



Dr. Fred Schwarz

The Schwarz Report



Dr. David Noebel

Volume 46, Number 7

July 2006

Inside

Middle-Eastern Style Liberation Theology

by Mark D. Tooley, Page 5

Once again, liberation theology has it wrong—this time in the Middle East.



Fidel Castro: Capitalist

by Humberto Fontova, Page 7

Fontova explains how Castro is one of the wealthiest heads of state and how it costs his countrymen.



Founded in 1953, the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, under the leadership of Dr. Fred C. Schwarz, has been publishing a monthly newsletter since 1960. *The Schwarz Report* is edited by Dr. David A. Noebel and Dr. Michael Bauman. The Crusade's address is PO Box 129, Manitou Springs, CO 80829. Our telephone number is (719) 685-9043. All correspondence and tax-deductible gifts (the Crusade is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization) may be sent to this address. Permission to reproduce materials from this *Report* is granted provided our name and address are given.

And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead expose them. Ephesians 5:11

Are Hugo Chavez's Days Numbered?

by Lowell Ponte

He was hailed as the next Fidel Castro, the messianic resurrection of moribund Marxism, who would unite Latin America with his fiery anti-Americanism and lead the overthrow of global capitalism.

But from *Newsweek International* to the *New York Times*, whose dishonest reporting helped install Castro almost half a century ago, a different conclusion is now emerging: Hugo Chavez, the megalomaniac Marxist dictator of Venezuela, has peaked and is now on his way down. As *Newsweek* reporter Ruchir Sharma wrote this week, "That Chavez Thing Is Over."

"Much to the disappointment of the romantics" on the radical Left, wrote Sharma, it now appears likely that Hugo Chavez's revolution will fail, "be pushed to the fringe, marginalized... the Chavez road will have led nowhere."

Graying Reds and other leftists continue to make pilgrimages to Chavez's socialist shrine in Caracas, as they once made on their knees to Moscow, Managua, and Havana. Among these "sandalistas" are Castro-loving actor Danny Glover, Jamaican singer Harry Belafonte, anti-war media addict Cindy Sheehan, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, and African-American pseudo-scholar Cornel West.

The San Francisco anti-capitalism group Global Exchange now arranges tours of socialist Venezuela for fashionable American leftists.

Anti-American film director Oliver Stone has just announced plans to make a movie about the coup in Venezuela. No, not the 1992 coup in which as a 37-year-old Lt. Colonel Hugo Chavez led an abortive attempt to overthrow the duly-elected government of his country.

Like his fellow socialists Adolf Hitler and Castro after their failed coup attempts, Chavez spent the next two years in prison refining his ideology concocted from the screeds of Noam Chomsky, Karl Marx, and Chavez's distortion of the ideas of 19th century Venezuelan liberator of much of South America, Simon Bolivar. (Chavez takes care never to mention that Bolivar enthusiastically modeled his efforts and ideals on the American Revolution but disapproved of the French Revolution that inspired Karl Marx.)

Unable to return to the military, Chavez entered politics as a fiery charismatic demagogue and, largely with the votes of the poor, was elected President in 1998. As Fabian socialist playwright George Bernard Shaw rightly wrote, "He who robs Peter to pay Paul can always count on Paul's support"...and votes.

Oliver Stone plans a propaganda film to lionize Hugo Chavez's role during a 2002 coup that for a few hours removed him from power, a coup Chavez blames on the United States. Stone did a similar "documentary" called *Commandante* that so glorified Fidel Castro that even the ultra-liberal Public Broadcasting Service insisted Stone add a tiny amount of criticism for "balance" before PBS could air it.

"Dwell on the past and you'll lose an eye; forget the past and you'll lose both eyes." Old Russian Proverb

But as happened in Castro's Cuba, the utopian illusion that Chavez is creating a Worker's Paradise in Venezuela is rapidly giving way to ugly reality. The country's poverty, instead of decreasing with purported socialist redistribution of wealth, has "risen to more than 50 percent" since Chavez took power, reported the left-leaning *Toronto Star*.

This has happened in part because Chavez is diverting his nation's oil wealth away from Venezuela's workers and poor and giving it to his ally Fidel Castro, to the Marxist Sandinistas in nearby Nicaragua, and using that wealth in other lands to foment Marxist revolution and buy allies. Chavez is also acquiring weapons and technology to turn Venezuela into an aggressive militarized state.

Democracy has ended in Venezuela, replaced by blatantly rigged elections and strong-armed *Chavista* mobs and spies in the streets. Venezuelans now face the presence in their midst of perhaps 20,000 of Castro's secret police and an epidemic of soaring violence and crime committed by leftist thugs who know the regime seldom makes arrests for the robbery and murder of bourgeois victims. Caracas, reports *The Times* of London, "now has the world's highest murder rate per capita."

