

Tyler Morning Telegraph

May Day a chance to rethink embargo

30 April 2014

No doubt there will again be a “red-tinged sea of Cubans” on the streets of Havana today, just as there are every year for the international communist holiday May Day. The celebration’s theme will be some variation on 2012’s “Preserve and Perfect Socialism,” as it always is, or a special recognition of some socialist hero, such as Hugo Chavez, honored in 2013.

What if we worked to make next year’s May Day a little different? By easing or even ending the embargos against Cuba, the United States could topple communism with something more powerful — the promise of prosperity.

“The U.S. government has waged economic war against the Castro regime for half a century,” said Doug Bandow of the Cato Institute. “The policy may have been worth a try during the Cold War, but the embargo has failed to liberate the Cuban people. It is time to end sanctions against Havana.”

The official Republican position is that because Cuba is a human rights monster, we mustn’t have any truck with it. How inconsistent is that? We have deep trading ties with China, another communist state and with its one-child policy and forced abortions, it’s as much a monster as Cuba.

In fact, it can be argued that trade has made China much less communist — and as its rural population moves to the cities to fill manufacturing jobs, the one child policy is starting to be ignored in the countryside.

Political satirist P.J. O’Rourke contends that commerce won the Cold War as assuredly as a military build-up did.

“In the end we beat them with Levi’s 501 jeans,” he wrote in “Give War A Chance.” “Seventy-two years of Communist indoctrination and propaganda was drowned out by a three-ounce Sony Walkman. A huge totalitarian system has been brought to its knees because nobody wants to wear Bulgarian shoes. Now they’re lunch, and we’re No. 1 on the planet.”

History shows that free trade played a major part in the collapse of communism.

Could we help collapse the aging and decrepit Castro regime with trade, tourism and, well, envy?

History says yes. Raul Castro is 83 — he's not going to last much longer. Even now, his hold on power is dependent on the faith of older generations. As Reuters reported last year, the young want no part of the "revolution."

The article shows "one of the Cuban government's biggest problems — youthful discontent with a system many view as lacking opportunity for a better life. It is not a problem unique to the Caribbean island, which like many underdeveloped countries struggles to hold on to its best and brightest, but unlike most others faces the added difficulty of doing so at the doorstep of a hostile superpower with an open door immigration policy for Cubans."

Cuba itself sees the problem and is slowly enacting reforms.

We could help by at least loosening the trade and travel embargos.

As Bandow said, "lifting sanctions would be a victory not for Fidel Castro, but for the power of free people to spread liberty."