



# CUBA

## Revolution Under Attack

Ian Ellis-Jones

*Ian Ellis-Jones* is a retired lawyer and educator. He visited Cuba in 2018. Ian is a member of the Socialist Alliance.

*Cover:* Pro-revolution rally, Havana, 2021.

This PDF edition published August 2021  
Resistance Books: [resistancebooks.com](http://resistancebooks.com)

# Contents

<b>Cuba: Revolution Under Attack by Ian Ellis-Jones .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Colonisation &amp; Imperialism .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Invaders & colonisers .....	6
An apple ripe for picking .....	6
The struggle for independence .....	7
A de facto US protectorate .....	7
Quasi-independence .....	8
Brutal & corrupt US backed dictatorships .....	8
<b>The Cuban Revolution &amp; US Aggression .....</b>	<b>11</b>
The struggle against Batista (1952-59) .....	11
Some achievements of the Cuban revolution .....	14
America's dirty war against Cuba .....	15
The Bay of Pigs & the Cuban missile crisis .....	16
The CIA keeps at it .....	18
<b>Rectification. Special Period. The Blockade .....</b>	<b>19</b>
Neocolonial economic dependence .....	19
Rectification campaign .....	20
The 'special period' .....	20
Foreign currency reserves & international debt .....	21
Trump steps up the blockade .....	22
US declares Cuba 'state sponsor of terrorism' .....	25
BLM movement condemns US blockade .....	27
The COVID-19 pandemic .....	28
<b>July 11 Protests &amp; the Future .....</b>	<b>30</b>
Important economic changes in Cuba .....	32
International aid to Cuba .....	33

Who has the high moral ground? ..... 34  
 Where to from here? ..... 35

**Appendix: Cuba Today: Homeland, People & Sovereignty**  
*by Julio César Guanche* ..... 37

**Notes** ..... 41



Fidel enters Havana with Rebel Army, January 1959.

**Note:** Throughout the text, \$ or dollars refers to US dollars.

# Cuba: Revolution Under Attack

*By Ian Ellis-Jones*

Cuba is today facing its biggest challenge since the 1959 revolution.

The harsh US blockade on Cuba — which also embraces countries trading with or otherwise having business with Cuba — has had a big impact. Millions of ordinary Cubans are beset by shortages and privation. Coupled with a vicious campaign by Washington on social media, this laid the basis for the unprecedented public protests on July 11.

At present, the country doesn't have enough foreign currency to pay for imports and to service its loan repayments. The nation's foreign debt is more than \$17.8 billion. There are serious shortages of food, medicines and other necessities. Tourism, which normally accounts for some 13% of Cuba's GDP, is sharply down, mainly because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cuba — perhaps more than most other countries — has been the victim of colonialism and imperialism. A long Spanish rule was replaced by that of the United States.

Granted a quasi-independence in 1902, Cuba spent almost 60 years as a *de facto* protectorate of the United States. Only on January 1, 1959 did Cuba achieve real independence as a sovereign nation in its own right. However, Washington has never accepted its loss of control and the presence of a socialist experiment just across the Florida Straits.

Successive American governments since 1960 have used every means available to try to crush the Cuban Revolution. Now Washington scents blood and hopes to extract major concessions and even the collapse of the revolution.

This pamphlet provides the essential background to the current crisis. Whatever weaknesses that exist and whatever mistakes may have been made, the situation created by the absolutely unrelenting and implacable US hostility and pressure would test any leadership.

An appendix provides a Cuban take on the situation. ■

# Colonisation & Imperialism

Cuba has been deeply marked by the centuries-long period of Spanish and then US control.

## Invaders & colonisers

Cuba was invaded and colonised by Spain throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. As is the case with all imperialism and colonisation, this resulted in a society deeply divided according to race, ethnicity and class. Most of the indigenous population was quickly exterminated.

For a while, the British also had their eyes on Cuba. The Seven Years' War (1756-63) was a struggle for global primacy. In 1762 the British declared war on Spain, took over Havana (the "Siege of Havana") and colonised Cuba for about a year. Cuba was returned to Spain in February 1763.

## An apple ripe for picking

US aggression against Cuba began early.

On October 24, 1823 Thomas Jefferson, the third US president, wrote, "I have ever looked upon Cuba as the most interesting addition which could ever be made to our system of States."