Chavez has turned Venezuela into a police state in which the press is intimidated and vague new "Social Responsibility" sedition laws make it a crime to criticize the government. Those who speak out or sign petitions challenging Chavez's dictatorial rule and his "Bolivarian Revolution" are blacklisted and risk losing their jobs or becoming targets of government harassment and mob attacks.

Hugo Chavez now rules by decree and via a rubber stamp legislature and judiciary. He has indicated he might not step down when the Constitution's term limits would end his presidency. This May he said he might seek "indefinite" re-election, i.e., the de facto position of "dictator for life," through a referendum.

Like Napoleon, Chavez wants no other gods above himself. He has expelled Christian missionaries from Venezuela, putting Cuban "teachers" in their place to proselytize for the pagan religion of Marxism. In this predominantly Roman Catholic country, he has called this church's leadership a "tumor." Venezuelan Cardinal Rosalio Castillo Lara accused Chavez of leading the country towards dictatorship.

But Catholic "Liberation Theologians" and others on the religious ultra-Left have treated socialist Chavez like "Saint Hugo." One poster popular with *Chavistas* depicts Hugo Chavez as a holy figure riding at the side of an approving Jesus Christ. And Chavez seems to delight in his Marxist "Cult of Personality."

This would not threaten us as greatly if Hugo Chavez were imposing his egomaniacal Marxist dictatorship on a poor

Third World nation. Venezuela, however, is the fifth largest oil producer in the world and a major supplier to the United States.

Chavez has adopted oil policies that began with huge retroactive tax bills for American and other foreign oil companies in Venezuela. When those bills were paid, more taxes and concessions were demanded. Chavez is now requiring these companies to surrender majority ownership to Venezuela's national oil company, which he controls (and which markets directly in U.S. service stations under the name Citgo). He is, to put it bluntly, expropriating the property of U.S. and European oil companies with little or no compensation for the many billions of dollars they have invested in exploration and equipment. Chavez has threatened to bring in Communist Chinese or other interests to take over running their facilities.

In Bolivia, Chavez backed victorious radical Left presidential candidate Evo Morales, who shortly after taking power earlier this year sent troops to surround and seize foreign-owned natural gas facilities. At Chavez's urging, Morales announced that Bolivia was expropriating not only energy companies but also, in the near future, an unspecified number of other foreign enterprises involved in mining and other profitable businesses.

Prior to entering politics, Morales made his living as a coca grower (and chewer). In addition to a Bolivian connection with Morales, Chavez is also suspected of supplying arms and other assistance to the Marxist revolutionary terrorist movement FARC in bordering Colombia that has replaced that nation's criminal drug cartels as its biggest producer and dealer of cocaine. International law enforcement authorities, according to the *Financial Times*, now say Venezuela "is becoming the leading transit country through which the bulk of the world's cocaine is smuggled to the U.S. and Europe."

Awash in oil and other sources of wealth, Hugo Chavez aspires to become a world leader with vast fame and power. He has already allocated half a billion dollars working with Communist China to launch Venezuela's space (and hence intercontinental ballistic missile) program by 2007. (The European Space Agency has launched rockets from French Guiana, east of Venezuela.)

In February 2006, Chavez met in Caracas with visiting Iranian Parliament Speaker Gholam Ali Haddad-Adel to announce a set of cooperation agreements between the two nations. Experts are concerned that one of these agreements on minerals secretly includes the transfer of uranium from deposits in the Venezuelan jungle states of Amazonas and Bolivar, regions from which Chavez suddenly evicted Christian missionaries. Venezuela in the United Nations has backed Iran in the dispute over its potential uranium enrichment and nuclear weapons development.

This Tehran-Caracas Atomic Axis could provide a pos-

sible path for Hugo Chavez, and through him for Fidel Castro, to acquire nuclear weapons with Iranian help. Former Venezuelan Defense Minister Raul Salazar told the *Washington Times* that Chavez's support for Iran's nuclear program was pushing relations with the United States past "the point of no return."

In many ways Hugo Chavez seems to be the Western Hemisphere's mirror image of the anti-American lunacy of theocratic Iran's figurehead President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Chavez's bond with Iran's dictators and other anti-Semitic Islamists may have more than political roots. In January 2006, Chavez declared that "a minority, the descendants of the same ones that crucified Christ... has taken possession of all the wealth of the world." The Simon Wiesenthal Center denounced Chavez's remarks as an anti-Semitic reference to Jews. Other Jewish organizations have interpreted Chavez's statement as a more ambiguous attack on capitalists.

Like Iran, Chavez has also supported anti-American terrorist organizations.

