



What Would Zapatero Die For?

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In the Anglo-Saxon world, the Rodríguez Zapatero administration is known as the "ABBA administration," not because it loves the Swedish music group, but because of its attitude and policies: "Anything But Bush and Aznar," or ABBA. But what started out as the newly elected socialist Prime Minister's great wish, has ended up coming back to hurt him. Today, Zapatero would kill to have the same close and available relationship with his declared monster, George W. Bush, which José María Aznar enjoyed. Moreover, from what we are silently witnessing, he would kill just to have George W. Bush stop treating him like a fetid pariah. But why would the leader of the new Spanish radical left want to get along well with the world leader of the far, militarized right (which is how the US President is depicted among the grassroots real socialists, exactly the kind in Spain)? The only explanation is that, contrary to the official line, Zapatero is now envious of the relationship his predecessor had with the United States. He no longer aspires to the exact opposite of everything Aznar, but more and more of the same, in this case, the White House.

Will he manage it? For George W. Bush, Rodríguez Zapatero is a liar and a traitor. That said, Moncloa knows the American governmental apparatus tends to get on well and cooperate with practically all allied governments. This is why Zapatero's advisors think normalizing relations with the United States is just a question of time. If the Spanish government doesn't stick its foot in its mouth any more, the wounds will heal. And the healing might

even pick up speed if, in addition, Zapatero made nice with the Americans. In this vein, the socialist administration is showing itself more than willing to cooperate in Afghanistan; Zapatero writes Bush whenever he can, no matter what the subject – although he doesn't always get a reply; and he made sure to send humanitarian aid after Katrina. These are all steps to score points with the US.

The US President's generosity has, up to now, been limited to a nod of the head and a brief exchange of words during some event or celebration, as is sure to happen again during the United Nations' 60th anniversary later this week.

But Rodríguez Zapatero wants more. He wants a photo-op in the Oval Office like those hanging on the walls in José María Aznar's office. The Spanish Embassy in Washington is working overtime on it. And Spanish diplomats pounce on their counterparts in the Department of State to push for a meeting whenever they get the chance. They know Bush has a good memory and so aspire to circumvention. Everybody's eyes will be fixed on what happens in New York. If the body language is positive, Zapatero's minions will race to organize a visit to the US capital for the end of the year or beginning of 2006. If not, they will tuck their dreams away and put up with whatever comes. Someone might even think it would be good if Zapatero got Foreign Minister Moratinos out of the way.

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