In 1823 the US formulated the "ripe fruit doctrine". John Quincy Adams, then secretary of state and later the sixth US president wrote a letter in which he anticipated the likelihood of US annexation of Cuba within half a century:

But there are laws of political as well as physical gravitation; and if an apple severed by its native tree cannot choose but fall to the ground, Cuba, forcibly disjoined from its own unnatural connection with Spain, and incapable of self-support, can gravitate only towards the North American Union which by the same law of nature, cannot cast her off its bosom.

The US made no secret of the fact that it wanted to take over Cuba once Spain had left. Che Guevara wrote in *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War*:<sup>1</sup>

The island [Cuba] was seen as an apple which, cut from Spain's branches, was fated to fall into Uncle Sam's hands. These are all links in a long chain of continental aggression which has been directed against others as well as Cuba.

## The struggle for independence

For more than 30 years Cuban patriots fought against Spain for independence. The first moves for independence began in the early part of the 19th century. Between 1868 and 1898 there were three liberation wars against Spain: the Ten Years' War (1868–78), the Little War (1879–80), and the Cuban War of Independence (1895–98).

The US, acting on its “ripe fruit doctrine”, decided to get involved in the fighting, ostensibly to support the Cuban independence fighters but in reality to establish its own domination.

The Spanish-American War was fought in the final three months of the Cuban War of Independence. Lenin wrote that the Spanish–American War was “the first imperialist war”.

The Cuban national hero José Martí helped initiate the final push for independence in 1895. In his final uncompleted letter — he was killed in battle the very next day — he wrote, “I have lived in the monster and I know its entrails” — referring to the US.

The US emerged victorious in the Spanish-American War and established a tight grip on the island.

## A *de facto* US protectorate

From 1899 to 1902 Cuba was under the control of a US military government. The first military governor, John R. Brooke, wasted no time in ordering independence fighters to disarm. Brooke strongly advocated annexation by the US and quickly began the process of US neocolonisation and tutelage over Cuban affairs. Cuba became a *de facto* US protectorate. Leonard Wood, the second military governor, sought to “Americanise” Cuba through a long occupation.

The delegates to a constitutional convention (1900-01), charged with drafting and approving a Cuban constitution, were pressured to include in an appendix provisions outlining the right of the US to intervene in Cuba's affairs, as set out in the “Platt Amendment” enacted by the US congress in 1901. With the Platt Amendment, the US conferred upon itself the right to intervene in Cuba's internal and external affairs — economically, politically and militarily — in order to defend US interests; required the Cuban constituent assembly to incorporate its provisions into Cuba's new constitution; and required Cuba to lease an area of land at Guantánamo Bay for a US naval base.

The delegates were told that the US wouldn't withdraw its army from Cuba unless

they agreed to Washington's right to intervene as it saw fit.

In addition, the Cuban economy was largely owned and controlled by US interests, which were interested solely in maximising their profits, not in improving the living conditions of the local population.

## Quasi-independence

After almost five years of US military occupation, a neocolonial republic was established in Cuba on May 20, 1902. However, the notorious Platt Amendment remained operative.

From 1903 onwards, the US had almost complete control over Cuba's political and economic affairs. Some three-quarters of the country's arable land was owned or controlled by US companies. When it came to the provision of telephone and electricity services, US interests exceeded 90%.

The Cuban and US governments signed several treaties, the two most important being: first, a treaty on commercial reciprocity, which ensured the US had control over the Cuban market and which consolidated the single-crop, lopsided structure of Cuba's economy; and, second, the Permanent Treaty, which gave a legal framework to the stipulations of the Platt Amendment. A 1903 trade agreement between the US and Cuba provided for a 20% reduction in tariffs by both countries. In practice, Cuban tariffs were often reduced by as much as 40%, which was quite unfair to Cuba and further cemented the neocolonial relationship of dependency.

Between 1898 to 1958 there were four American military interventions in Cuba (1898-1902, 1906-1909, 1917, and 1921).

## Brutal & corrupt US-backed dictatorships

Under American tutelage and neocolonialism Cuba suffered under two particularly brutal, corrupt and authoritarian dictatorships — those of Gerardo Machado (the "Tropical Mussolini") from 1925 to 1933, and Fulgencio Batista, from 1934 to 1944, and 1952 to the end of 1958. Both were protected by the US for most of their time in power.

American economic involvement stunted Cuba's development and made the country more dependent on the US. In addition, the American Mafia began its activities in Cuba in the early 1920s, running rum and other alcohol. The Mafia's activities were entrenched by the end of 1933.<sup>2</sup>

The Great Depression only further cemented Cuba's economic dependence upon both US and, to a lesser extent, Spain, which still had important commercial interests in Cuba.



