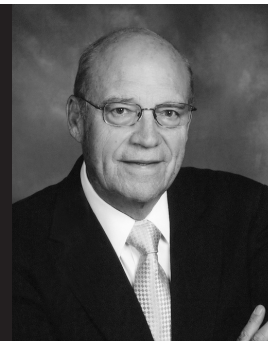




Dr. Fred Schwarz

The Schwarz Report



Dr. David Noebel

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“The Big Bang model also says nothing about what banged, why it banged, or what happened before it banged.”
—Manjit Kumar

“It had long been assumed that gravity would act as a brake on cosmic expansion, but astronomers were horrified to discover in the 1990s that the expansion is speeding up. ‘Dark energy’ is the mysterious culprit, but the name is more of a sign of ignorance than a physical description of something that makes up approximately 23% of the universe is made up of something dubbed ‘dark matter.’ This means we know nothing about roughly 96% of our universe.”
Kumar (author of *Quantum: Einstein, Bohr and the Great Debate About the Nature of Reality.*)

—*The Wall Street Journal*, March 28, 2012, p. A11

The Case for God

by Eric Metaxas

In 1966 *Time* magazine ran a cover story asking: Is God Dead? Many have accepted the cultural narrative that he’s obsolete—that as science progresses, there is less need for a “God” to explain the universe. Yet it turns out that the rumors of God’s death were premature. More amazing is that the relatively recent case for his existence comes from a surprising place—science itself.

Here’s the story: The same year *Time* featured the now-famous headline, the astronomer Carl Sagan announced that there were two important criteria for a planet to support life: The right kind of star, and a planet the right distance from that star. Given the roughly octillion—1 followed by 27 zeros—planets in the universe, there should have been about septillion—1 followed by 24 zeros—planets capable of supporting life.

With such spectacular odds, the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, a large, expensive collection of private and publicly funded projects launched in the 1960s, was sure to turn up something soon. Scientists listened with a vast radio telescopic network for signals that resembled coded intelligence and were not merely random. But as years passed, the silence from the rest of the universe was deafening. Congress defunded SETI in 1993, but the search continues with private funds. As of 2014, researchers have discovered precisely bubkis—0 followed by nothing.

What happened? As our knowledge of the universe increased, it became clear that there were far more factors necessary for life than Sagan supposed. His two parameters grew to 10 and then 20 and then 50, and so the number of potentially life-supporting planets decreased accordingly. The number dropped to a few thousand planets and kept on plummeting.

Even SETI proponents acknowledged the problem. Peter Schenkel wrote in a 2006 piece for *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine: “In light of new findings and insights, it seems appropriate to put excessive euphoria to rest . . . We should quietly admit that the early estimates . . . may no longer be tenable.”

As factors continued to be discovered, the number of possible planets hit zero, and kept going. In other words, the odds turned against any planet in the universe supporting life, including this one. Probability said that even we shouldn’t be here.

Today there are more than 200 known parameters necessary for a planet to support life—every single one of which must be perfectly met, or the whole thing falls apart. Without a massive planet like Jupiter nearby, whose gravity will draw away asteroids, a thousand times as many would hit Earth’s surface. The odds against life in the universe are simply astonishing.

Yet here we are, not only existing, but talking about existing. What can account for it? Can every one of those many parameters have been perfect by accident? At what point is it fair to admit that science suggests that we cannot be the result of random forces? Doesn't assuming that an intelligence created these perfect conditions require far less faith than believing that a life-sustaining Earth just happened to beat the inconceivable odds to come into being?

There's more. The fine-tuning necessary for life to exist on a planet is nothing compared with the fine-tuning required for the universe to exist at all. For example, astrophysicists now know that the values of the four fundamental forces—gravity, the electromagnetic force, and the “strong” and “weak” nuclear forces—were determined less than one millionth of a second after the big bang. Alter any one value and the universe could not exist. For instance, if the ratio between the nuclear strong force and the electromagnetic force had been off by the tiniest fraction of the tiniest fraction—by even one part in 100,000,000,000,000,000—then no stars could have ever formed at all. Feel free to gulp.

