

Hugo Chavez's New World Vision

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After agreeing to supply discounted oil to the richest city in Europe – London – to help its low income residents use the city's buses at a reduced cost after earlier providing discounted heating oil for the poor in several northeastern US cities including its richest one – New York, Hugo Chavez is at it again. This time he offered to aid the US oil and cash-rich state of Alaska by providing an even greater benefit – free or subsidized heating oil. In the richest, most powerful country in the world, federal, state and local governments continue to provide fewer essential services to their citizens most in need like helping them stay warm in winter when they can't afford to do it on their own. The result is many of them don't and some die as a result.

Even without federal help, Alaska easily has enough resources and plenty of oil inside its borders to help its most needy if it chooses to. Currently the state has a Permanent Fund of \$34 billion and a \$2 billion budget reserve fund for a population of about 660,000 people. Still, each winter thousands of Alaskans can't afford to buy enough heating oil, especially since its price rose so dramatically in the past few years. Alaska has its own federally funded Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, but it's woefully underfunded and unable to provide enough help. So if the state and federal government won't do the job, Hugo Chavez said he would step in with financial aid through Venezuela's state-owned oil company PDVSA's subsidiary CITGO Petroleum Corporation. The money will be donated to state Native non-profit organizations as part of a greater effort that will also help other communities in the state. It's also one part of CITGO's overall program to provide 5 – 10 million gallons of heating oil to help Native Americans nationwide. The goal is to help thousands of poor Alaskans and Native Americans in other states stay warm in the winter in cases where they're unable to get help any other way.

Think of it. Tiny Venezuela has a population of about 27 million people that's 1/12th the size of the US. And it had a 2005 Gross Domestic Product of about \$160 billion that's less than 2% of the US GDP of \$12.5 trillion last year and less than half of oil giant Exxon-Mobil's \$371 billion 2005 sales volume. Still Hugo Chavez is willing to share his nation's oil and financial resources so those in need in the US can get some of the help its own government won't provide and help other nations as well that don't have enough ability to do it themselves. Don't ever expect Exxon-Mobil to offer aid as its game plan is to manipulate oil prices for maximum sales and profit growth with little or no regard for social responsibility that would only lower them.

The Vision of Chavez's Democratic Bolivarian Revolution Vs. Bush's Belligerent Imperialism

Look at the difference between how Hugo Chavez governs at home and shares with others abroad based on the principles of social equity and justice compared to the way George Bush does it. He and his hard-right Republican allies believe it's right to take from the poor

and plunder other nations abroad to benefit the rich and powerful at home. To do it he's been waging illegal wars of aggression almost since he took office and just declared a permanent "long war" clash of civilizations against 1.8 billion Muslims worldwide to subjugate and exploit them for the corporate interests he represents.

Hugo Chavez will stand for re-election on December 3 this year. His approval rating is so high (compared to Bush's low one), no opposition candidate can defeat him in a free, fair and open election although the Bush administration is planning an unknown array of dirty tricks trying to do it. Compare that to the way elections are now run in the US where the only sure way George Bush and neocon Republicans can win is by rigging the outcomes. They have to because growing numbers of voters are fed up with them and reject their failed policies of endless war against enemies that don't exist, tax cuts for the rich combined with reduced social services for everyone else to pay for them, and a crackdown on civil liberties to quell dissent that always happens in the face of injustice.

A lot more people would reject them as well if they knew and took to heart Founding Father and President James Madison's belief about the dangers of war and how it extends "the discretionary power of the Executive." He wrote: "No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare." And Abraham Lincoln once wrote while he was still in the Congress that "kings had always been involving and impoverishing their people in wars, pretending....that the good of the people was the object." Both these now revered men would shudder at how right they were if they knew how fast those freedoms and greater good for the people have been lost under the Bush administration, its policies of universal repression, and plan to turn the US into a nation of serfs and then do the same thing all over the world and make ordinary Americans have to pay the bills for it and end up poorer as a result.

Things aren't this way in Venezuela and shouldn't be anywhere. Under the letter and spirit of the Bolivarian Revolution, the country is governed under a system of real participatory democracy where the people get to vote and those they elect actually serve them. In the US what's called democracy is only for the privileged few. All others are left behind in a system morphing toward modern-day feudalism based on how an earlier failed 20th century tyrant ruled which he explained in his own words - "(by) a system of government that exercises a dictatorship of the extreme right, typically through the merging of state and business leadership, together with belligent nationalism." Sound familiar?