Washington's ostensibly non-interventionist "Good Neighbor Policy" (1933) proved to be just another useful tool for the US to intervene in Latin America, when deemed necessary.

When Machado's government was faltering amid increasing violence, US president Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Sumner Welles as special envoy to Cuba. Welles, who had been instructed to negotiate a settlement to avoid US intervention, made it clear that the prime qualification for any Cuban president must be his "thorough acquaintance with the desires of the US Government [and] his amenability to suggestion or advice which might be made to him by the American legation".

Machado's government collapsed in September 1933. Following a general strike, Cuba underwent a revolution. Welles immediately initiated negotiation with the opposition groups and brokered a pro-US provisional government, which was followed in January 1934 by the "Sergeants' Revolt". The latter was a coup organised by former clerk-typist sergeant and self-proclaimed colonel (and later major-general) Fulgencio Batista. He formed a provisional government with the approval of the US government, its intelligence services, and the US Mafia.<sup>3</sup>

Batista ruled for the next 10 years, first as the puppet-master behind various presidents and then as president himself after 1940. During this period the existing culture of gangsterism, cronyism and corruption was further cemented and consolidated.

The US repealed the Platt Amendment in 1933. However, a 1934 Treaty of Relations between Cuba and the US continued the 1903 agreements leasing the Guantánamo Bay naval base to the US. To this day, the US government maintains a naval base and prison at there, despite strong opposition from the Cuban government.

Batista was elected president in 1940 and ruled until 1944 when he was constitutionally obligated to step down. Enrique Cirules writes<sup>4</sup> that when FDR wanted to convince Batista not to run in the 1944 election, Mafia crime boss Meyer Lansky was chosen as the US intermediary. Batista then went to live in Miami, having amassed a considerable sum of money from corruption. Between 1944 and 1952 there was a quasi-democratic government with some respect for human rights. Nevertheless, cronyism, maladministration, corruption, gangsterism and, of course, submission to US interests were still the norm. In 1948 Batista returned from Miami and won election as a senator in the Cuban general elections held that year.

By this time, almost all of Havana's major hotels and casinos — many were both — were owned or controlled by the Mafia. In his book *The Mafia in Havana: A Caribbean Mob Story*,<sup>5</sup> Cirules exposes the close ties between the American Mafia, US business interests and US intelligence agencies in pre-1959 Cuba. The Mafia were also

heavily involved in Cuban commerce, industry, transportation, communications (press, radio and television) and, of course, political leadership.

It is impossible to overstate the extent of US domination of Cuba around this time. By 1950, American corporations controlled 90% of Cuba's electricity and telephone services, 70% of Cuba's arable land, two-thirds of Cuba's sugar production, and 50 % of Cuba's railways. Only 3% of Cuban farmers owned the land they worked — a veritable state of serfdom.

The quality of life under American neocolonialism was abysmal: 56% of Cubans had no electricity; some 14% of Cubans had tuberculosis; 13% had typhoid fever; 91% of Cubans were malnourished; nearly 25% of Cubans were illiterate; the average life expectancy was just 59 years; infant mortality stood at 60 per 1000.

Decades of American exploitation, gangsterism, brutal US-backed dictatorships and associated corruption had ripped the heart out of the Cuban political system and society. It was inevitable that sooner or later there would be a radical revolution.

Supported by the army, Batista orchestrated a *coup d'état* on March 10, 1952, some three months before the scheduled presidential elections. A brutal and corrupt right-wing dictatorship ensued throughout the 1950s. Batista rose to power, and stayed in power, with the help and support of the US, only losing it in the final couple of years of his regime. He aligned himself with US business interests and used secret police and terror to control the country. During the Batista years Cuba had become a playpen for drug barons, the Mafia and American holidaymakers. Prostitution was rife and unregulated. It was, in the somewhat facetious words of Enrique Cirules, “a delirious paradise of casinos, brothels and drugs”.<sup>6</sup> After the 1959 revolution, the Eisenhower administration (1953-61) provided a sanctuary in the US for Batista's henchmen, torturers and murderers.

The man known as “America's last Ambassador to Cuba”, career diplomat Philip W. Bonsal, wrote in his book *Cuba, Castro, and the United States*: “In pre-Castro Cuba, the pervasive American presence in geopolitical terms was a constant reminder of the imperfect nature of Cuban sovereignty.”<sup>7</sup> ■

# The Cuban Revolution & US Aggression

## The struggle against Batista (1952-59)

The Cuban revolution was first and foremost a nationalist movement. Chris Slee has convincingly documented how the workers and peasants of Cuba “made the revolution”, as opposed to it having been imposed upon them.<sup>1</sup>

The rise to power of Fidel Castro had been closely watched by the CIA from 1948.

