

The San Juan Star

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The San Juan Star Viewpoint

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Readers' Viewpoint

Chávez more of a menace than Fidel

A.W. Maldonado's commentary in the Jan. 28 edition of The STAR compared the disaster brought about to the people of Cuba by the 47-year dictatorship imposed by Fidel Castro to the present-day reign of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. The column is accurate except for one major point.

In February 1960, Russian Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan visited Havana to plant the seed that was to become the first post-Stalin Russian foothold in the Americas. The Cuban-American Chamber of Commerce was requested to host a reception at the Hotel Riviera in honor of Mr. Mikoyan, which I attended. Fidel was the center of all attention, surrounded, as usual, by three phalanxes of bodyguards. His electrifying charisma reached across the 30 feet that separated us. With his powerful, totally captivating aura, Fidel kept all, including Mikoyan and yours truly, spellbound the entire evening.

Though Chávez lacks Fidel's captivating personality by a long shot, the immense wealth generated by Venezuelan oil and mineral exports, which Chávez unilaterally controls, more than offsets his clownish presentation. There is no question that the course rhetoric Chávez employs is geared to win support from the masses "South of the Border." His efforts to carry forward Castro's dream for the complete domination of the Americas through a socialist 'Bolivarian' revolution is an incredible success story. The majority of Latin American nations now tilt his way and, worse yet, Chávez has the means to induce them to stay on his course.

Though not exactly like Castro, Chávez has the means to become even more of a menace



Venezuela's president Hugo Chávez, wearing a fatigue uniform and the presidential sash, salutes his supporters upon his arrival to Fort Tiuna to ahead the 15th anniversary of 1992 coup attempt in Caracas, Feb. 4.

than Castro ever was to lovers of true democratic freedom, everywhere, including those of us living in Puerto Rico.

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