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Coronel: The Real Tragedy of Venezuela

"Hugo Chavez has succeeded in dividing Venezuelans deeply, sowing social resentment into the souls of millions of poorer Venezuelans who now believe that anyone who has an education, a home and a stable job is responsible for their poverty and chronic state of hopelessness," says long-time Venezuela expert Gustavo Coronel. "He has poisoned the Venezuelan soul."



By Gustavo Coronel

The dramatic involution of Venezuela -- from a Venezuela on the way to Chile to a Venezuela on the way to Haiti -- has at least three facets: one is political, the conversion of the Venezuelan democracy into a dictatorial narcostate; the second is economic, the waste of about one trillion dollars in the last 13 years to cement Hugo Chavez's domestic political power and regional influence at the expense of the welfare of the nation; and, the third one -- possibly the most tragic -- is spiritual and has to do with the collapse of our educational standards and the poisoning of the Venezuelan soul.

Hugo Chavez has succeeded in dividing Venezuelans deeply, sowing social resentment into the souls of millions of poorer Venezuelans who now believe that anyone who has an education, a home and a stable job is responsible for their poverty and chronic state of hopelessness. Even worse, they have been promised that the assets of the "rich" will be confiscated and given to them.

Chavez has promoted and encouraged these attitudes by establishing a gigantic system of handouts: free or subsidized food, transport, primary medical assistance and low quality education, to millions of poorer, largely




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uneducated Venezuelans who receive a fish a day buy who are not learning how to fish. As a result they are becoming more and more dependent on presidential promises that remain essentially unfulfilled. Chavez only speaks in the future tense.



Whereas the political and economic tragedies can be reverted in a relatively short time, the spiritual tragedy threatens to dump Venezuela together with the most miserable and defenseless societies of the planet. Not only this can be documented by looking at economic and social independent statistics on Venezuela, but it is immediately apparent to a good observer and listener of what is going on in Venezuela at this time.

The average morphology of the Venezuelan in the streets has changed, from normal and even graceful to grotesquely shapeless or obese -- a sure indication of a poor diet.

The quality of the government language is now several steps down from the years in which President Betancourt or President Leoni addressed the nation in respectful and correct Spanish.



Today, President Chavez pretends to impose on Venezuelans a gross, occasionally pornographic language, full of insults and disdain for anyone who thinks differently.

The dress and social attitudes of the average urbanite are depressing. A typical day at the Caracas Metro illustrates the degree of disarray prevailing in the country. Public buildings

and other physical infrastructure suffer the lack of maintenance, hospitals are short on the most essential items and schools are being utilized for ideological indoctrination.

This orgy of mediocrity in social attitudes cannot be reverted in a matter of a few years.

It has wounded the Venezuelan soul so deeply that it will take generations to make Venezuela, again, the cordial and flourishing society that we knew during large portions of the 20th century.

Due to his ineptitude Chavez has already failed in trying to install a Cuba-like society in Venezuela, but, in trying to do this, he seems to have been more successful in robbing Venezuela of its spiritual compass.

Gustavo Coronel was on the Board of Directors of PDVSA from 1976 to 1979. He was Chief Operations Officer (COO) and acting CEO of the Corporacion Venezolana de Guayana (CVG), the \$35 billion Venezuelan government conglomerate designed to exploit and run all of Venezuela's mineral, metal and mining operations, from 1994-1995. He was President of Puerto Cabello - - Venezuela's main port -- from 2001 to 2002.

Coronel was author of the Cato Institute study "[Corruption, Mismanagement and Abuse of Power in Hugo Chavez's Venezuela](#)" and was the Venezuelan representative to Transparency International from 1996 to 2000. In 1994, he

founded Pro Calidad de Vida, an NGO promoting anti-corruption techniques in government and civic education for children in Venezuela, Panama, Paraguay, Mexico and Nicaragua.

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