

Venezuela: The Tragic Tatters of Socialism

Rod Taylor

Leader, CHP Canada

As the world looks on, Venezuela teeters on the brink of collapse under the thumb of dictator Nicolás Maduro, now ostensibly backed by his military chiefs. The President of Venezuela's elected National Assembly, Juan Guaidó—accusing Maduro of election fraud in his 2018 re-election—has asserted his own claim to the presidency but Maduro adamantly refuses to cede power. The nations of the world are quickly taking sides, with the US and Canada and most western-style democracies backing Guaidó, while Russia, China, Turkey and Mexico are standing by Maduro. Is this just another self-infatuated madman clinging to power or are there lessons to be learned that Canadians would ignore to our own peril? What social (or socialist) trends led to the current debacle?

First of all, we've seen this movie before. When the Soviet Union finally collapsed under the weight of decades of communist corruption, the tens of millions who died cruel deaths by starvation and torture testified—by their deaths—to the inevitable failure of a government-controlled economy and Politburo-regulated social life. People long to be free to build, to raise families and to create wealth, homes and businesses.

In broad terms, we often refer to communism and socialism as “leftist” and those who espouse free-market capitalism as of the “right”. Through an historical and journalistic sleight-of-hand, many in our generation tend to think of the horrendous Nazi regime as “right wing”, but in doing so, they ignore its roots. The Nazi Party of Hitler's day was actually the National Socialist German Workers' Party. The sharing and caring so often fantasized about by today's socialists simply are not the fruit of socialism. Poverty, oppression, imprisonment and terror are its grim results.

Venezuela used to be the richest country in South America. She has proven oil reserves of 297 billion barrels (as of 2014), the highest of any country in the world.¹ Besides oil, she has diamonds, bauxite, gold, iron ore, and natural gas²—but corruption, mismanagement and high levels of debt have crippled and impoverished the nation.

As is often the case, the dawn of socialism in Venezuela came in the wake of decades of non-socialist dictators so that when Hugo Chavez came to power in 1998, socialist thinkers and politicians around the world praised him and spoke in glowing terms of Venezuela's bright future. But in the waning years of his reign and following the election of his socialist successor, Maduro, the wheels began to come off the bus.

Now, instead of clean water, electricity and other elements of modern civilization, Venezuelans are unable even to get food. Rather than starve to death under the tyrant's boot, three million Venezuelans have chosen to flee the country. Those who remain have taken to the streets to demand change.

In Venezuela today:

- Inflation has reached 1,300,000%.

- 9 out of 10 Venezuelans say they can't afford basic food, the average Venezuelan has lost 11.4 kg and 6 out of 10 go to bed hungry.
- Malaria, diphtheria and measles are on the rise and people can't afford medicine.
- Oil production has been steadily falling and world oil prices have exacerbated the damage to the economy.³

Winston Churchill, who understood political pragmatism (having been forced to work with communist dictator Stalin to defeat National Socialist dictator Adolf Hitler) had this to say about the decline of Britain's fortunes under state-sponsored socialism: "The German U-boats in their worst endeavours never made bread-rationing necessary in war. It took a Socialist Government and Socialist planners to fasten it on us in time of peace when the seas are open and the world harvests good."⁴

It is impossible to say how Venezuela will fare in the current crisis. Some have already died at the hands of the military. Even the man acclaimed by Western leaders as the legitimate interim president is a socialist, albeit a kinder and more conscientious one. What's the lesson for Canada, where we still can afford bread and are not yet threatened by military force?

It's simple: we need to reject the knee-jerk demands of those who think we can achieve utopia by nationalizing productive industries, raising taxes on the successful and hiring an expensive army of bureaucrats and planners to manage the details of our lives. Free enterprise and free thinking, taking responsibility for our own choices and contributing to society through our own creativity and hard work—these are the things that keep a nation healthy. Free elections and free speech go hand in hand. When a government begins to dictate what we can say and how we are to raise our children, we need to recognize the approach of tyranny and resist it vigorously.

To help us keep Canada free, we invite you to become a member of CHP at chp.ca⁵; if you're already a member, let us know how you'd like to serve, as a volunteer, a candidate or a financial supporter.⁶ We don't need or want a government bailout; we only want a citizenry awake and engaged in its own defence.

Footnotes

¹ www.worldatlas.com/articles/the-world-s-largest-oil-reserves-by-country.html

² www.azomining.com/Article.aspx?ArticleID=73

³ www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-46999668

⁴ books.google.ca/books?id=Fj7FAgAAQBAJ&pg=PA178

⁵ www.chp.ca/get-involved

⁶ www.chp.ca/donate