Multiply that single parameter by all the other necessary conditions, and the odds against the universe existing are so heart-stoppingly astronomical that the notion that it all “just happened” defies common sense. It would be like tossing a coin and having it come up heads 10 quintillion times in a row. Really?

Fred Hoyle, the astronomer who coined the term “big bang,” said that his atheism was “greatly shaken” at these developments. He later wrote that “a common-sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super-intellect has monkeyed with the physics, as well as with chemistry and biology The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question.”

Theoretical physicist Paul Davies has said that “the appearance of design is overwhelming” and Oxford professor Dr. John Lennox has said “the more we get to know about our universe, the more the hypothesis that there is a Creator . . . gains in credibility as the best explanation of why we are here.”

The greatest miracle of all time, without any close seconds, is the universe. It is the miracle of all miracles, one that ineluctably points with the combined brightness of every star to something—or Someone—beyond itself.
—*The Wall Street Journal*, December 26, 2014, A 11



Berlin's Wall Fell, But Not Communism

by Marion Smith

As the world marks the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in Nov. 9, 1989, we should also remember the many dozens of people who died trying to get past it.

Ida Siekmann, the wall's first casualty, died jumping out of her fourth-floor window while attempting to escape from East Berlin in August 1961. In January 1972, a young mother named Ingrid hid with her infant son in a crate in the back of a truck crossing from East to West. When the child began to cry at the East Berlin checkpoint, a desperate Ingrid covered his mouth with her hand, not realizing the child had an infection and couldn't breathe through his nose. She made her way to freedom, but in the process suffocated her 15-month-old son. Chris Gueffroy, an East German buoyed by the ease of tensions between East and West in early 1989, believed that the shoot-on-sight order for the Berlin Wall had been lifted. He was mistaken. Gueffroy would be the last person shot attempting to flee Communist-occupied East Berlin.

But Gueffroy was far from the last victim of communism. Millions of people are still ruled by Communist regimes in places like Pyongyang, Hanoi, and Havana.

As important as the fall of the Berlin Wall was, it was not the end of what John F. Kennedy called the “long, twilight struggle” against a sinister ideology. By looking at the population statistics of several nations we can estimate that 1.5 billion people still live under communism. Political prisoners continue to be rounded up, gulags still exist, millions are being starved, and untold numbers are

Founded in 1953, the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, under the leadership of Dr. Fred C. Schwarz (1913-2009) has been publishing a monthly newsletter since 1960. *The Schwarz Report* is edited by Dr. David A. Noebel and Dr. Michael Bauman and is offered free of charge to anyone asking for it. 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 (CACC is a 501C3 tax-exempt organization) may be sent to this address. You may also access earlier editions of *The Schwarz Report* and make donations at www.schwarzreport.org. Permission to reproduce materials from this Report is granted provided that the article and author are given along with our name and address. Our daily blog address is www.thunderontheright.wordpress.com.

being torn from families and friends simply because of their opposition to a totalitarian state.

Today, Communist regimes continue to brutalize and repress the hapless men, women, and children unlucky enough to be born in the wrong country.

In China, thousands of Hong Kong protesters recently took to the streets demanding the right to elect their chief executive in open and honest elections. This democratic movement—the most important protests in China since the Tiananmen Square demonstrations and massacre 25 years ago—was met with tear gas and pepper spray from a regime that does not tolerate dissent or criticism. The Communist Party routinely censors, beats, and jails dissidents, and through the barbaric one-child policy has caused some 400 million abortions, according to statements by a Chinese official in 2011.

In Vietnam, every morning the unelected Communist government blasts state-sponsored propaganda over loud speakers across Hanoi, like a scene out of George Orwell's *1984*.

