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Venezuela Is Socialist, Senator Sanders. Any Questions?

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Socialism: Like a skyscraper crane about to topple in high winds, Venezuela is teetering on the brink of a horrific economic collapse. It was brought on by one thing: socialism, taken to the hilt.

Yet incredibly, neither Bernie Sanders nor his voters make this connection.

It's worrisome that so many Americans see socialism in a favorable light these days. A May 2015 YouGov poll showed that socialism was viewed favorably by 43% of Democrats, while a June 2015 Gallup poll showed that 47% of Americans would vote for a socialist.

It points to a collective loss of memory. After all, it's been decades since the fact that the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet empire collapsed. As chess champion Garry Kasparov has noted in "Winter Is Coming," there have been no truth commissions or victory parades to institutionalize the monstrous idea's discreditation and demise. In fact, the idea seems to be resurging in the U.S. Democratic Party, even with examples of its failures continuing, the latest example being Venezuela.

That reality of socialism and its horrific results is mocked by Sanders himself, who denies it has anything to do with his own ideas. "I myself don't use the word socialism," he told a University of Vermont student publication in 1976 "because people have been brainwashed into thinking socialism automatically means slave-labor camps, dictatorship and lack of freedom of speech."

Brainwashed? The very word comes from socialist indoctrination practices. Sanders' flip dismissal of those realities reminds us of a quote from Nobel Prize winner and author of "The Gulag Archipelago" Aleksander Solzhenitsyn: "Or do they refuse to see?" Yes, Sanders and his followers refuse.

Even the absence of slave-labor camps, in say, socialist Venezuela, doesn't get Sanders off the hook. Right now Venezuelans are at the logical conclusion of 18 years of democratic socialism, the kind Sanders has praised in the past, and even benefited from, as he accepted Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chavez's oil largesse — stolen from Venezuela's people — for Vermont.

Today Venezuela, with the world's largest oil reserves is, believe it or not, *importing* oil. It's a perfect illustration of Nobel-winning economist Milton Friedman's well known saying that if the Sahara took up socialism, there would soon be a shortage of sand.

Socialism has also led to massive shortages of food, toilet paper, diapers and medicine, among many other things, all the result of state planning and currency controls and rampant inflation. After 18 years of socialist spending, inflation has hit 720%, the IMF says. And don't forget that Venezuela also has the world's highest crime rate, with Caracas rated the world's most dangerous city by the Citizens' Council for Public Security and Criminal Justice.

Socialist Venezuela is on the verge of a massive Argentina-sized sovereign debt default, with \$10 billion in debt payments due this year, and only \$8 billion left to buy imports such as food, according to an appalling analysis in the Financial Times by Ricardo Hausmann. Meanwhile, Venezuela ranks No. 1 in the world on economist Steve Hanke's Cato Institute "Misery Index" which is his measure of each nation's combined inflation, unemployment and interest rates. Friday, Reuters reported that Venezuela was desperately trying to swap out their gold reserves with German banks to survive a little longer. No surprise, investment banks say they're looking at an 80% chance of a default. Blogger Miguel Octavio of The Devil's Excrement reported this week that the Caracas airport was full of weeping families sending their young people into exile abroad.

That's the part of socialism Bernie Sanders doesn't want to talk about. It's the same wherever it's tried. Voters fall for it over and over, and all it brings is failure. Sanders is only continuing the con. When is he going to be called on it?