The beginnings of what is now known as the “Cuban Revolution” — there have, of course, been others — lay in Batista’s March 10, 1952 military coup. On April 5, 1952 the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) attempted to seize Camp Columbia, Batista’s military headquarters in Havana. On June 2, 1952 various moderate opposition leaders, led by Carlos Prío and Emilio Ochoa, met in Canada to unite their forces against Batista.

On July 26, 1953, a group of 135 revolutionaries led by Fidel Castro attacked the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba. Although the attack failed, July 26, 1953 is generally accepted as the beginning of the Cuban Revolution, with the revolutionary movement becoming known as the 26th of July Movement (Movimiento 26 Julio or J26M). On that very day another group of 25 revolutionaries led by Raúl Martínez Ararás attacked the Bayamo Barracks, again unsuccessfully.

Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro and other revolutionaries were imprisoned for almost two years for their unsuccessful attack on Batista’s armed forces.

In his two-hour speech *History Will Absolve Me* (1953)<sup>2</sup> Fidel Castro said:

... Cuba is suffering from a cruel and base despotism. You are well aware that resistance to despots is legitimate. This is a universally recognized principle and our 1940 Constitution expressly makes it a sacred right ... And even if this prerogative had not been provided by the Supreme Law of the Land, it is a consideration without which one cannot conceive of the existence of a democratic collectivity ...<sup>3</sup>

Castro made the speech on October 16, 1953 in his own defence in court against the

charges brought against him after the failed attack on the Moncada Barracks. *History Will Absolve Me* was published and became the manifesto of the J26M.

The revolutionaries were later pardoned and released.

On November 25, 1956 Fidel Castro, with some 80 insurgents — including Raúl Castro, Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos — set sail from Mexico for Cuba in the yacht *Granma*. Five days later, underground combatants of M 26-7 under the command of Frank País carried out an uprising in Santiago de Cuba to support the imminent landing of the revolutionaries. On December 2, 1956 the *Granma* landed in Las Coloradas, Oriente province. The survivors made their way to the mountains and began a guerrilla war.

Elsewhere, there were strikes in 1957-58 including an insurrectional general strike in early 1958. In May of that year Batista sent some 10,000 troops into the Sierra Maestra to destroy Castro's 300 armed guerrillas. Thousands more were sent to the Escambray to take on guerrillas led by Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo.

By 1957 the US government largely had withdrawn its support for the Batista regime as its brutality and corruption made it a liability. In March 1958 the US imposed an arms embargo on Cuba. By August 1958 the rebel groups had defeated the Cuban Army's attempted advance and captured a huge amount of arms.

There is some suggestion that the CIA had been helping for years to put Fidel Castro in power, in their efforts to get rid of Batista, and had even supplied arms to Castro during his guerrilla war in the mountains.<sup>4</sup> If true, this would be somewhat ironic in view of the CIA's later attempts to assassinate Castro and otherwise bring about regime change.

In December 1958 Castro and the other rebels captured several towns in eastern and central Cuba.

On January 1, 1959 the Rebel Army entered Havana. Batista had fled the country taking a considerable amount of loot with him. He had been regularly receiving a fixed percentage of the takings from the Mafia-controlled casinos.

Most historians and political commentators have acknowledged the historical and political inevitability of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, given the prolonged state of affairs that preceded it. Philip Bonsal, the US ambassador to Cuba, understood why the revolution was inevitable. In May 1959, he testified before a closed session of the US House Committee on Foreign Relations and explained why the Cuban Revolution had such widespread popular support. He said that "the corruption and the sadism of many Batista henchmen united most Cubans against the regime". He described how Batista's security forces had killed many Cubans, saying, "many, many more were arrested on no charges and kept in jail for indefinite periods".

After the fall of the Batista regime, the rats quickly fled the sinking ship. The first to leave Cuba for the US were the croupiers, casino workers, drug pushers and pimps, not to mention Batista's henchmen, torturers and murderers. This assortment of undesirables was quickly followed by many bourgeois business owners and landowners, the majority of whom were aligned with US interests and oligarchic circles.

The new revolutionary government moved swiftly to implement its program. In March 1959 Castro confronted racism in a speech in Havana and racial prejudice was made a punishable offense. Two months later, the Cuban government enacted the agrarian reform law which limited land ownership to 404.69 hectares (1000 acres) and expropriated all other land.