In Laos, where the Lao People's Revolutionary Party tolerates no other political parties, the government owns all the media, restricts religious freedom, denies property rights, jails dissidents, and tortures prisoners.

In Cuba, a moribund Communist junta maintains a chokehold on the island nation. Arbitrary arrests, beatings, intimidation, and total media control are among the tools of the current regime, which has never owned up to its bloody past.

The Stalinesque abuses of North Korea are among the most shocking. As South Korea's President Park Geun-hye recently told the United Nations, "This year marks the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, but the Korean Peninsula remains stifled by a wall of division." On both sides of that wall—a 400-mile-long, 61-year-old demilitarized zone—are people with the same history, language, and often family.

But whereas the capitalist South is free and prosperous, the Communist North is a prison of torture and starvation run by a family of dictators at war with freedom of religion, freedom of movement, and freedom of thought. President Park is now challenging the U.N. General Assembly "to stand with us in tearing down the world's last remaining wall of division."

To tear down that wall will require the same moral clarity that brought down the concrete and barbed-wire barrier that divided Berlin 25 years ago. The Cold War may be over, but the battle on behalf of human freedom is still being waged every day. The triumph of liberty we

celebrate on this anniversary of the Berlin Wall's destruction must not be allowed to turn to complacency in the 21st century. Victory in the struggle against totalitarian oppression is far from inevitable, but this week we remember that it can be achieved.

Mr. Smith is executive director of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in Washington, D.C.

—*The Wall Street Journal*, November 7, 2014, A 11

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Hello! Castro

by Humberto Fontova

Did you notice the timing of President Obama's economic lifeline to Castro as announced on December 17th under the guise of "changing our relations" with the *people* (emphasis mine) of Cuba?"

No? But you have noticed the price at the gas pumps, right? These two items are closely related . . . Oh and by the way, every atom of evidence shows that the actual people of Cuba actually want US sanctions against the Stalinist regime that tortures them tightened. So perhaps President Obama should stop insulting the intelligence of Cuba-watchers by claiming to speak and act on their behalf. Here's their reaction to this week's early Christmas gift from Obama to the Stalinist dictator who tortures them:

"Sadly, President Obama made the wrong decision. The freedom and democracy of the Cuban people will not be achieved through these benefits that he's giving—not to the Cuban people—but to the Cuban government. The Cuban government will only take advantage to strengthen its repressive machinery, to repress civil society, its people, and remain in power." (Berta Soler, leader of The Ladies in White, Cuba's biggest dissident group.)

"[Alan Gross] was not arrested for what he did, but for what could be gained from his arrest. He was simply bait and they were aware of it from the beginning . . . Castroism has won," (Yoani Sanchez, Cuba's most internationally famous dissident.)

"I feel as though I have been abandoned on the battlefield." (Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet, former Cuban political prisoner awarded the US Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bush.)

The list of back-stabbed and outraged Cuban dissidents is much, much longer.

At any rate, Cuba's post-Soviet sugar-daddy (Venezuela) is currently in dire economic straits from the pre-

cipitous plunge in the price of oil, Venezuela's top export. Their economic lifeline to the Castro regime looks shaky, hence the: "here I come to save the day!" by President Obama.

But let's face it. Castro's Stalinist regime has jailed, tortured, and murdered tens of thousands (including some US citizens) for over half a decade and most Americans don't seem to give a flying flip. Fine. So let's consult yet another Cuban dissident who actually serves up some red meat. Let's notify Joe Sixpack and Soccer Mom (who quite understandably find all this human-rights stuff regarding a foreign country utterly irrelevant) that maybe it's time to pay closer attention to the issue:

"If the US allows financing towards Cuba, it will be the US taxpayers who would sustain the Castro regime. Since it has run out of doors to knock on (for credit), the Castro regime is now focused on the United States." (Cuban dissident and three-time Amnesty-International prisoner of conscience Rene Gomez Manzanoin.)

"Whoops!" you say. "How's that again?!"