In a 2003 interview Diaz Castillo, Chavez's former personal pilot who also served as operations chief for Venezuela's Air Force, revealed that immediately following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America Chavez was eager to send Venezuelan troops to Afghanistan to help the Taliban. Chavez also supported and met with Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. (Chavez in public calls himself a "Bolivarian" but in private, said Castillo, Chavez "openly" acknowledges that he is a Communist.)

Earlier this month the United States banned future arms sales to Venezuela, citing its "near total lack of cooperation with anti-terrorism efforts..." Hours later, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Thomas A. Shannon voiced concerns to one reporter about "groups and individuals" observed in Venezuela with "links to terrorist organizations in the Middle East." Shannon declined to give details, but the *Washington Times* noted that the U.S. military has detected activities in Latin America by Hezbollah, the "Party of God," a Lebanon-based Islamist Shiite terrorist group armed and funded by Iran.

Hugo Chavez's response to the U.S. arms cutoff was to announce that Venezuela might sell its 21 American-made F-16 fighter jets to Iran. This, the U.S. Defense Department responded, would violate an **agreement** signed by Venezuela not to transfer this technology to another country without U.S. permission. The F-16s were purchased in 1982 and have not undergone any recent technology updating. Chavez proclaimed that he would replace the American F-16s with Russian Su-35 warplanes.

The U.S. arms ban, said Chavez's Foreign Minister Ali Rodriguez, is intended to "prepare the political conditions"

for an attack on Venezuela and to "handicap our defenses." He promptly staged a "mock invasion" of the country, covered by national media, that simulated a capture of Venezuela's large Paraguana Refining Complex.

But a month before the arms ban Chavez launched his campaign to create a million-person army reserve, ten times larger than Venezuela's actual army. Chavez is also creating a parallel new "Territorial Guard" militia under his direct personal command that is ominously capable of suppressing dissent, spying on the citizenry and keeping Chavez in power with bayonets even if a majority of Venezuelans somehow votes him out. The primary qualification for membership in this Territorial Guard, as it now is for membership in Venezuela's biggest labor unions, is not skill or integrity but strict ideological loyalty to Chavez.

Chavez in mid-April threatened that if invaders were about to remove him from power, he would order the destruction of Venezuela's oil fields. In other words, like Hitler ordering the destruction of a defeated Germany, Chavez proclaimed that if he could not rule Venezuela he would destroy its economy and leave its poor in desolation. Thus would end the society of native houses built on poles above the waters of the Gulf of Venezuela and Lake Maracaibo that prompted Spanish explorers to name the place after Italy's Venice.

Hugo Chavez's self-identified hero, Simon Bolivar, militarily conquered several of the Spanish-ruled countries around Venezuela. As Chavez's neighbors witness his rush to create a military capability far beyond anything Venezuela needs for self-defense, disquiet grows in the region over what he intends to do with this huge military.

Netherlands Defense Minister Henk Kamp has warned that Chavez is looking "with big eyes" at Dutch-aligned islands in the Caribbean, and the Associated Press in April reported Chavez's denial of rumors that the Venezuelan dictator "has territorial designs on the Netherlands Antilles." The Netherlands is part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and is part of its mutual defense treaty with the United States.

Chavez claims he wants to unite Latin America. But the more that neighbors watch his behavior, the clearer it is becoming to them that Chavez wants it united only around his anti-American, anti-capitalist ideology with himself as its leader.

Chavez has become a divider in Latin America. In late April, he gave an ultimatum to Venezuela's longstanding allies in the Andean Community of Nations demanding that its members choose between his radical vision or free trade with the United States. Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru chose trade with the U.S. "Either we're a united community or we're not," Chavez declared as he attacked Colombia and Peru for being two of the nine Latin American nations that have signed free trade agreements with Washington.

When the president of Peru reminded him that the U.S. was Venezuela's biggest oil customer, Chavez went berserk, withdrew Venezuela from the Andean trade pact, and created a new one with his two allies Bolivia and Communist Cuba.

Cuba is an economic deadbeat that has reneged on billions of dollars in debt to European nations and stays afloat only because of the huge amounts of oil welfare Chavez gives to Castro at the expense of the Venezuelan people. Chavez named his economically absurd new socialist trade troika ALBA, the "Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas."

Chavez also responded by inserting himself into Peru's presidential election by openly endorsing the more leftward candidate and insulting his opponent. The response by retiring Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo was blunt: "Mr. Chavez, learn to govern democratically. Learn to work with us. Our arms are open to integrate Latin America, but not for you to destabilize us with your checkbook."

In a modernizing Latin America that increasingly embraces hemisphere-wide free trade, democracy and capitalism, even when left-liberal Social Democrats win elections, the endorsement of self-proclaimed "anti-liberal" Marxist Castro sycophant Hugo Chavez can defeat a candidate.

