



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on May 27, 2016

Edict From Venezuela's President Maduro: Grow Your Own Food

Word got out that there would be chicken for sale at the Central Madeirense supermarket in Guarenas, Venezuela, on Friday, so Katty Alonzo got there at 4 a.m. The line of others already snaked around the block, waiting for the delivery trucks to arrive.



But when the trucks arrived at 6:30, the national guardsmen monitoring the crowd sensed the possibility of a riot and ordered the trucks to move on. The people waiting in line turned ugly and smashed the windows of some bakeries and delis and then robbed another delivery truck that couldn't escape.

[It made the nightly news](#) around the world and highlighted the end stages of socialism: regression back to an agrarian society where people starve, fight to obtain what little food there is, and demand that the government save them.

The genesis began in 2011 when Venezuela, run by the Marxist President Hugo Chávez, began implementing price controls as the government's answer to government-caused inflation. Because 95 percent of the country's income comes from oil (Venezuela has eight times the proven oil reserves as does the United States), the onset of the Great Recession and the collapse of oil prices drastically shrank the government's income. Rather than cut spending, Chavez instead decided to print more money to cover the shortfall. When the purchasing power of the Bolivar Fuerte — hopelessly called the “strong bolivar” — began to decline, prices began to rise.

On November 22, 2011, Chávez announced that prices on natural water, fruit juices, bleach, soap, liquid dishwashing detergent, and other cleaners, shampoo, deodorants, toilet paper, and throwaway diapers would be fixed. It didn't take long for most of those items to disappear from stores' shelves as their makers couldn't make a profit selling them (shelves in store in Venezuela shown).

This brought on attacks by Chávez on companies, mostly American, which wouldn't continue to sell those products at a loss. Chávez targeted specifically Nestle, Colgate-Palmolive, Johnson & Johnson, Coca-Cola, and Unilever, telling his citizens that “what certainly is not normal are these prices,” without explaining that it was his government's policies that were behind the rises.

When shortages continued, people began, when given the opportunity, to buy more than they needed. When Chávez discovered this, he called it “hoarding,” using the Spanish word “bachaqueros” (meaning giant ants) to describe the miscreants. After Chávez died in March of 2013, his Marxist protégé Nicolás Maduro had his attorney general, Luisa Ortega Díaz, inform the citizens that those hoarding “would face serious consequences” and then ordered prosecutors to arrest anyone found buying more than they needed. She said hoarding was a threat against “food security” and, consequently, a threat against the state.



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When that edict failed, grocery stores were required to implement a fingerprint registry so that purchases could be tracked and an alarm would sound if someone bought more than his “allotment.” It also tracked how often a customer would return, and if it was less than eight days between visits, they were turned away.

The next step downward toward an agrarian society began in 2015 when people had to wait two hours in line just to get into a grocery store and then another three hours to check out with whatever little they could still find on the shelves. It often turned ugly, according to a local paper: “Five hours in line to buy a chicken; kicks, pushes, and blows of all kinds to be one of the fortunate ones to enter the supermarket and get away with a bag of flour or rice.”

Then Maduro’s government began to ration electricity, using global warming as the excuse, rather than the real reason: cutting government expenses in order to pay the interest owed to international banks on its huge national debt.

Last summer Maduro took the next step: forcing what food producers remained to sell their produce to the government at below-cost prices and then offering it for sale in government-owned stores. This was a blatant attack on the private stores that still remained in business, which couldn’t compete. It also further reduced the incentive to produce the goods that citizens desperately needed.

In January 2016, Maduro expanded his government further by announcing the creation of three more agencies to address the problem: the Department of Marine Life and Fisheries, the Department of Agricultural Production and Land, and the Ministry of Urban Agriculture, or “Urban Ag.” The third agency’s task is to persuade the country’s citizens [to grow their own food](#) to make up for the shortages caused by the government’s policies. These agencies were announced with great fanfare as efforts, according to Maduro, to “fight the grave economic situation” that were, he said, caused by “falling oil prices and the war being waged by the U.S. Empire against our national economy.”

This, of course, is a classic example of “political distraction away from government-caused economic misery” that every politician eventually learns to use if he wishes to stay long in power. Added Maduro, “Cilia and I have 50 chickens in our house. It’s time to develop a new culture of production.”

Such a move is likely to have little positive impact as the population moves closer to starvation. A poll by DatinCorp in April found that nearly nine out of 10 Venezuelans bought “less” or “much less” food than they used to, and almost half say they now eat just one or two meals a day.

In the meantime Maduro has his military forces preparing for the coming invasion from the United States.

It is hoped that, in the upcoming debate between presidential hopefuls Bernie Sanders, an avowed Socialist, and Donald Trump, an avowed capitalist, Trump might ask Sanders why, since socialism works so well in Venezuela, it should be adopted here.

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at [LightFromTheRight.com](#), primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com.



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