Well, the US Chamber of Commerce, farm lobby, Council on Foreign Relations, and Castro's agents of influence (but I repeat myself) understandably avoid this issue like the very plague, hence its invisibility in the mainstream media. So please listen up: For over a decade the so-called US embargo, so disparaged by President Obama, has mostly stipulated that Castro's Stalinist regime pay cash up front through a third-party bank for all US agricultural products; no Ex-Im (US taxpayer) financing of such sales. And that's what infuriates Castro, and motivates his US agents of influence.

Enacted by the Bush team in 2001, this cash-up-front policy has been monumentally beneficial to US taxpayers, making them among the few in the world not rooked by the Castro regime, which per capita-wise qualifies as the world's biggest debtor nation, with a foreign debt estimated at \$50 billion, a credit rating nudging Somalia's and an uninterrupted record of defaults. Standard & Poors refuses even to rate Cuba, regarding the economic figures released by its Stalinist apparatchiks as utterly bogus. Just this year the Russians wrote off almost \$30 billion Castro still owed them.

Interesting that a Cuban dissident should plumb this matter more accurately than those "champions of the US taxpayers," Rand Paul and Jeff Flake, who loudly applaud President Obama's Christmas present to Castro this week. From the White house "Fact Sheet; Charting a New Course on Cuba:"

* US institutions will be permitted to open correspondent accounts at Cuban financial institutions to facilitate

the processing of authorized transactions.

* The regulatory definition of the statutory term "cash in advance" will be revised to specify that it means "cash before transfer of title"; this will provide more efficient financing of authorized trade with Cuba.

Whoops! Though still a bit sketchy, it certainly sounds like we're moving in the direction Rene Gomez warned against. This matter was recently explained in more detail by a *Townhall* columnist on Canada's SunNews network.

Obama claims we've been "isolating" Cuba. Again, stop insulting our intelligence, Mr. President. To wit:

In 1957 when Cuba was a "US economic colony" we're constantly told by the media—(though US investments in Cuba accounted for only 14 per cent of the island's GNP) the US exported \$347.5 million worth of goods to Cuba.

In 2013 (when Cuba was being "strangled by a US economic blockade" we're constantly told by the media) the US exported \$457.3 million to Cuba. In fact for every year Obama has been in office the "Cuba-embargoing" US has exported more goods to Cuba than it did in 1957.

In 1957 (when Cuba was a "playground for US tourists" we're constantly told by the media) 263,000 people visited Cuba from the US.

In 2013 (when Cuba was being diabolically "blockaded" by the US, according to the media) an estimated 500,000 people visited Cuba from the US. So under Obama twice as many people are visiting Cuba as in the golden 1950s.

In 1958 with Cuba under a "US-backed dictator," with the US "controlling Cuba's economy," (according to the media, though in fact, US companies employed 7 percent of Cuba's workforce) the staff of the US embassy in Cuba numbered 87, including Cuban employees.

Today with supposedly no diplomatic relations with Cuba (according to the media) the staff of the US Interest Section in Havana numbers 351, including Cuban employees. In fact, for well over a decade the US has had twice as many diplomatic personnel in Havana as Canada and Mexico combined. In the Twilight Zone occupied by the US media this is termed "diplomatic isolation."

In executive order after executive order, President Obama has already abolished President Bush's travel and remittance restrictions to Castro's terror-sponsoring fiefdom and opened the pipeline to a point where the cash-flow from the US to Cuba last year was estimated at \$4 billion a year. While a proud Soviet satrapy Cuba received \$3-5 billion annually from the Soviets. In brief, almost every year since Obama took office more cash has been flowing from the US to Cuba than used to flow there

from the Soviets at the height of their Cuba-sponsorship. In the Twilight Zone occupied by the mainstream media this is known as an “economic embargo.”