The radical Left candidate in Mexico's upcoming July 2 election had been leading in polls until his more conservative opponent started running TV ads linking him to Chavez; the Leftist candidate has now fallen behind. The same has happened in polls for Peru's upcoming presidential election. The kiss of approval from Chavez is becoming a political kiss of death.

The mere association with Mr. Chavez has helped reverse the leads of presidential candidates in Mexico and Peru," wrote *New York Times* reporter Juan Forero. "Officials from Mexico to Nicaragua, Peru and Brazil have expressed rising impatience with what they see as Mr. Chavez's meddling and grandstanding, often at their expense."

Chavez's love of grandstanding was on full display in recent weeks during his whirlwind tour of Europe, Libya and Algeria. In England he refused to meet with Prime Minister Tony Blair, whom he called "the main ally of Hitler." Chavez dined instead with the figurehead Marxist Mayor of London "Red Ken" Livingstone. (For comparison, Chavez has called Africa's Marxist racist dictator of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe a "true freedom-fighter.") He lectured Europeans on the need for socialism and, of course, was embraced by Europe's looney Left.

Like a rich man tossing coins to peons to win their applause, Chavez offered to give Venezuelan oil to Europe's poor. He has made similar offers of free or cheap oil to states in New England that vote for liberal Democrats and to Nicaraguan villages that support the Marxist Sandinistas, thereby

interfering in the domestic politics of other countries. Gangster Al Capone likewise, to enhance his own political support, set up token soup kitchens for the poor.

And like a petulant child who screams and misbehaves to get attention from grown-ups, Chavez has spewed a stream of ever-more-shrill and vile invective at President George W. Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Prime Minister Blair and any Latin American leader who refuses to do Chavez's bidding. Chavez may also have helped organize, and perhaps even fund, the May Day illegal immigrant street protests in the United States. But American policy has been to ignore his childish rantings, thereby driving Chavez to more and more infantile behavior.

Chavez "is beginning to overreach, wanting to be involved in everything," Johns Hopkins University director of Latin American Studies Riordan Roett told the *New York Times*. "It's a matter of egomania at work here."

When Bolivia, with Chavez's guidance and urging, expropriated foreign natural gas companies it seized more than U.S. and European properties. It also confiscated companies from Brazil, Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America. This has created deep rifts even with Brazil's leftwing President Luiz Inacio Lula de Silva. Bolivia's and Venezuela's property expropriations have already weakened the outside investment and development help that Latin America wants and needs.

And this has sent a clear message to Venezuela's neighbors that Chavez may be as much their enemy as he is America's. Chavez's days may be numbered.

"Chavez's idea of sovereignty seems pretty selective," Michael Shifter, a senior policy analyst at Washington's Inter-American Dialogue policy group, told the *Times*. "Chavez has been saying, in effect, 'You're either with us or against us.' For most Latin Americans that hubristic message doesn't go over very well, whether it comes from Washington or Caracas."

Chilean General Augusto Pinochet, who led the coup that ousted minority-elected President Salvador Allende before this Castro-allied Marxist could consolidate his dictatorship, thereafter ruled as a dictator of the right. Pinochet was widely criticized by the world's leftist press. But, it was said, Pinochet could end all such press attacks merely by re-naming his country the People's Socialist Democratic Republic of Chile and making a few speeches filled with Marxist class warfare cliches. As a self-identified Marxist ruler Pinochet would be praised and immune from criticism by the *New York Times* and Britain's *Guardian*, just as Castro and Chavez have been.

When you strip away the red from Hugo Chavez's rhetoric and the dishonest propaganda glorifying him from the world's left-wing press, the naked Chavez turns out to be little more than an old-fashioned Latin American military dic-

tator like Pinochet, a prating megalomaniac caudillo propped up mostly by secret police and stolen oil money. Even the *New York Times*, if only to save its own waning credibility, has begun to report Chavez's defects and decline.

Chavez "is imposing a fascist dictatorship," history professor and author Herma Marksman, who was Chavez's mistress for 10 years during his first marriage, told *The Times* of London in May.

"A totalitarian regime is coming because he doesn't believe in democratic institutions. Hugo controls all the powers," said Marksman. "[He] disguised himself as little Red Riding Hood and turned out to be the wolf... He's the caudillo you have to say yes to. At the rate he's going, his end can only be violent."

Middle-Eastern Style Liberation Theology

by Mark D. Tooley

"Liberation Theology" was the theological justification for Western church groups that backed Marxist revolution 20 and 30 years ago. Its influence waned with those failed revolutions, especially in Latin America, but it continues to shape intellectual life in the Middle East, as a tool against Israel.

