



## The Government's Desperation

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The Spanish Ambassador in Washington, Carlos Westendorp, criticizes those using stopwatches to judge the relationship between the Bush and Zapatero administrations. From their official seven minute conversation at the NATO summit in Istanbul, the two leaders latest "meeting" was a seven second "Hey there, how are you?" exchange -something in America you might say to a complete stranger or someone filling up your gas tank. Foreign Minister Moratinos also claims the relationship is doing swell and cites various Ministers upcoming trips to the Potomac. But he does not mention what they are going to discuss to avoid potential failure.

In truth, these gestures only demonstrate how far the Spanish government has fallen off the White House map. President Bush is not willing to unfreeze bilateral relations with Mr. Zapatero's Spain. It is logical for the United States to want to normalize the issues it views as important, especially military ones and police anti-terrorist cooperation. This, however, does not mean it trusts the current Spanish government or wants to restore any luster to a relationship the socialists impulsively dynamited.

There is an anecdote that highlights the intensity of the Zapatero administration's unspoken desperation. A few days before Easter, Richard Perle, an analyst at the American Enterprise Institute, major neo-

conservative proponent and past "Prince of Darkness" in the Reagan Pentagon, was in Madrid. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Bernardino León took the opportunity to invite him to his office to exchange opinions and ideas. The curious thing, however, is not Mr. León's desire to meet with a man many consider anathema and the devil incarnate, but that the interview had a witness, a former Foreign Affairs Minister, not Spanish, but Israeli. Any means are judged acceptable to send a message, even it requires using foreign civil servants in a theoretically official Spanish office.

The Prime Minister's reckless foreign policy never fails to surprise. What most catches the eye is the administration's rejection of our country's recent past, its readiness to reopen wounds everyone thought had healed, its removal of Franco's symbols and statues from public spaces under state control. The result has been to put bilateral relations with the United States right back where Francisco Franco left them: essentially military in nature and of great benefit to US strategic policy and of zero benefit to Spain's political performance. This is the sad truth, even if it pains Mr. Zapatero, Mr. Moratinos and Ambassador Westendorp.

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