In sum, the proof is long in: record tourism and foreign investment into Cuba = record repression for the Cuban people. Every shred of observable evidence proves that travel to Cuba and business with its Stalinist mafia enriches and entrenches these KGB-trained and heavily-armed owners of Cuba’s economy. Thus they remain the most highly motivated guardians of Cuba’s Stalinist and Terror-Sponsoring status-quo.

This week they’re all toasting Obama, snickering, and rubbing their hands. So grab your wallets, amigos.

—*Townhall.com*, December 22, 2014

people. Cuba already enjoys access to commerce, money, and goods from other nations, and yet the Cuban people are still not free. They are not free because the regime—just as it does with every aspect of life—manipulates and controls to its own advantage all currency that flows into the island. More economic engagement with the US means that the regime’s grip on power will be strengthened for decades to come—dashing the Cuban people’s hopes for freedom and democracy.

Of course, like all Americans, I am overjoyed for Alan Gross and his family after his release from captivity after five years. This American had been a hostage of the regime, and it was through his imprisonment that the Cuban regime again showed the world its cruel nature.

But the policy changes announced by President Obama will have far-reaching consequences for the American people. President Obama made it clear that if you take an American hostage and are willing to hold him long enough, you may not only get your own prisoners released from US jails—as three Cuban spies were—you may actually win lasting policy concessions from the US as well. This precedent places a new price on the head of every American, and it gives rogue leaders around the world more clear-cut evidence of this president’s naïveté and his willingness to abandon fundamental principles in a desperate attempt to burnish his legacy. There can be no doubt that the regime in Tehran is watching closely, and it will try to exploit President Obama’s naïveté as the Iranian leaders pursue concessions from the US in their quest to establish themselves as a nuclear power.

Reasonable people can disagree about the efficacy of American foreign policy toward Cuba and even the embargo, but no serious person can argue that the manner in which President Obama unilaterally granted concessions to the regime in Havana was well advised.

For these reasons and many more, in the weeks and months ahead I will work with Republicans and Democrats who share my concerns and do everything in my power to prevent President Obama’s dangerous policies from becoming reality.

While my personal ties to Cuba and its people are well known, this is not just a personal issue. American foreign policy affects every aspect of American life, and our people cannot realize their full promise if the world becomes more dangerous because America retreats from its role in the world. Moreover, the Cuban people have the same rights that God bestowed on every other man, woman and child that has ever lived. All of those who are oppressed around the world look to America to stand up for their rights and to raise its voice when tyrants like the



To the Rescue

by Marco Rubio

The announcement by President Obama on Wednesday giving the Castro regime diplomatic legitimacy and access to American dollars isn’t just bad for the oppressed Cuban people, or for the millions who live in exile and lost everything at the hands of the dictatorship. Mr. Obama’s new Cuba policy is a victory for oppressive governments the world over and will have real, negative consequences for the American people.

Since the US severed diplomatic relations in 1961, the Castro family has controlled the country and the economy with an iron fist that punishes Cubans who speak out in opposition and demand a better future. Under the Castros, Cuba has also been a central figure in terrorism, narco-trafficking, and all manner of misery and mayhem in our hemisphere.

As a result, it has been the policy and law of the US to make clear that re-establishing diplomatic and economic relations with Cuba is possible—but only once the Cuban government stops jailing political opponents, protects free speech, and allows independent political parties to be formed and to participate in free and fair elections.

The opportunity for Cuba to normalize relations with the US has always been there, but the Castro regime has never been interested in changing its ways. Now, thanks to President Obama’s concessions, the regime in Cuba won’t have to change.

The entire policy shift is based on the illusion—in fact, on the lie—that more commerce and access to money and goods will translate to political freedom for the Cuban

Castros are trying to crush their spirits.

By conceding to the oppressors in the Castro regime, this president and his administration have let the Cuban people down, further weakened America's standing in the world and endangered Americans.