The tyrant was Benito Mussolini, and he called it fascism, although despite his claim, he didn't invent it. Nineteenth century born and early 20th century philosopher Giovanni Gentile did, and he's sometimes called the "philosopher of fascism." He explained it in the Encyclopia Italiana saying "Fascism should more appropriately be called corporatism because it is a merger of state and corporate power." Like all good dictators finding an idea he liked, Mussolini replaced Gentile's name with his own and claimed credit for it. Now in the US under George Bush it's showing up again as a feudal corporatocracy heading straight toward a full-blown version of the Mussolini/Hitler model, US-style with many of the same trappings - a messianic mission and appeal to patriotism to fight an endless war on terrorism sacrificing constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties to do it and enriching corporations that profit from it. And all this falsely couched in the "land of the free and home of the brave" rhetoric and spirit from "The Star-Spangled Banner" anthem all children are taught at an early age to sing in school with hands over heart and never forget.

Hugo Chavez represents a different vision. Among world leaders, he's the best hope to give democracy meaning again throughout the Americas and beyond, and that's why the Bush administration is determined to oust him before he spreads much more of his good will. The Chavez way is gaining ground because it's a new paradigm based on global solidarity, equality and political, economic and social justice that opposes the failed Bush neoliberal imperial world model more people everywhere are fed up with and want no more of. It's shown up on the streets of Mexico for weeks and again on Sunday when hundreds of thousands of people packed the great Zocalo square in Mexico City in support of winning candidate Lopez Obrador denied by massive fraud the office of president he won in July. They stand with him in solidarity and his intention to set up a parallel government after he's sworn in as its "legitimate president" on November 20. Hugo Chavez stands with him as well, and on Saturday at the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Havana accused Mexico's ruling party of stealing the election and destroying the chance for good relations with Venezuela.

There were more signs of discontent with the old order at the 16th annual NAM summit, attended by representatives from over 110 nations. At it, Hugo Chavez declared "American imperialism is in decline. A new bi-polar world is emerging. The non-aligned group has been relaunched to unite the South under its umbrella (in opposition)." At the summit's conclusion, a final document was drafted expressing support for Venezuela, its constitutional government and democratically elected President Hugo Chavez. It criticized US aggressive policies against Chavez and supported the right of the Venezuelan people to choose their own form of government, their leader and representatives, and their economic and political system free from foreign intervention. The document also expressed "firm support and solidarity for Bolivia" and Cuba including demanding the US end its economic, trade and financial blockade that violates the UN Charter and other international law.

It also acknowledged Iran's right to develop its commercial nuclear industry that's in full compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) based on known evidence about it. Further, it sharply criticized US foreign policy and its wars of illegal aggression as well as Israel's wars against Lebanon and Palestine and the US role in them. It also spoke out by implication against the unilateral US domination of the UN calling on this international body to do more to respect and better represent the needs and rights of smaller nations. The document affirmed the right of each nation's national sovereignty and was a strong rebuke of the US Bush administration and its imperial policies. In addition, it represented a strong statement of growing resistance to it from around the world that's likely to gain added resonance as long as Hugo Chavez is able to pursue his policies of putting the needs and rights of people ahead of those of wealth and power.

Other Unexpected Criticism

Chavez isn't alone as other critics are emerging in places as unexpected as the UK where British Labour Party 23-year veteran MP and former Cabinet Minister Clare Short just announced she's leaving New Labour because she's "profoundly ashamed" of the Government and Prime Minister Tony Blair's "craven" support for "US neoconservative foreign policy (that) has dishonoured the UK, undermined the UN and international law and helped to make the world a more dangerous place." She said she was "standing down (to) speak the truth and support the changes that are needed." She's not alone in the Blair government as growing numbers of other party "back-benchers" are joining her in a show of solidarity and disgust for a government allied shamelessly with Washington's corrupted notion of might makes right and the use of it in the pursuit of wealth and power as an end in

itself.

Stay tuned for the coming chapters in this epic struggle for a new and better world vision and an end to the old one that doesn't work, never did or will, and that more people than ever are determined to free themselves from. It's what Abraham Lincoln meant when he once said: "Any people anywhere, being inclined and having the power, have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better. This is a most valuable, a most sacred right, which we hope and believe is to liberate the world." It was the same message South America's great Liberator Simon Bolivar had when he once spoke of the imperial curse he sought to free his people from that "plague(d) Latin America with misery in the name of liberty." From the NAM summit in Havana, Hugo Chavez echoed similar thoughts in his address to the General Assembly on September 15. In it he said: "....let's unite in the South and we will have a future, we will have dignity, our people will have life....Let's unite to liberate ourselves, to exist, to self-construct the South."

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