

A Courageous Man Speaks Out - Hugo Chavez at the UN General Assembly

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Hugo Chavez chooses his authors, political and social thinkers well, and there's no one better than Noam Chomsky. In his dramatic and courageous speech yesterday to the 61st UN General Assembly, Chavez held up a copy of Chomsky's 2003 book *Hegemony or Survival* (which I've read and quoted from before). In the book, Chomsky cites the work of Ernst Mayr whom he describes as "one of the great figures of contemporary biology." Mayr noted that beetles and bacteria have been far more successful surviving than the human species is likely to be. He also observed that "the average life expectancy of a species is about 100,000 years" which is about how long ours has been around, and he went on to wonder if we might use our "allotted time" to destroy ourselves and much more with us. Chomsky then noted we certainly have the means to do it, and should it happen, which he says is very possible, we likely will become the only species ever to have made itself extinct.

Hugo Chavez also could have explained what Chomsky had to say about this possibility in his most recent book, *Failed States*, in which he addresses the three issues he feels are most important - "the threat of nuclear war, environmental disaster, and the fact that the government of the world's only superpower is acting in ways that increase the likelihood of (causing) these catastrophes." Chomsky goes even further raising a fourth issue that the "American system" is in danger of losing its "historic values (of) equality, liberty and meaningful democracy (because of the course it's on)."

Reflecting the thinking and spirit of Noam Chomsky, Hugo Chavez delivered an impassioned speech yesterday to the assembled delegates who came to hear him. It's one likely to be favorably remembered many years from now. At its end, the delegates showed their appreciation and support by giving him a standing ovation (the longest one of all the leaders addressing the Assembly) in contrast to the cool and polite reception given George Bush the previous day who chose not to attend to hear the Venezuelan leader. Too bad he didn't as he might have learned from it if he stayed alert and paid attention. Citing the language in Chomsky's book in his hand, Chavez said: "The hegemonistic pretensions of the American empire are placing at risk the very existence of the human species (and) We appeal to the people of the United States and the world to halt this threat, which is like a sword hanging over our head." He went on to explain that earlier the President of the US attended an Organization of American States meeting and proposed a NAFTA-type trade agreement in both regions that is the "fundamental cause of the great evils and the great tragedies currently suffered by our people. Neoliberal capitalism, the Washington Consensus....has generated....a high degree of misery, inequality and infinite tragedy for all the peoples on (this) continent."

Hugo Chavez called George Bush “the devil” several times and said he came here yesterday and “from this rostrum (talked) as if he owned the world.” He denounced the President’s talk, said he’s responsible for all conflict in the Middle East, and that those opposed to these policies are resisting his imperial model of domination. Chavez predicted the US empire will fall, said “What we need now more than ever....is a new international order,” and that he wants to see a reinvented UN be part of what can help achieve it. He said the UN under its current rules “does not work” and must be changed to bring more democracy to the organization. He called for the “foundation of a new United Nations” and proposed four fundamental changes including the “need to....suppress....the veto in the decisions taken by the Security Council (because) that elitist trace is incompatible with democracy, incompatible with the principles of equality and democracy.” He also called for expanding the Security Council to include developing nations as permanent members and wants to strengthen the role of the Secretary General. He stressed that today the UN body is “worthless” and needs to be “refounded.”

Hugo Chavez is dedicated to the principles and spirit of the Bolivarian Revolution he gave the people of Venezuela and wants to spread it to the developing world as a counter-force to the US model of global dominance of the developed North over the less-developed South with the US as hegemon-in-chief. He called on leaders from the developing world to unite and resist to build a new world model based on social equity and justice. Judging by the reception Chavez got yesterday, it looks like he made some progress toward that goal, especially in Latin America that’s become an incubator of resistance against the unipolar world the US is beginning to lose its grip on and in support of the multi-polar one Hugo Chavez wants to help create.

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