—*The Wall Street Journal*, December 18, 2014, p. A 19

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Totalitarians Celebrate

by Lloyd Billingsley

"I first went to Cuba in January 1968, during the height of revolutionary aspirations," writes New Left celebrity Tom Hayden in "50 Years Later It's Time for Closure," a Dec. 21 op-ed piece in the *Sacramento Bee*. On recent visits Hayden hung out with Cuba's former minister of foreign affairs Ricardo Alarcon, and that inspired Hayden to write the forthcoming *Listen Yankee! Why Cuba Matters*. Meanwhile, Tom Hayden is excited about recent moves by President Obama.

"The Cuban Revolution has achieved its aim," Hayden explains, "recognition of the sovereign right of its people to revolt against the Yankee Goliath and survive as a state in a sea of global solidarity." Further, "After the fall of the Soviet Union, there was a decade of American triumphalism based on the mistaken belief that the Cuban state would collapse like East Germany. We underestimated Cuban nationalism."

However, "a sticking point on the US side was the persistent funding of 'democracy promotion,' or our secret efforts to promote a more open society." Hayden further explains that Alan Gross "was a covert agent, not a home appliance distributor."

Cuban spies Gerardo Hernandez, Rene Gonzalez, Ramon Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando Gonzalez, were all tried and imprisoned in the United States for gathering intelligence on US air bases. They also infiltrated Brothers to the Rescue and tipped off the Castro regime, which scrambled MIG fighters and downed one of the Brothers' unarmed planes, killing four people. Tom Hayden's take is rather different: "The Cuban Five were protecting Cuba's security from us, not acting as terrorists."

Hayden contends that key episodes in Cuban history are "best recalled" through Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather: Part II*. Fortunately, American viewers can gain knowledge of Cuba in films by actual Cubans that cover events Tom Hayden and Ricardo Alarcon prefer to avoid.

When Cuban general Arnaldo Ochoa returned from his military campaign in Africa, "8A," a play on his name, began to appear on walls all over the island. Long oppressed

Cubans believed the popular general was the only one with a chance to topple Fidel Castro's Communist dictatorship. Fidel knew it too. He held a show trial for Ochoa and put it on satellite television. Cuban filmmaker Orlando Jimenez Leal taped it and made the documentary *8A*.

Viewers can see the regime's lawyers demanding that their clients get the death penalty. Fidel Castro agreed and on July 12, 1989 duly carried out the sentence by firing squad, just like back in the revolutionary days. No appeal process, and no more threat from Arnaldo Ochoa.

In *Improper Conduct* Jimenez Leal and cinematographer Nestor Almendros portrayed the Castro regime's repressions against political dissidents, journalists, poets, and homosexuals. *The New York Times* called the film "convincing" and former Castro supporter Susan Sontag said "The discovery that homosexuals were being persecuted in Cuba shows how much the Left needs to evolve."

It will be interesting to see what Tom Hayden says about this in his new book *Listen Yankee! Why Cuba Matters*. In the meantime, readers might consult books written by actual Cubans.

In *Against All Hope*, which has been compared to Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, Cuban dissident Armando Valladares charts 20 years in Castro's prisons, and the violence he and other political prisoners suffered. Arrested in 1960, Valladares was not freed until 1982. This came through the efforts of French president Francois Mitterand and human rights organizations. A ballpark figure for the number of Cuban dissidents the American New Left has supported is zero.

In *Family Portrait with Fidel*, Carlos Franqui charts the Cuban Revolution from 1959 to 1964. Franqui broke ranks over Fidel's shift to Soviet Communism, after which "nothing worked." The privations of the regime get extensive treatment in Heberto Padilla's novel, *Heroes are Grazing in My Garden*.

In *The Longest Romance*, Humberto Fontova calculates that between 65,000 and 85,000 people have died trying to escape Cuba, 30 times the number of Berlin Wall casualties. Cuba's prison population is 90 percent black and includes Eusebio Penlaver, "the world's longest suffering black political prisoner." That wasn't a sticking point for Barack Obama.

