



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on April 2, 2019

## Socialist Misery Deepens in Formerly Prosperous Venezuela

When Venezuela's Marxist dictator Nicolas Maduro addressed his citizens on Sunday, [he told them](#) that their electric power would be rationed: "I have approved a 30-day plan to regulate the output." He called the plan "a load management regime."

Unfortunately, owing to the rolling power outages that have plagued Venezuela over the last month, most of those citizens, if they had television, weren't able to view his speech because their power was out.



That is the end point of socialism: When government interferes, products and services formerly provided by the free market become limited. Prices go up and price controls follow. The price controls further limit supply, and the final step is rationing what's left.

Maduro admitted to two failures in that short sentence: His government is unable to provide for his people; and those shortages are likely to last for a long time. The unspoken message being delivered is that socialism, no matter what it might be called, always ends in tyranny, misery, and death.

Venezuela's power industry was nationalized in 2007 under the socialist administration of Maduro's predecessor and mentor, Marxist Hugo Chavez. The ideology of socialism, termed Chavismo, continued under Maduro following Chavez's death in 2013. Consequently, those professionals running the energy grid were removed and replaced with political appointees as rewards for their loyalty to the socialist regime. Since then some 25,000 technicians skilled in running the power industry have left the country, leaving the incompetent in charge.

As Maduro's economy spiraled downward, funds for maintenance dried up. In early March a grassfire burned some trunk lines feeding power from the country's Guri dam, causing turbines generating power to fail. This plunged the populace into darkness for days. On March 25, another outage led to more misery, and more socialist intervention in the form of rationing the remaining electricity that the power plant is able to produce.

The impacts are predictable, and widely known: Patients are forced to bring their own bedding, water, and medicines to hospitals, where there is no air conditioning and few sanitary services available. Without gasoline, which is limited in supply, backup generators are only able to provide electricity to parts of the hospitals. Newborns are dying due to lack of sanitary conditions and adequate supplies.

When the power grid goes down, nothing works: no phones, no gas, no water, no credit card transactions. Without water citizens are forced to find what they can on their own, many filling jugs from the polluted Guaire river flowing through Caracas. This predictably leads to more sickness, more demand for diminishing medical hospital services, and more deaths.

In the final analysis, socialism is a political and economic system of war against the most helpless in society, as Alexis de Tocqueville explained 171 years ago. In February 1848, the Second French



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Republic was established and debates raged about how to cure the problem of unemployment.

The issue centered on continuing the public assistance programs established by the monarchy of Louis Phillippe, and de Tocqueville's eloquence in explaining why it would continue to fail is unmatched:

Now, the first characteristic of all socialist ideologies is, I believe, an incessant, vigorous and extreme appeal to the material passions of man. [Signs of approval.]

Thus, some have said: "Let us rehabilitate the body"; others, that "work, even of the hardest kind, must be not only useful, but agreeable"; still others, that "man must be paid, not according to his merit, but according to his need"; while, finally, they have told us here that the object of the February Revolution, of socialism, is to procure unlimited wealth for all.

A second trait, always present, is an attack, either direct or indirect, on the principle of private property. From the first socialist who said, fifty years ago, that "property is the origin of all the ills of the world," to the socialist who spoke from this podium and who, less charitable than the first, passing from property to the property-holder, exclaimed that "property is theft," all socialists, all, I insist, attack, either in a direct or indirect manner, private property. ["True, true."] I do not pretend to hold that all who do so, assault it in the frank and brutal manner which one of our colleagues has adopted. But I say that all socialists, by more or less roundabout means, if they do not destroy the principle upon which it is based, transform it, diminish it, obstruct it, limit it, and mold it into something completely foreign to what we know and have been familiar with since the beginning of time as private property. [Excited signs of assent.]

Now, a third and final trait, one which, in my eyes, best describes socialists of all schools and shades, is a profound opposition to personal liberty and scorn for individual reason, a complete contempt for the individual. They unceasingly attempt to mutilate, to curtail, to obstruct personal freedom in any and all ways. They hold that the State must not only act as the director of society, but must further be master of each man, and not only master, but keeper and trainer. ["Excellent."]

For fear of allowing him to err, the State must place itself forever by his side, above him, around him, better to guide him, to maintain him, in a word, to confine him. They call, in fact, for the forfeiture, to a greater or less degree, of human liberty, [Further signs of assent.] to the point where, were I to attempt to sum up what socialism is, I would say that it was simply a new system of serfdom. [Lively assent.]

Just as there is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9), nothing new is occurring in Venezuela that hasn't happened countless times in history. What Venezuela teaches is unknown to so many who want to make policy in the United States. Absent knowing their history, they should make a short visit to Caracas to see for themselves the end game of the socialism they so ardently revere and promote.

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