The Jerusalem-based Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center coordinates the anti-Israel advocacy of U.S. church groups. Sabeel guides and leads U.S. church delegations when they come to the Middle East, where they are exposed primarily to a pro-Palestinian perspective. When Sabeel conducts conferences in the U.S. or Canada, North American denominations host and promote the conferences, some of which are secretive and prohibit press coverage.

Early this year, Sabeel hosted events, with church help, in Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C., to sound its usual themes of Liberation Theology with a Middle East flavor. Divestment aimed at Israel was also a major Sabeel cause at these events.

Sabeel describes itself as "an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians." Liberation Theology, a fad among declining Western churches for much of the 1970s and 1980s, was used to justify religious support for Marxist revolutionary movements. When the Soviet Union died, depriving most of those movements of their oxygen, so too did much of Liberation Theology. But Liberation Theology remains narrowly alive as a theological pretext for churches to back the Palestinians, as the supposed Third World oppressed, against Israel, the ostensible Western colonizer.

In its self-defined mission, Sabeel promotes "a more accurate international awareness" of Palestinian Christians. Now numbering only about three percent of Palestinians, the dwindling Christian population serves as a hook for engaging the

Chavez has abolished honest elections for an obvious reason: he would lose. He is South America's obsolete strongman on horseback whose biggest "contribution" to Venezuelan culture is that he changed the national seal so that its horse that used to run to the right now runs left.

Chavez in Venezuela has destroyed genuine democracy, economic liberty, freedom of speech and a free press. Like his graying fellow Marxists, he is the last reactionary gasp of neo-feudal Big Brotherism as it spirals downward into the garbage disposal of history. Hugo Chavez is, in short, everything that the best instincts of the American Revolution-loving Simon Bolivar wanted overthrown so that Latin America could become modern and free."

—*FrontPageMagazine.com*, May 26, 2006

interest of leftist-led Western mainline church groups, most of which have little to no interest in persecuted Christian minorities struggling to live under Islamist rule.

According to Sabeel, Palestinian Liberation Theology "opens new horizons of understanding for the pursuit of a just peace and for the reconciliation proclaimed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ." By learning from Jesus, who also lived under "occupation" and responded to "injustice," Sabeel spotlights Israeli human rights violations and encourages Christians globally to "stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people."

Naturally, Sabeel and the church groups have little to no interest in actually spreading the Gospel among Palestinians, which would arouse the ire of the Muslim majority, and certainly provoke the new Hamas-led Islamist regime. So Sabeel's version of Christianity is simply an anti-Israeli and anti-Western political message, largely devoid of the transcendent message of the Christian Gospel.

A Christmas greeting from Sabeel two years ago illustrates its theology. "Wherever empire exists and the powers that be are in control through domination, there is a greater responsibility for all of us to take a stand against all that dehumanizes people and to work for their liberation," it read, merrily. "The Christmas story is a story of a liberating God who comes to join an oppressed people in the work of liberation. God's message through the angels is a message of defiance. In spite of the presence of empire, human arrogance, and oppression, God is announcing peace and goodwill. This is God's agenda. Glory belongs to God and not to the emperor nor to the powers."

Its festive seasonal message continued: "We defy the occupation; we defy the injustice; we defy the oppressors; we defy the powers; They do not possess the last word, they can build high walls, but they cannot take away our hope... Therefore Christmas makes us defiant."

Sabeel dates to 1989 and now has supportive chapters in Australia, Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, and the United States. It strives to stand for the "op-

pressed, work for justice, and seek peace-building opportunities,” while “empowering the Palestinian community as a whole.” From the start, Sabeel had help from radical U.S. theologians, like Rosemary Radford Ruether, a renegade Roman Catholic who taught for years at United Methodist Garrett Evangelical Seminary outside Chicago. Ruether was better known for her promotion of 1) radical feminist theology and 2) Gaia, the earth goddess. But she also made time for Sabeel and helped edit a book chronicling the founding conference of the movement.

U.S. churches helped to provide staff and organizational help to Sabeel. For example, United Methodist missionary Janet Lahr Lewis works at the Sabeel office in Jerusalem, located in what the United Methodist missions board website describes as “Palestine,” but which most people describe as Israel. According to the Methodist missions website, Lewis’s work includes “educating the public about the realities of the situation, organizing prayer vigils and peace marches, developing media campaigns, offering worship opportunities, hosting delegations to the area, and overseeing other special events.”

According to Lewis, “After taking a typical Holy Land tour and seeing the devastating consequences of the ongoing illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, I experienced not only a ‘call,’ but rather an undeniable ‘push’ to go back to that not-so-holy land and do whatever I could to help bring about ‘freedom for the oppressed.’” She sold her house in the U.S. to move to Bethlehem, where she “lived with my neighbors under the heavy hand of injustice and military occupation.”