Tom Hayden recently showed up in *Leading with Honor: Leadership Lessons from the Hanoi Hilton*. Author Lee Ellis was shot down over North Vietnam, imprisoned and tortured. Americans were kept in cages with their legs tied together and arms laced behind the back until the elbows touched and shoulders pulled out of joint. Some Americans were kept awake for two weeks and beaten, but

the treatment wasn't just physical.

As Ellis explains, the prison guards piped in propaganda broadcasts by Tom Hayden, a "regular speaker" who supported the regime and said the reports of torture were nothing but lies. Given that record, Cuban prisons may soon ring with readings from *Listen Yankee! Why Cuba Matters*, by Tom Hayden.

—*FrontPageMagazine*, December 23, 2014



Why Not Lift Communism?

by Mary Anastasia O'Grady

On a trip to Havana in the late 1990s, I toured the restoration of a 17th century convent with a Cuban architect. He told me the project was having trouble getting replacement floor tiles because of the US embargo. I smiled and told him there was no blockade of the island and that the tiles could be sourced in Mexico. He grinned back at me.

"Well, OK," he said. "The real problem is that we don't have any money to buy them."

Cubans are programmed from an early age to complain to anyone who will listen that "el bloqueo" is the cause of the island's dire poverty. They know it's a lie. But obediently repeating it is a survival skill. It raises the odds that the demented dictator won't suspect you of having counterrevolutionary thoughts, boot you from your job, kick your children out of school, and haul you off to jail.

President Obama appeared to be trying to prove his own revolutionary bona fides when he announced on Wednesday new diplomatic relations with the military dictatorship and plans to make it easier for Americans to travel to the island and engage in commerce with Cubans. He repeatedly linked the isolation of the Cuban people to US policy, as the regime teaches Cuban children to do. He complained that the embargo strives to keep "Cuba closed off from an interconnected world." In a reference to the limited access that Cubans have to telecommunications, he said "our sanctions on Cuba have denied Cubans access to technology that has empowered individuals around the globe."

Even the humblest Cuban peasant would split his sides laughing if he heard those statements, which none did because they do not have access to anything other than Cuban state television—speaking of isolation. Cubans know that the island is not isolated from foreigners. According to Cuban statistics in 2013 there were 2.85 million visitors to the island of 11 million inhabitants. These included Euro-

pean, Chinese, Latin American, Canadian and American tourists, and investors. In the first six months of this year, according to The Havana Consulting Group, there were 327,000 visitors to Cuba from the US.

The isolation (news flash Rand Paul) is caused by the police state, which controls and surveils foreigners' movements, herding most visitors into resort enclaves. Foreign journalists who vocally oppose the Communist Party line are not allowed into the country.

More visitors won't do anything to reduce Cuban poverty. The regime pockets the hard currency that they leave behind and pays workers in worthless pesos. Foreigners who decide to reward good workers without state approval can face prison.

It's true that the Cuban people lack access to technology, but Mr. Obama's suggestion that it is because of the embargo is a howler. Carlos Slim, the Mexican telecom monopolist and global player; Telefónica, the Spanish broadband and telecommunications provider; Vietnam's Natcom; Ireland's Digicel and countless other companies can do business on the island. But they can't provide Internet access in homes because the state prohibits it.

US telecom companies are lobbying Washington to be able to do business with the dictator. So to peddle the idea to the rest of us, Mr. Obama claims that this small, backward Caribbean country is a huge untapped export market. Question: How come the likes of Mexico and Spain haven't flooded the virgin paradise for capitalists and turbocharged the Cuban middle class? Maybe because a couple of hoodlums have rigged the game. They decide who and what enters the country, treat Cubans like slaves, and arbitrarily jail foreign entrepreneurs and take property when it suits them.

Some delusional pro-market pundits think the anti-market Mr. Obama is suddenly pushing their ideas in Cuba. Mr. Obama wants us to believe that when Americans do business in Cuba, Cubans will be empowered. Funny that he didn't feel that way about helping democratic Colombia when its US free-trade agreement was up for ratification. Back then the White House was fretting about Colombian workers' rights. Now, well, never mind.

