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“Chomsky claims peace prize, takes on the West”

LINGUIST, social scientist and author Noam Chomsky last night warned that the assassination of Osama Bin Laden by US forces would only heighten the threat of a nuclear attack on a Western country. Speaking to a rapturous audience at Sydney Town Hall, Professor Chomsky was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize by the Peace Prize Foundation for what it called his long-held commitment to “peace with justice”. The Professor of linguistics at MIT in the US, described by some as a socialist humanitarian, is highly critical of globalisation and what he calls the “neo-liberal” world view. The controversial writer saves much of his harshest criticism for his own nation’s foreign policy. In a speech primarily concerned with the theme of Western hypocrisy in waging war and managing peace, Professor Chomsky said many of the Anglosphere’s current problems rested on the premise that the victor thinks “after the war . . . he has proved war and violence pay”. “We have to cease to acquiesce so easily in evil conditions, and we have to assess the violence on which the current system is based,” he said. Professor Chomsky told the audience that as a result of the self-defence rationale used by George W. Bush and Tony Blair to wage war in Iraq, the Japanese bombings of Pearl Harbour could be easily justified. Of the recent 10-year anniversary of September 11, he said Western governments had hoped that partial closure was reached with the death of bin Laden, but he was critical of what he called his murder without trial. Rather than bring an end to the risk of further terror attacks, Professor Chomsky said, it would only further destabilise the country and intensify anti-americanism in a state with a large nuclear arsenal. “(President Barack) Obama has now increased the risk of nuclear explosions in London and New York,” he told the audience. “The assassination of bin Laden greatly heightened that risk in a way that was ignored in the general enthusiasm for assassination of suspects.” The academic was also highly critical of Australia’s role in East Timor and pointed out that this year was also the 20th anniversary of Santa Cruz massacre in Dili. He criticised former foreign affairs minister Gareth Evans for what he argued was a mute response to the killings by the Indonesian army. “There could hardly be a more painful illustration, a shameful display of subornation of power,” he said. Earlier Professor Chomsky addressed a group of people who had participated in the occupation of Martin Place, Sydney’s financial district, and were ejected by police last month. He told them outside Sydney Town Hall that the occupy movement was “one of the most exciting experiences in our lifetime”.



SAM MOOY

Noam Chomsky meets activists from the Occupy movement outside Sydney Town Hall yesterday