In October 1959 Castro called the US "accomplices" of the Batista loyalists forces who recently had launched air attacks on Cuba.

Bonsal protested to the US secretary of state that Cuban American relations were being poisoned because the US was allowing several hundred Batista allies to live in the US. Bonsal explained that the Cuban government saw this as harbouring counter-revolutionaries.

In Bonsal's view, the Batista allies should be forced to "move on to some other country". However, by this time the training and arming of anti-Castro Cubans in the US was well underway, with a view to overthrowing the Cuban government.

Bonsal's advice wasn't followed. The more conservative and reactionary members of the US congress regarded his attempts at adopting a conciliatory approach to the Castro regime as appeasement of communism. Bonsal was recalled several times and eventually the US broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba on January 3, 1961.

In May 1961, Fidel Castro declared Cuba a socialist state. That same year, three important Cuban political organisations were fused to form the Integrated Revolutionary Organisation (ORI), which was the forerunner of the Partido Comunista de Cuba (Communist Party of Cuba or PCC). The three organisations were the J26M, the Revolutionary Student Directorate, and the Stalinist Popular Socialist Party. The ORI was subsequently renamed the Partido Unido de la Revolution Socialista (United Party of the Socialist Revolution or PURS). In 1965 the PURS was replaced by the PCC.

Fidel Castro led Cuba from 1959 to 2008, serving as prime minister from 1959 to 1976 and president from 1976 to 2008. He was succeeded by his brother Raúl who stepped down as president in April 2018 but continued to serve as first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba until April 9, 2021.

Cuba remains a socialist state with a centrally planned economy. However, there have been some important changes.

## Some achievements of the Cuban revolution

The achievements of the Cuban revolution are many and include:

- Free universal public education, resulting in a highly educated population, with many poor Cubans becoming world-class doctors, scientists and scholars.
- The eradication of functional illiteracy, as a result of a successful national campaign for literacy implemented in 1961 (*Campaña Nacional de Alfabetización en Cuba*).
- Free universal healthcare, with the world's highest ratio of doctors to population, the eradication of many illnesses that beset Cubans prior to 1959 (including tuberculosis and typhoid fever), and several positive health indicators including high life expectancy (marginally higher than that of the United States) and low infant mortality (lower than that of the United States),
- An advanced medical research industry, with 80% of all Cuba's vaccines being produced in Cuba,
- Internationally renowned medical diplomacy with thousands of specialist staff — members of Cuba's Henry Reeve Brigade — regularly being sent abroad to help other nations tackle natural disasters, medical emergencies and other crises, and
- Many initiatives on the international stage including:
  - a. The export of its adult literacy campaign model, Yes, I Can (*Yo, Sí Puedo*), to more than 30 countries (including Australia), which has enabled more than 10,000,000 people to learn to read and write in their local language
  - b. Cuba's interventions in Angola — both in 1976 and again in 1987 — played a crucial role in defeating the South African forces, preventing them from occupying the country, and making a big contribution to the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa itself.

In a 2010 review, Dave Holmes wrote:

The Cuban Revolution has been marked by its tremendous internationalism, the high points of which have been its armed intervention in Angola in support of the struggle against the South African apartheid regime and its unstinting medical aid to the Third World ...

We might well wonder where would Cuba be today if there had been no blockade. The innumerable bourgeois commentaries on Cuba's economic problems rarely dwell, if at all, on the impact of the blockade. The imperialists and their flunkys go on about how socialism doesn't work but make absolutely no acknowledgement of their own — far from insignificant — contribution to Cuba's problems!!<sup>5</sup>

In an insightful review<sup>6</sup> of Helen Yaffe's book *We Are Cuba! How a Revolutionary People Have Survived in a Post-Soviet World* (2020)<sup>7</sup> Susan Babbitt writes:

Cuba's success in medicine, biotechnology, education and renewable power, under

almost 60 years of blockade, is remarkable. When the remarkable is not explained, it is dismissible. For it is anomalous, even miraculous, not repeatable. Without explanation, Cuba's story has no implications for the rest of us.

## America's dirty war against Cuba

A dirty war by the US against Cuba — the largest-ever covert action program conducted by one nation against another — commenced in October 1959. At its height, the dirty war included about 299 bands of right-wing exiles with 3995 members operating throughout Cuba.

