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## Another Fidel Castro ruling Venezuela

WILLIAM BUTLER SALAZAR

Special to the STAR

**A**t sea or in the air, there may arrive one short moment when the vessel ceases to be worthy and goes down. Venezuela is rapidly approaching this junction. It cannot continue its present course. Change will come quickly. The outcome will settle the country's political, economic and social future for decades to come.

Power — in any political system — rests upon control of a variety of governing agencies and groups within. These factors are so basic that in most countries they are taken for granted, like well oiled machinery. Power in each and every nation in our world rests with the executive, legislative, judicial, armed forces, police, organized labor, student bodies, opposition groups, the press, the church, the under-privileged masses, business groups, and the general public.

In a dictatorship, such as in Cuba, total absolute power within its borders rests with Fidel Castro. In a republic, balance of power swings continuously and the voice of the majority most often rules over the long run. Once every two, four or six years, voters determine the future course of events, and that's the end of it, until the next time around.

Venezuela got off to an auspicious running start with the arrival of the new millennium. Voters had recently overwhelmingly rejected both major political parties that had devastated the country during more than 30 years of corruption and voted into power a proven revolutionary under the premise that anything was better rather than to continue with the old.

With an overwhelming vote of confidence, President Hugo Chávez Frías, cleverly and not without guidance from his mentor Fidel Castro quickly called for a constitutional assembly. In short time, his cronies delivered a new Constitution for his Fifth Republic. Wisely counseled, he held elections and received an overwhelming mandate. Since then, Chávez, much like the octopus monster we see in scary movies, has been pro-

gressively taking over the country by neutralizing or eliminating all vestiges of organized opposition. During his two years in power, an enchanted public has voted six times to change the Constitution and while doing so created a docile National Assembly, stacked state governorships and the Supreme Court with men loyal to President Chávez and approved a move to disman- tle labor unions.

Chávez relies on two powerful forces, popular with totalitarian regimes, as his key to maintaining absolute power: intelligence and repression. Through the agencies assigned these two tasks, he maintains close tabs on groups which could be obstacles in his trust for absolute power: the armed forces, business groups, the press, organized labor, student groups, and opposition legislators. During his two years in power and not without help from Castro, he has succeeded in identifying key opponents in each of these sectors.

The Dirección de Inteligencia Militar, or DIM, (Military Intelligence Directorate) has been publicly mandated by Chávez to actively reinforce efforts within the military to re-power and reinforce the permanence and consolidation of the revolutionary process. One early move was to rate and catalogue each and every general officer as either revolutionary (100 percent with Chávez) or dissident (which means he will soon lose his command, be sent to a far off embassy or be retired). Traditionally, within modern Venezuela, the armed forces have been a major stabilizing force. With time running short, the military must act before the octopus squeezes all of their power into the arms of the satanic leadership spearheaded by Havana. Once the army has been "revolutionized," the freedom loving population has lost a major significant ally.

A second group, styled after Cuba's, is the "Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement," (curiously, it's the same name as the underground group Chávez led in the 1980s) whose purpose is to organize Venezuelans into "patriotic circles" to "defend the revolution." Cubans have grown accustomed to living with these know-all-see-all informers who maintain block-by-block control of every

square kilometer of every town and city. And unlike our republics, citizens cannot straddle the fence. Like the line President Bush swiped from Fidel: You are either with us or you are our enemy.

Chávez has attacked the two leading Venezuelan dailies. He has sponsored attacks against El Universal, allowed his goons to openly carry out manifestations against El Nacional, and on national TV has menaced with force any and all who oppose his revolution. In his Castro-like marathon TV addresses, he stresses that he will be president for another 20 years.

Chávez's main concern today is his erosion of power in the National Assembly. A year ago his party swept the election for presidency of the National assembly by receiving 126 votes out of 165. A week ago, William Lara was reelected to the presidency of the assembly by a vote of 85-73. Preoccupied with this downward trend, militants of the Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement were allowed by the police to stone and rough up members of the National Assembly who voted against Lara upon their departure from the halls of the Assembly. (Reuters)

Add to this potage a total lack of personal security, inflation, infiltration by hordes of Cuban agents, a frightened business community, nationwide confiscation of property, considerable wealth, and a confirmed revolutionary as leader, Venezuela's sky high 20th century ride is in for a sudden change. In six months the bloodless revolution spearheaded by Chávez will have neutralized all opposition and stretched its power base from the Andes to the Atlantic. Unless the ladies who bang their pots on every street corner succeed in fueling action within the military, Venezuelans will find themselves chained to an irrational fanatic wed to the principles and techniques utilized by Fidel Castro in Cuba whose principal objective is to spread the gospel of the Forum of Sao Paulo: the peaceful overthrow of all American Republics.

*William Butler Salazar is an electrical engineer, an ocean navigator, and author.*