The Castros are in full-blown panic mode because Venezuela, which has been their financial lifeline for 15 years, is broke. The last time things were this bad, when Soviet subsidies dried up in the early 1990s and the regime ran out of money, Castro introduced the "special period."

Cubans were permitted to run restaurants in their homes, operate taxis, and provide other services to foreigners and locals. As entrepreneurship blossomed, the

state began to lose the absolute control it had relied on since 1959. Fidel clamped down as soon as Cuba stabilized.

Now the gangsters are again on the ropes. If they can up the number of US travelers to the island and later wrangle multilateral funding now blocked by the US, they might squeeze by. But if not, the dictatorship is likely to come unglued, which raises the question of just who Mr. Obama is trying to help by stepping in now.

—*The Wall Street Journal*, December 22, 2014, p. A 15

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The Confucius Institute

Editorial

Critics have argued that China’s Confucius Institutes pose a threat to academic freedom in the United States, Canada, Europe, and beyond. Now the Beijing official in charge has confirmed it.

If you’re new to this issue, the Chinese government has set up 1,100 of these state-run Confucius Institutes since 2004 to teach language and culture within universities and grade schools world-wide. Now the institutes are facing long overdue scrutiny, and some universities and school districts are closing them down.

On Sunday the BBC interviewed Chinese Vice Minister Xu Lin, director-general of Confucius Institute Headquarters. She confirmed in no uncertain terms that her organization exports the values of the Chinese Communist Party to foreign academic institutions, from Columbia and Stanford to neighborhood elementary schools.

Ms. Xu described how the teachers must file official reports and answer questions about whether they discussed politically sensitive subjects in the classroom. She also confirmed that Beijing forces foreign institutions to deny employment to believers in Falun Gong, a spiritual movement banned in China.

We wrote about Ms. Xu this summer, when her staff tore out pages from the program at an academic conference in Portugal. She was offended by the co-sponsorship of a Taiwanese foundation.

Queried about this by the BBC, Ms. Xu was dismissive. “Nobody worried, I was there,” she claimed—even though the European Association for Chinese Studies brought the episode to light as a “totally unacceptable” act of academic bullying.

When the BBC’s John Sudworth pressed on, Ms.

Xu became impatient. “I think you shouldn’t ask this question,” she said. “The Taiwan issue is our own issue. It’s a China issue. It’s not a foreign people’s issue.” She demanded that Mr. Sudworth erase their discussion of the “Portugal issue.” Mr. Sudworth refused.

Then Ms. Xu offered perhaps the most revealing statement of all: “Every mainland teacher we send,” she explained, “will say Taiwan belongs to China. We should have one China. No hesitation.”

Earlier this year, US College Board President David Coleman feted Ms. Xu at a conference in Los Angeles. Referring to Ms. Xu’s agency by its Chinese acronym, Hanban, Mr. Coleman gushed: “Hanban is like the sun. It lights the path to develop Chinese teaching in the US. The College Board is the moon. I am so honored to reflect the light that we’ve gotten from Hanban.”

Not all scholars and politicians are so credulous. The University of Chicago and Penn State recently closed their Confucius Institutes, while Canada’s largest school district, in Toronto, nixed plans to open one.

Ms. Xu’s comments now challenge the legions of American university and K-12 leaders who have never raised concerns, even as most of them signed secret contracts with Beijing. New Jersey Rep. Chris Smith has pledged to investigate such contracts and examine whether institutions should lose government funds for restricting academic freedom. Such efforts can help, but a broader shift in attitude is needed.

Students deserve opportunities to study Chinese language and culture without wearing ideological blinders provided by Beijing. To the extent that Beijing-backed Confucius Institutes shape instruction in the West, Chinese government interests will increasingly trump academic freedom.

—*The Wall Street Journal*, December 26, 2014, p. A 12

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