



Written by [Walter E. Williams](#) on November 13, 2019

Young People Ignorant of History

A recent survey conducted by the Victims of Communism and polled by YouGov, a research and data firm, found that 70% of millennials are likely to vote socialist and that one in three millennials saw communism as “favorable.”

Let’s examine this tragic vision in light of the Fraser Institute’s recently released annual study “Economic Freedom of the World,” prepared by Professors James Gwartney, Florida State University; Robert A. Lawson and Ryan Murphy of Southern Methodist University; and Joshua Hall, West Virginia University, in cooperation with the Economic Freedom Network.



Hong Kong and Singapore maintained their lead as the world’s most economically free countries — although China’s heavy hand threatens Hong Kong’s top ranking. Rounding out the top 10 are New Zealand, Switzerland, the United States, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Mauritius. By the way, after having fallen to 16th in 2016, the U.S. has staged a comeback to being in the top five economically free countries in the world.

What statistics go into the Fraser Institute’s calculation of economic freedom? The report measures the ability of individuals to make their own economic decisions by analyzing the policies and institutions of 162 countries and territories. These include regulation, freedom to trade internationally, size of government, sound legal system, private property rights and government spending and taxation.

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Fraser Institute scholar Fred McMahon says, “Where people are free to pursue their own opportunities and make their own choices, they lead more prosperous, happier and healthier lives.” The evidence for his assessment is: Countries in the top quartile of economic freedom had an average per-capita GDP of \$36,770 in 2017 compared with \$6,140 for bottom quartile countries. Poverty rates are lower. In the top quartile, 1.8% of the population experienced extreme poverty (\$1.90 a day) compared with 27.2% in the lowest quartile. Life expectancy is 79.5 years in the top quartile of economically free countries compared with 64.4 years in the bottom quartile.

The Fraser Institute’s rankings of other major countries include Japan (17th), Germany (20th), Italy (46th), France (50th), Mexico (76th), India (79th), Russia (85th), China (113th) and Brazil (120th). The least free countries are Venezuela, Argentina, Ukraine and nearly every African country with the most notable exception of Mauritius. By the way, Argentina and Venezuela used to be rich until they bought into socialism.

During the Cold War, leftists made a moral equivalency between communist totalitarianism and democracy. W. E. B. Du Bois, writing in the *National Guardian* (1953) said, “Joseph Stalin was a great man; few other men of the 20th century approach his stature.” Walter Duranty called Stalin “the



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greatest living statesman ... a quiet, unobtrusive man." George Bernard Shaw expressed admiration for Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin. Economist John Kenneth Galbraith visited Mao's China and praised Mao Zedong and the Chinese economic system. Gunther Stein of the *Christian Science Monitor* also admired Mao and declared ecstatically that "the men and women pioneers of Yenan are truly new humans in spirit, thought and action." Michel Oksenberg, President Jimmy Carter's China expert, complained that "America (is) doomed to decay until radical, even revolutionary, change fundamentally alters the institutions and values," and urged us to "borrow ideas and solutions" from China.

Leftists exempted communist leaders from the harsh criticism directed toward Adolf Hitler, even though communist crimes against humanity made Hitler's slaughter of 11 million noncombatants appear almost amateurish. According to Professor R.J. Rummel's research in "Death by Government," from 1917 until its collapse, the Soviet Union murdered or caused the death of 61 million people, mostly its own citizens. From 1949 to 1976, Mao's Communist regime was responsible for the death of as many as 76 million Chinese citizens.

Today's leftists, socialists and progressives would bristle at the suggestion that their agenda differs little from that of past tyrants. They should keep in mind that the origins of the unspeakable horrors of Nazism, Stalinism and Maoism did not begin in the '20s, '30s and '40s. Those horrors were simply the result of a long evolution of ideas leading to a consolidation of power in the central government in the quest for "social justice."

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