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MEDIA MATTERS

Paul Harvey praises

Cuba's Fidel Castro

Radio legend compliments dictator
for speech on morality, growing up

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By Joe Kovacs

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American radio legend [Paul Harvey](#), most noted for recounting the "rest of the story," is now singing the praises of Fidel Castro following a speech on morality delivered by the Cuban dictator.

The 84-year-old broadcaster spent several minutes during his noontime "News and Comment" segment yesterday reminiscing about his personal experience with Castro in the 1950s, remarking how the dictator has changed over the years.

"I first met Fidel Castro when [Fulgencio] Battista was heading Cuba's government," said Harvey. "Young Fidel was a student radical, leading hit-and-run raids, then retreating into the mountains. I was a wet-eared young reporter. He was a marathon talker even then, so I listened. I was not impressed. Maybe I should have been.

"Castro and I were the most surprised humans in the Western Hemisphere when Battista removed himself from the country and young Castro and his brother and a handful of friends inherited that 'Humpty Dumpty' country.

"Over the years since," Harvey continued, "Castro gave up plucking chickens in fashionable hotel rooms and throwing feathers out the windows. Over the years since, Castro gave up smoking and drinking and much of what communism was, but he never stopped talking."

Harvey said his memories of the Cuban leader were rekindled by an address Castro gave Tuesday night to thousands of students attending Havana's Latin American Medical School.

In the speech, Castro warned the students to beware of the dangers of rum, cars and capitalism.

"How much damage has rum caused any society?" the Cuban president asked. "How many deaths from the irresponsibility of accidents and alcoholic drinks?"

Castro also urged citizens to celebrate New Year's with "parties all over the country. But without rum!"

"It's not that there is going to be a dry law. No. Those who want to buy will pay a lot," Castro added. "If there is one thing I can assure you, it's that neither cigarettes nor rum will ever be sold cheaply in this country."

The 76-year-old dictator was at one time the most famous cigar-smoker in the world, but gave up the habit 17 years ago to set an example for fellow Cubans. He now reportedly drinks only moderately, leaving his wine untouched at many state dinners.

Castro also used his Day of the Doctor address to inspire the medical students as they face the rigors of their profession, often long distances from modern hospitals.

"The important thing is that you are ready to head out there far from the cities to treat so many children, so many women, so many people who suffer some illness," he said.

But Castro slammed American doctors, claiming most are "educated with a mercantilist concept," unwilling to forego high salaries and high-tech conveniences to experience "the horrible conditions of the Third World."

He touted his belief that the students were being educated "in truly humanitarian principles and not corrupted by consumer societies."

Additionally, as most Cubans are denied ownership of cars, Castro suggested he might revoke the current exception for foreign students.

"If we begin to see students with motorcycles, automobiles, etc., we are risking accidents," Castro warned. "The saddest thing that could happen is a case of death in an accident. We have the duty to protect you as much as possible. ...

"We will not rest until this is the most humane, most just and most honest society that has ever been created. We prefer death to corruption."

Based in Chicago, Paul Harvey has been a mainstay of American broadcasting for over half a century. His trademark "Good day!" salute is heard on some 1,200 stations across the nation and on 400 Armed Forces Radio stations around the world, reaching approximately 24 million listeners daily. "Reaganomics," and "guesstimate" are among the words and catch phrases he coined over the years.

As WorldNetDaily reported a year ago, Harvey said in his Thanksgiving address that [God miraculously healed him of an illness which had left him completely voiceless for three months](#).

Expounding on Castro's remarks, Harvey overlooked the slaps at capitalism, highlighting only references to the manners of personal living.

"He told them to leave the Cuban rum alone, and leave the Cuban cigars to the idlers and the parasites and the foreign buyers who want to self-destruct," Harvey said. "His appeal was to the morality of his audience - how they must be examples, how they must not contribute to the irresponsibility and the accidents resulting from drinking. He urged them to celebrate the New Year this year without rum.

"As doctors, he urged them to serve the poor in rural areas which most doctors ignore. We Cubans will not rest, he said, until ours is the most humane, most just, most honest, most sober society that has ever been created.

"Fidel Castro has done a lot of growing up since we first met," concluded Harvey. "I hope we both have."



Paul Harvey



Cuban dictator Fidel Castro

It was unclear why Castro chose this year to fire a shot at rum consumption, but his call comes on the heels of a new book that claims Bacardi, the world's largest rum company, has been engaged for more than 40 years in [clandestine attempts to overthrow the Cuban government by both violent and other means](#).

In "[Bacardi, The Hidden War](#)," Colombian journalist Hernando Calvo Ospina reveals how directors and shareholders of the family-owned firm aggressively worked to undermine Castro, claiming they bankrolled a CIA mission in 1964 to kill the Cuban leader.

"No one at Bacardi believes this book is worth commenting on," a spokeswoman for the rum maker told the London Guardian.

Its publication comes at the same time the Bush administration has been trying to link Havana to the war on terror. Even before the attacks of Sept. 11, the [State Department listed Cuba among seven state sponsors of terrorism](#).

Despite that distinction, the House of Representatives voted 262-187 this year to relax travel restrictions to the island as part of the ongoing U.S. embargo, and a growing number of politicians are calling for open trade with Cuba.

During a [Cato Institute forum on Bush's Cuba policy](#) last year in Washington, Mark Falcoff, an expert on Latin America at the American Enterprise Institute stated, "Many people in the business and agricultural community believe that the trade embargo forces us to forego a wonderful market while other countries get rich in Cuba. I happen to believe they are ludicrously wrong, but that hardly matters. They are beginning to make themselves felt among Republicans in Congress and in the Statehouses, and particularly in the farm states, and also among the general public."

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