



Starving Venezuelans Risk 60 Miles of Open Ocean to Barter for Food

The end stages of socialism in Venezuela are forcing citizens to do anything they can to obtain food for themselves and their families, including risking their lives. Mariana Revilla, a medical doctor reduced to making midnight excursions over 60 miles of open ocean to feed her family, was making her fifth trip to Trinidad when her boat capsized, [costing her her life](#) and the lives of two others assisting her.



Her boat contained seven tons of flour, sugar, and cooking oil that she had obtained through barter at one of the west coast towns of Trinidad, exchanging them for the tons of fresh shrimp she had brought with her. Others making the midnight trips would take with them anything of value to exchange for food and basic necessities, making the boats look like a floating garage sale: plastic chairs, house doors, ceramic cooking pots, and even exotic animals such as iguanas and macaws to trade for food.

Socialists promise that such things could never happen in the “paradise” they are determined to build. Americans for Prosperity (AFP) compared the promises to the reality which Venezuelans are now facing daily:

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1. Socialists promise that there will be income equality, as everyone will contribute what they can and receive what they need. But, says AFP, the system instead guarantees that everyone (except the elites in charge) will be equally poor.
2. Under socialism, private companies will be forced by the government to charge what it determines to be “reasonable” prices through price-fixing. Rationing follows when goods previously available disappear from the market. All these mandates do, says AFP, is guarantee bread lines and shortages, as producers cannot produce under such strictures without going bankrupt.
3. Under socialism the government, having eliminated the overhead cost of “profits” needed under a free market capitalist system, is touted as being able to make the economy grow. In Venezuela, however, the oil-rich nation is unable to feed itself, thanks to bureaucratic miscues and massive corruption among government officials doing the rationing of goods and services.
4. Socialism is sold as guaranteeing a class-free society, which turns out, according to AFP, to be a society where “everyone (except the elites) is equal in their misery.”
5. Socialism guarantees free college educations and free healthcare for everyone, but without asking and answering the key question: at whose expense? The myth that everyone can live at the expense of everyone else has been exposed in Venezuela.
6. Socialism claims that everyone is entitled to material goods, but fails as instead it favors those at the top and leaves everyone else destitute.
7. Socialism promises that workers will be “liberated” from their capitalist slave masters, but the



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on June 26, 2017

workers discover that they are now slaves of the state, subject to the orders of the state and to having their earnings taken from them and distributed to others.

The sad forced transition of Venezuela into a backward, third-world country whose starving citizens are forced to barter has been tracked extensively by *The New American* and elsewhere. Starting in April, angry civilians took to the streets to protest the increasingly totalitarian regime, which has in turn ramped up the regime's oppression of its citizens. As of this writing, more than 70 protesters have been killed, hundreds more injured, and additional hundreds arrested. Those jailed are living in conditions that are too horrifying to recount here. Political rights have all but disappeared and oil production has dropped precipitously, while drug trafficking (involving close relatives of President Maduro) has skyrocketed.

The Marxist Maduro regime is being propped up by neighboring countries that continue to support and do business with it, despite the atrocities. Wall Street is involved as well, with Goldman Sachs coming under fire for buying \$2.8 billion worth of bonds (now named "hunger bonds") for pennies on the dollar. Goldman was reviled by Rolling Stones' Matt Taibbi back in 2010 as "a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money." In Venezuela, Goldman Sachs smells opportunity, hoping either to offload those bonds to unsuspecting investors unfamiliar with the risks of default, or hold them in the hopes that somehow the country will be bailed out and the bonds paid off at something much closer to face value.

Support for the failing Marxist regime hindered the sanctions that the Organization of American States (OAS) tried to apply last week. At its meeting in Cancún last Wednesday, the OAS's motion to sanction Maduro failed by three votes: those from Bolivia (run by socialist Evo Morales), from Nicaragua (run by Marxist Sandinista Daniel Ortega), and from the Dominican Republic, which continues to prop up Maduro with annual payments of \$1.5 billion (and products such as black beans) to pay for its oil purchases.

The twin island country of Trinidad and Tobago is also supporting Maduro, just inking an agreement in May to engage in collaborative gas exploration and expanded trade agreements.

That provides another characteristic of socialism: The system cannot operate for long on its own without outside assistance. Once it has completely impoverished the civilian population, there are no other sources of wealth to appropriate. Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was right when she observed, "The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money."

As Venezuela runs out of other people's money, Maduro may be running out of time.

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