



They Say Scandinavia But They Mean Venezuela

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Venezuela, where I was born and still have family—bad. Cuba—bad. Zimbabwe— bad. Soviet Union—bad. China under Mao—bad. Sweden, Denmark, Norway—good.

This is the socialist report card as it currently stands. Never mind that Venezuela, Cuba, Zimbabwe, the Soviet Union, Mao's China were once good. Once they go bad, they stay bad and are quickly forgotten—lost down the memory hole.

But those Nordic paradises? They never let you down. Whenever Bernie, the “Squad,” and the growing horde of Democratic Socialists ever get cornered, there's always “like Denmark” to come to the rescue. “No, no—we don't want anything like what's going on in Venezuela... Denmark is what we have in mind!” Except they don't. And it's time we all figured this out—before it's too late.

Here's what you need know about Scandinavian countries: They are *capitalist* in wealth creation and *socialist* in wealth distribution. They have low corporate taxes—around 20%, no higher than in America. Unlike America, neither Norway nor Sweden nor Denmark has a government-set minimum wage. Most make it very easy to start a new business. Most have private healthcare and education options.

Yes, the Nordic countries have an expansive welfare state, but *everyone* pays into the system: rich, middle class, and poor. Nobody escapes the tax man because nobody escapes the 25% value-added tax. This sales tax—a tax on what you buy—is regressive, meaning it falls much more heavily percentage-of-income-wise on the poor and the middle class than it does on the rich.

This concept is a complete non-starter for American socialists, who want only “the rich” to pay more even though America's tax system is already steeply progressive: “The rich”—the top 10%—pay about 70% of all income taxes. But for the socialist, it never seems to be enough. So if the American left has rejected the Scandinavian model, which model is it embracing? Well, where do the leading figures of the American left, from Sean Penn to Michael Moore and Bill Ayers, go when they want to praise socialism? Here's a hint: When was the last time you saw Bernie in Copenhagen?

First it was the Soviet Union. Then it was Cuba. Then it was Venezuela.

Venezuelan socialism, like current American socialism, is based on sowing social division. The left in Venezuela divided the country not merely between the rich and the poor, but white and black or brown—between Europeans, Africans, and indigenous people. Hugo Chavez made

much of his black and Indian roots. Venezuelan socialists were bringing down statues of Columbus long before American leftists did.

Once you establish the villain class, taking away their wealth is not hard to do. Whatever Chavez and now his successor, Nicolas Maduro, wanted, they took—or, if you care about moral clarity, they stole—always, like the French and Russian revolutions, in the name of “equality.” It didn’t start out that way, of course. It never does. Chavez portrayed himself as a moderate in his early presidential campaigns. Expropriations came later. What Chavez and Maduro achieved at the end of a gun, the American left would achieve through extremely high taxation on income, wealth and inheritance.

But we shouldn’t leave guns out of this discussion. In 2010, Venezuelan socialists started a campaign to disarm law-abiding citizens under the guise of stopping gun violence. They called it *desarma la violencia*. When citizens, now unarmed, began to protest the corruption and tyranny of the socialist government, Chavez and then Maduro unleashed a group of criminal thugs—the *colectivos*—to terrorize them. Their specific targets included small business owners, entrepreneurs, farmers and clergy. There are no *colectivos* or Antifa in Scandinavia.

Venezuela is now a cautionary tale. All the people you see on the news rummaging through garbage cans or standing in line to get food, toilet paper and gas—those are the ordinary citizens. The country’s leaders aren’t missing any meals. The socialist elite, the so-called *Chavistas*, eat in fine restaurants and go on European vacations. Miraculously, it always works out that way.

The American left keeps telling us they want to take us to Stockholm, but its policies point in the direction of Caracas. My birth country was once prosperous and free, but socialism destroyed it.

Take heed, America.

I’m Debbie D’Souza for Prager University.