

Successful Businessman Born in Venezuela Explains How Socialism Devastated His Homeland

If you've been following the news, you know Venezuela is falling apart. It's incredible that the country once described as the most prosperous in South America is now in total chaos. And it's because of socialism.

While visiting St. Augustine, Florida, recently, I met a man named Michael Sabga, a born-again Christian and successful businessman who was born in Venezuela but moved to the United States in the 1980s. His father was CFO of Mobile Venezuela, and his family was heartbroken as they watched their home country deteriorate. As Sabga told me his story, I knew I had to interview him for my "Strang Report" podcast.

In our interview, Sabga offered insight that only someone from Venezuela could give. (Click [here](#) to listen to the podcast or scroll down.) He remembers the days when Venezuela had one of the most coveted economies in all Latin America.

"It was a prosperous, beautiful, great country to live in," Sabga tells me. "It had a great education system, great economy, buildings, highways. One of the most advanced medical facilities in the world was in Venezuela when we were growing up. ... And the country had real freedoms, like in the U.S."

Sabga and his parents moved out of Venezuela before Hugo Chavez took charge in the late 1990s. Chavez introduced the country to socialism, but Sabga says the problem began way before then.

"The borders between Colombia and Venezuela were very porous,

and actually, they still are," he says. "There's never been an actual fence or border or any such thing. ... In the '70s and '80s, what really happened—and this is my opinion—is that Colombia was a very poor and devastated country. They were under the grip of really bad drug cartels. We all know about Pablo Escobar and the Cartel de Cali and what those people did to Colombia, which was basically turned into a war zone. And the quickest and easiest thing to do was to go to Venezuela, right next door. It was very convenient."

Sabga explains that because Venezuela was so rich and there was so much work available, many of Colombia's poorest immigrated there to find a better life. But an issue arose.

"The problem was that for a long period of time—I'm talking two decades—the migration of these people was so intense and so heavy that it got to a point where the Venezuelan system couldn't deal with them anymore," Sabga says. "They couldn't support them. They couldn't offer them education. And what you ended up with was what we call belts of poverty around the cities."

The poverty got so intense that neither the government nor the religious institutions could keep it under control. Soon, the poor communities were being isolated from the rest of society. That's when Chavez showed up, speaking the language of the common people and offering them a future that looked very bright—a future that included a lot of giveaways.

"He was definitely a communist," Sabga says of Chavez. "He was definitely a follower of Fidel, of the Marxist ideologies that swept through not only Cuba, but all of Latin America. In fact, a lot of people would be shocked to learn that Fidel Castro actually invaded Venezuela not once but twice. After he was already in Cuba, he made various incursions into Venezuela to try to invade Venezuela, because of course they were after the oil and the money and the power that came with oil. And he failed."

Sabga says Castro failed because Venezuela's then-president, Marcos Perez Jimenez—who was later called a dictator—squashed the socialist and communist movement. But Chavez grew up listening to stories of Castro's exploits and his desires to put Venezuela under a communist regime.

"Hugo Chavez came in 1998 and hand-delivered Venezuela to the Cubans," Sabga tells me.

The result has proven to be economic turmoil. Venezuela's inflation is at 10,000,000%, and people across the nation are starving. I asked Sabga how the socialists managed to take over and create this chaos.

"The first thing they do is go after the Constitution," he responded. "So whatever constitution is in place, they're going to go and change it. And that's a textbook definition of what Marxism is and what communists do. ... The second thing they do is they infiltrate the electoral system. So now once they can stay in power forever, they will infiltrate the apparatus of the elections. They basically fix the election so they're always winning. And there were many instances in which Hugo Chavez brought in these voting machines, electronic machines, where he got to control the results."

As Chavez gained more control of Venezuela's oil business, he started replacing knowledgeable businessmen and politicians with his friends. Later on, when Nicolás Maduro took Chavez's place as president, he put military personnel in charge of the oil companies.

Sabga says that financial consequences were huge—Venezuela went from selling 3.5 million barrels of oil per day down to selling only 600,000. The U.S. buys 400,000 of those barrels. That is, they did until President Trump set oil sanctions in place after Maduro refused to step down and accept Juan Guaidó's legitimate presidential election.

"The U.S. is no longer buying Venezuelan oil because they're

trying to cut whatever income is going into the Maduro regime,” Sabga says. “And they did the right thing. But basically, the [oil] industry was already falling apart. That’s why there’s no money, there’s no electricity. The money that used to go into the electrical grids and into the water system and into medicines, that money is basically gone. And they’re not going to replace that money. They’re basically letting the country fall into an abyss.”

As discouraging as Venezuela’s situation is, though, Sabga hasn’t given up hope on his home country.

“What’s happening is we’re now seeing this new government emerging, which is going to replace the Maduro regime eventually,” he says. “We don’t know when, but it’s already being recognized by all the countries in the world—with the great support of President Trump and people like Marco Rubio and Rick Scott and a number of U.S. diplomats and politicians who are backing Mr. Guaidó’s presidency. ... No. 2, Brazil and Colombia are playing a big role because they’re actually being affected by the situation in Venezuela. So they’re actually more interested than anyone else in seeing this situation come to an end.”

Sabga also sees some frightening parallels between the U.S. and Venezuela. And he hopes the U.S. will learn valuable lessons from watching what happened to the once-prosperous South American nation.

“The most important thing right now is we have to stop this immigration flow in the southern border of the U.S.—and at some point, the northern border, because we’re going to have a problem with Canada as well,” he says. “The No. 1 reason that Venezuela fell into the chaos that they’re in today is very simple: open border and no control of immigration. This is what started the whole thing, and this is what is happening in the United States. We have to find a way to stop that flow.”

I sincerely hope the U.S. pays attention to Venezuela's hardship and realizes that if we do not deal with the immigration crisis we're facing, we could suffer greatly later on. If you want to hear the rest of Sabga's profound insights into Venezuela's situation—and what the U.S. can learn from it—click on my podcast below.