“Christ calls us all to be ministers of justice,” she observes. “Through my work with the Palestinian Christian community and Sabeel, I will be able to answer this call by working for a just and lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis, so that reconciliation and healing can occur.”

Lewis and other Sabeel activists helped to guide official delegations from U.S. and Western church groups, making sure they are attuned to the pro-Palestinian perspective. For example, the National Council of Churches (NCC) sent an 11-member delegation to the Middle East last year, led by NCC General Secretary Bob Edgar. Naturally, the ecumenical delegation promised to “redouble our efforts for an end of the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and for an end of the U.S. occupation of Iraq.” Naturally, the delegation denounced the “separation barrier” that Israel has built to guard itself from Palestinian terror. And naturally, the delegation “undertook a Way of the Cross liturgy facilitated by friends from the Sabeel Liberation Theology Center.”

Early this year, the head of Sabeel, the Rev. Naim Ateek, addressed the World Council of Churches Assembly meeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, urging “selective divestment” in corporations doing business with Israel. According to Ateek, who is an Anglican priest: “We know there are corporations profiting from the misery of occupation, and if you find your money

invested in that misery, then it becomes your responsibility to question the morality of that investment.”

Sabeel sponsored a conference called “A call for Morally Responsible Investment: A Nonviolent Response to the Israeli Occupation” in Toronto, Canada, last Fall. Reporters and outsiders were prohibited from attending. Participants had to sign a statement of support when registering. Despite the secrecy, the conference was endorsed by the World Council of Churches, the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries, and the United Church of Christ USA and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Common Global Ministries.

Even more recently, early this year, Sabeel hosted more conferences, this time in Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C. These events were open to the public. Co-sponsors included local agencies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the United Methodist Church, and the United Church of Christ (UCC), as well as the far-left Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) caucus, the Islamic Center of Pittsburgh, and several other religious and secular activist groups.

Sabeel sounded its usual anti-U.S. and anti-Israel themes. According to onsite reporting in Pittsburgh by my assistant John Lomperis, Rev. Ateek declared to loud applause, “The United States has never been an honest broker in this conflict; it’s always been... against the Palestinians!” Ateek also denounced the Western media as being mainly “against the Palestinians,” a charge echoed by other conference speakers.

Of course, anti-Israel “divestment” was a major theme. Ateek enthused that movements for divestment were afoot in several U.S. denominations, and divestment has been endorsed by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). He did not acknowledge that formal divestment has largely been defeated or forestalled almost in every other denomination where proposed. Ateek was forced to admit that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was already “under great attack” for its divestment measure. Predictably other speakers compared Israel to apartheid South Africa.

Ateek insisted that Sabeel does not want “to destroy Israel” and desires a “two-state solution” with a shared Jerusalem. But the “Jerusalem Sabeel Document” distributed at the conference described Sabeel’s “vision for the future” as establishing a single “bi-national state... for two nations and three religions.” It proposes “a constitutional democracy that protects and guarantees all [Israeli and Palestinian] rights, responsibilities, and duties without racism or discrimination.” So, in other words, bye-bye, Israel, at least ultimately and ideally.

Like the leftist-led Western church groups that support it, Sabeel is not overly alarmed about the Hamas Islamist regime or the possibility of Islamic Sharia law. It prefers to fault Israel for all problems of Palestinian Christians. Sabeel and its church friends do not offer any brand of Liberation Theology for Christian minorities throughout the Middle East who struggle to survive under radical Islam and dictatorship. Apparently, Liberation Theology was never intended for those Christians.

—*FrontPageMagazine.com*, May 23, 2006

Fidel Castro: Capitalist

by Humberto Fontova

When Forbes magazine named him among the world's richest heads of state in 2005, a furious Fidel Castro denounced it as "infamy!" "Do they think I'm some kind of Mobutu!" he raged. At the time Forbes estimated his fortune at \$550 million.

This year Forbes raised his ranking to the world's 7th richest head of state, with an estimated fortune of \$900 million. "Repugnant slander!" Castro thundered on Cuban television sets (all twelve of them) this week. The "President" of Cuba's National Bank, Francisco Soberon, also chimed in: "The Cuban revolution and its Maximum Leader are an example of honesty and ethical conduct in this chaotic and corrupt world into which the empire has cast humanity," he added.

Actually, Castro has a point. He has no business being lumped in with measly millionaire chumps like Mobutu Sese Seko and Queen Elizabeth. Forbes admits that its estimate of Castro's wealth is "more art than science," and is based on his partial ownership of state enterprises, among them the Havana Convention Center, the Cimex retail conglomerate and Medicuba. But as Cuban-American scholar Eugenio Yanez asks: why not include many other, and much larger, Cuban state enterprises like Cubatabaco, Artex, Cubacatricos, Cubatecnica, Gaviota, Acemex, Cubatur, Antex, Caribat, Cubatur, and many more? The list is much longer than those singled out by Forbes.

