

## Socialism in Seattle

Idealogues have taken over. The days of clean city streets, law and order, and a vibrant happy community are long behind us. The streets are now littered with drug paraphernalia. Tents occupy nearly every corner and underpass, and violent crime is increasing. Power has been seized through virtuous words of inclusion and social justice. The economy is ravaged through poor policy. Human life has become worthless. Civil society has been corroded. The above can easily be used to describe Venezuela, yet the similarities with Seattle are striking.

Hugo Chavez, Venezuela's former President, told voters that he was not for "savage capitalism, nor socialism, nor communism." Instead he supported a "third way" which was a balance of capitalism and socialism.<sup>1</sup> Initially, this was true. He began by maintaining the frameworks of Venezuela's old system, while also rewriting the constitution to give himself nearly unchecked power in the country. The new constitution came with new rights such as free government-provided health care, free college, and "social justice."

This was followed by a stacking of the Venezuelan Supreme Court with Chavez loyalists, thereby giving him a majority in the courts and the unprecedented ability to legislate from the judicial branch of government. With his new powers, he moved away from the third way, his cover during the elections, and began to implement real socialism. This caused once profitable industries to rapidly fail after they were systematically taken over by the state. Oil production slowed and soon after that, the price of oil began to fall. Like all socialist countries, Chavez began running out of other peoples' money. In order to maintain the benefits for the poor that had kept him in power, Chavez began inflating the currency. This destroyed peoples' savings and drove investment out of the country. Price controls began to make basic goods impossible to buy at any price. Money became worthless and people began to starve.<sup>2</sup>

What began as the "third way" resulted in extreme socialism, causing Venezuela to dive into lawlessness, political violence, and scarcity. This revealed another essential characteristic of socialism: an inability to accept blame for creating the problems. This is what happens when an avowed ideologue takes power. "Egos can become so invested in an ideology's correctness that, even after an idea has been discredited, steadfastness becomes an emotional need based on pride rather than an intelligent opinion based on reason." Even with initial good intentions they, "start to care less about whether their policies are adequately serving important human needs than they do about the strictness with which those policies are aligning to a set of abstract philosophical concepts."<sup>3</sup> People critical of Maduro can expect to be held as political prisoners. If they gather in numbers, they can expect a violent response from government-backed Red-Shirts. This is the end result of socialism, "[it] not only takes away from

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<sup>1</sup> Lott, Maxim. "How Socialism Turned Venezuela from the Wealthiest Country in South America into an Economic Basket Case." *Fox News*, FOX News Network, 26 Jan. 2019.

<sup>2</sup> "In Venezuela, Socialism Has Succeeded the Way It Always Does." *Washington Examiner*, Washington Examiner, 26 Jan. 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Rozsa, Matthew. "The Danger of Ideologues." *The Good Men Project*, 26 Mar. 2016.

people the access to basic food and medicines, but also creates an environment in which life is worth nothing.”<sup>4</sup>

This is how South America's once-wealthiest nation, with greater proven oil reserves than Norway or Saudi Arabia, has been turned into a failed state without regard for its own citizenry. It no longer has a functioning democracy. The military and police have been corrupted by Chavez' goons. Its money is worthless and litters the streets. People no longer struggle to make money, they struggle to survive. This is how socialism has worked out everywhere it is tried and from that point of view, it has been a great success in Venezuela.

This is eerily reminiscent of what is beginning to happen in many major cities throughout the US, including Seattle. Seattle's city council members and mayor want to balance their socialistic tendencies with capitalism. They (with the exception of a few) are not for unbridled socialism, or unbridled capitalism yet are fans of the third way-- undermining capitalism until socialism is seen as the only solution to our problems.

Like Venezuela, these Seattle based politicians sell themselves as the protectors of the workers, along with a myriad of other “discriminated groups,” who are demanding “social justice” much like Chavez did on his course towards authoritarian power. Similarly to Venezuela, we see more and more anti-business policies being floated. The rhetoric used to pass these laws is geared towards the demonization of business owners, creating an environment where one side is viewed as inherently evil, and the other virtuous.

These ideologues are unable or unwilling to see the realities of their policies. There are massive numbers of homeless people on the streets of Seattle every night, only behind Los Angeles and New York, and it is growing.<sup>5</sup> The city enables drug users by giving them free paraphernalia, free drugs at injection sites, and freedom from the law. Seattle, and King County, are not properly handling criminals who have committed serious offences once or even multiple times.<sup>6</sup> Crime and lawlessness is up. Police power is dwindling due to an unsupportive city government's lack of determination to properly police the city.<sup>7</sup> Human life has taken a back seat to their main priority: enacting their ideology by any means necessary.

It's almost as if they don't care. They are strict ideologues, who see their policies fail yet refuse to change course. Instead, in failure, they find a scapegoat on which to pin the blame. They will continue this “us vs. them” warfare for as long as it suits their agenda. It seems that anywhere ideologues take power, the value of human life is diminished- in Seattle, just as in Venezuela.

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<sup>4</sup>Lott, Maxim. “How Socialism Turned Venezuela from the Wealthiest Country in South America into an Economic Basket Case.” *Fox News*, FOX News Network, 26 Jan. 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Mulvihill, Geoff. “Report: Seattle Has Nation's Largest Homeless Population Outside of New York, Los Angeles.” *KOMO*, KOMO, 17 Dec. 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Kiro. “Prolific Offenders' in Seattle Result of Case Delays, Lack of Oversight, Report Says.” *KIRO*, 26 Feb. 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Rantz, Jason. “'Mass Exodus' of Seattle Officers over Disgust with City Leadership.” *MyNorthwest.com*, 28 June 2018.