Another method used by Forbes was calculating that Castro owns roughly ten per cent of the Cuban GDP. Why only ten percent?

All enterprises in Cuba are state enterprises, including so-called "joint-ventures" with foreign investors, as shown by a *Miami Herald* headline from June of 2005: "Many Foreign Investors Being Booted Out of Cuba" it read.

"It's outrageous!" the *Herald* quoted a Spanish businessman leaving Cuba. "I've gone through endless meetings for more than a year with no result in terms of recovering our investment!" he whimpered.

"What I can't accept," wailed another European businessman, "is simply being booted out of here with no solid guarantee I will ever get my money back!"

Our hearts bleed for these unfortunate gentlemen. Also notice: the investors were being booted out of Cuba. But the investments remained, as did those of the 5,911 businesses valued at close to \$2 billion stolen at gunpoint from U.S. owners and investors in 1960. A few owners who resisted, like Howard Anderson, who had his Jeep dealership stolen, and Tom Fuller, whose family farm was stolen, were promptly murdered by Castro and Che's firing squads.

Interestingly, new Bolivian president Evo Morales had a lengthy meeting with Fidel Castro just last week. Immediately

upon returning to Bolivia, Morales announced the "nationalization" (looting) of all the foreign-owned (primarily Brazilian) natural gas companies in Bolivia. Rafael Dausa, Cuba's brand new ambassador to Bolivia, is among Cuba's highest ranking intelligence officers.

Fidel Castro is officially Cuba's Chief of State, Head of Government, Prime Minister, First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party, and Commander in Chief of the armed forces. Bank President Francisco Soberon didn't refer to him as the "Maximum Leader" for nothing. So why does Forbes only estimate his control of Cuba's GDP at ten-per-cent? "The right to enjoy and to dispose of things in the most absolute manner as he pleases," is how a legal dictionary defines property. To "dispose" is the key phrase in the legal definition of property. In brief: something is genuinely yours only if you have the right to sell it. As such, Castro owns 100 per cent of Cuban enterprises along with the full fruits of the labor of his 11 million subjects.

Article 33.1. of the Cuban "Constitution" states: "The workers in joint ventures who are Cuban shall be contracted by an employing entity proposed by the (Cuban) Ministry of Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation, and authorized by the (Cuban) Ministry of Labor and Social Security.

Article 33.4. states: "Payments to Cuban workers in Cuba shall be made in national currency, which must be obtained beforehand from convertible foreign currency.

In other words, say the Cuban Ministry of Labor decides that the salary for your Cuban laborers (who are forbidden under penalty of prison or firing squad from striking) is 100 pesos a week. Then you would pay 100 dollars or Euros per laborer to the Cuban government (of which Castro is Maximum Leader.) The government stashes this currency and pays the hapless Cuban worker 100 worthless Cuban pesos, which varies in value from 15-20 per U.S. dollar. In the Dark and Fascistic Batista Age the Cuban peso was always interchangeable one to one with the U.S. dollar. Elsewhere they call this chattel slavery. Neither Red China nor Red Viet-nam have such mandates for foreign investors.

A Cuban resident is most valuable to Castro when he wants to escape Cuba. This writer's family paid \$15,000 to get a cousin out of Cuba in the early 60s. This was not an easy amount for destitute refugees to round up at the time, but the firing squads were working triple shifts and Cuba's prisons were filled to suffocation. You weren't only paying for a loved ones' freedom, you might also be paying for his (or her) life. Armando Valladares, who somehow escaped the firing squad but spent 22 torture-filled years in Cuba's Gulag, described his trial very succinctly: "not one witness to accuse me, not one to identify me, not one single piece of evidence against me." Valladares had been arrested in his office for the crime of refusing to display a pro-Castro sign on his desk.

One day in early 1959 one of Che's Revolutionary Courts

actually found a Cuban army captain named Pedro Morejon innocent of the charge of “war-criminal”. This brought Che’s fellow comandante, Camilo Cienfuegos to his feet. “If Morejon is not executed,” he yelled, “I’ll put a bullet through his head myself!” The court reassembled frantically and quickly arrived at a new verdict. Morejon crumpled in front of a firing squad the following day. As Castro’s chief executioner, Che Guevara, explained it: “Judicial evidence is an archaic bourgeois detail.” So you can see the sense of urgency of getting a relative out, especially if the authorities had set their sights on him as a counter-revolutionary. Elsewhere they call such a judiciary process at the hands of dictators, “death squads.”

Most Cuban-exile families can relate similar cases of ransoming relatives. Elsewhere they call this “kidnapping and extortion.”

Cuba’s campesinos (country folk) were among the first to learn the bitter lesson of ownership in Castro’s Cuba and consequently rise in arms against Castroism. In 1959 with cameras rolling, flashbulbs popping and reporters scribbling, Castro’s much-lauded “Institute of Agrarian Reform” made a big show of handing out land “titles” to thousands of beaming campesinos.

Soon these new “owners” learned they were prohibited from selling “their” land. More interestingly, the produce grown on “their” land could only be sold to the government. More interesting still, the price paid for “their” produce was the government’s whim. Elsewhere they called this “serfdom.”

Castro quickly ended the charade and all agricultural laborers were herded into granjas, i.e. collective farms identical to Soviet kolkhozes. Indeed, Soviet agricultural “advisors,” still flush from their success in the Ukraine, had been advising Cuba’s INRA (Institute of Agrarian Reform) from day one. The Cuban campesino’s desperate, bloody and lonely rebellion against their enslavement spread to the towns and cities and lasted from late 1959 to 1966. Castro himself admitted that his troops, militia and Soviet advisors were up against 179 different “bands of bandits” as they labeled these freedom-fighting rednecks. Tens of thousands of troops, scores of Soviet advisors, and squadrons of Soviet tanks, helicopters and flame-throwers finally extinguished the lonely Cuban freedom-fight. Elsewhere they call this “an insurgency.”

This ferocious guerrilla war, waged 90 miles from America’s shores, might have taken place on the planet Pluto for all you’ll read about it in the MSM and all you’ll learn about it from those illustrious Ivy-League Academics. To get an idea of the odds faced by those rural rebels, the desperation of their battle and the damage they wrought, you might revisit Tony Montana during the last 15 minutes of “Scarface.” Enrique Encinosa documents this heroic rebellion in his superb book, *Unvanquished*. “We fought with the fury of cornered beasts,” was how one of the few surviving rebels described their insurgency.

In 1962 the Kennedy-Khrushchev swindle that “solved”

the Missile Crisis—not only starved these freedom-fighters of the measly aid they’d been getting from Cuban-exile freebooters (who were rounded up for violating U.S. neutrality laws)—it also sanctioned the 44,000 Soviet troops in Cuba. Elsewhere they call this “foreign occupation.”

Leftists wail about the U.S. “occupation” of Iraq, where 125,000 U.S. troops are stationed in a nation of 25 million. Leftists also applaud how Castro “liberated” Cuba from “foreign imperialism.” Cuba was a nation of 6.5 million in 1962, with 44,000 Soviet troops amongst them. Put your calculator to those figures and calculate the ratio vs the current one for Iraq. If we’re occupying Iraq, what where the Soviets—to Castro and Che’s behest—doing to Cuba?

A few years earlier, with Castro’s rebels skirmishing against (mostly bribing, actually) Batista’s army, U.S. reporters had swarmed into Cuba’s hills lugging cameras and tape recorders for fawning interviews with the gallant Fidel and his strutting rebel comandantes. Print reporters from Herbert Matthews of the *New York Times* to Jules Dubois of the *Chicago Tribune*, TV figures from Robert Taber of CBS to Ed Sullivan, all interviewed (soft-soaped) the Cuban Robin Hood for the folks back home. Even a reporter for *Boy’s Life* magazine made the scene. All this coming and going by foreign press agencies was somehow managed while Cuba suffered under “a stifling and murderous dictatorship!” or so these reporters and commentators constantly reminded their gaping audience. To accommodate the media mob, Castro’s people camp finally assembled a separate building at his campsite with a sign “Press Hut.”

Came a genuine rebellion against a genuine dictatorship—and one involving ten times the number of rebels (and casualties) as the one against Batista as well as lasting twice as long—and nary an intrepid reporter was to be found anywhere near Cuba’s hills. Not that these “valiant crusaders for the truth,” as Columbia School of Journalism hails their noble profession, weren’t in Cuba. From Laura Berquist of *Look Magazine* to Jean Daniel of *The New Republic* to Lee Lockwood of *Life* they were all in Havana lining up for fawning “interviews”—not with the rebels this time—but with their jailers and assassins, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara.

If the Britain in *V for Vendetta* bordered Castro’s Cuba she’d be mobbed with grateful political refugees who’d scale walls to bask in her relative freedom. At one point in 1961 one of every 18 Cubans was a political prisoner, a higher ratio than in Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Russia.

Castro can dispose of every business on his captive island in any manner he chooses. He can do the same with his every Cuban captive. He can just as easily rent them out as slave labor, as sell them for ransom, as jail them, as shoot them. *Forbes* lists only the tiny-tip of the Castro-wealth iceberg.

—*FrontPageMagazine.com*, May 18, 2006