Since 1959 there have been over 680 acts of terrorism including chemical warfare and bioterrorism, assassination attempts, and terrorist attacks against tourist facilities carried out by US agencies or paid hitmen under their protection, including air attacks on Cuba and sabotage activities carried out by thousands of right-wing exiles in Cuba. More than 3000 Cubans have died since 1959 as a result of these acts of terrorism.

In January 1960 US president Dwight D. Eisenhower suggested blockading the island, stating, "If they [the Cuban people] are hungry, they will throw Castro out."<sup>8</sup> Two months later, Eisenhower approved plans for overthrowing the Cuban government and, to that end, ordered the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) director Allen Dulles to train Cuban exiles for a covert invasion of Cuba. Regime change was the goal. It remains the goal for the US to this day.

On April 6, 1960 the then US deputy assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, Lester DeWitt Mallory, wrote a memorandum, stating:

The majority of Cubans support Castro ... [T]he only foreseeable means of alienating internal support [to the government] is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship ... [A]ll possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba ... denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government.<sup>9</sup>

That, for all intents and purposes, continues to be the demonstrably cruel policy and *modus operandi* of successive US governments.

To give effect to its covert plan to invade Cuba and assassinate Fidel Castro, the CIA recruited right-wing Cuban exiles and Mob bosses including Sam Giancana and Santo Trafficante Jr. The resources of the US departments of state and defense were also used.

On May 8, 1960 Cuba and the USSR established diplomatic relations. Cuba reached an agreement to sell some 635,000 tonnes of sugar to the USSR. This led to a series of escalating actions by the US and Cuba. Cuba ordered its refineries controlled by Shell

and Esso to process Soviet oil. Under pressure from the US government they refused. In July 1960 Cuba nationalised the refineries. The US then cancelled Cuba's sugar import quota (some 2.72 million tonnes), banned commercial ships from docking in Cuban ports, and suspended US financial credits to Cuban banks.

US ambassador Philip Bonsal opposed US retaliatory action and sanctions against Castro's government. He knew that would drive Cuba further into the Soviet orbit, which was exactly what happened.

The Cuban government then nationalised other US owned assets in Cuba including banks and sugar mills as well as various companies of the Cuban bourgeoisie aligned with US interests and oligarchic circles. Castro accused these companies of systemic undercapitalisation and economic sabotage.

On August 28, 1960 the Eisenhower administration responded by imposing an economic, financial and commercial embargo (*el bloqueo* — “the blockade”) against trade with Cuba, which lasts to this day. In February 1962 US president John F. Kennedy expanded the trade embargo to cover all US imports from Cuba and made the embargo permanent.

## The Bay of Pigs & the Cuban missile crisis

Kennedy officials exerted heavy pressure on the CIA to get rid of Fidel Castro. There were over 600 assassination plots and conspiracies against Castro — from exploding cigars to *femmes fatales*.

In a confidential memorandum of December 11, 1959 sent to CIA director Allen Dulles, the then-chief of the CIA's western hemisphere division, J.C. King, stated that in Cuba a “dictatorship of the far left is now established [in Cuba] ... which, if permitted to stand, will encourage similar actions against US holdings in other Latin American countries.”<sup>10</sup> The memorandum outlined a program with this specific objective: “The overthrow of Castro within one year, and his replacement by a junta friendly to the United States which will call for elections six months after assumption of office.”<sup>11</sup>

The program included the following:

- Clandestine radio attacks on Cuba, from liberal Caribbean countries.
- Intrusion operations against Castro's TV and radio, to be mounted from within Cuba.
- Formation of pro-US opposition groups to establish by force a controlled area within Cuba.<sup>12</sup>

Colonel King then suggested that:

Thorough consideration [should] be given to the elimination of Fidel Castro. None of those close to Fidel, such as his brother Raul or his companion Che Guevarra [*sic*], have



the same mesmeric appeal to the masses. Many informed people believe that the disappearance of Fidel would greatly accelerate the fall of the present government.<sup>13</sup>

Eisenhower had already approved a plan for a group of CIA-sponsored counterintelligence personnel, in the form of Cuban exiles, to invade Cuba and then take control of the Cuban government. The idea was to turn Cuban exile leaders in the US into a suitably representative government-in-exile, with the ultimate aim of eventually establishing a pro-US puppet state in Cuba.

On April 15, 1961 there was a bombing raid on Cuban airfields. From April 17-20, 1961 there was an attempted invasion at the Bay of Pigs.<sup>14</sup> This was a failed landing operation on Cuba's south-western coast by a CIA-sponsored paramilitary group (Brigade 2506) made up of right-wing anti-Castro Cuban exiles. The Bay of Pigs fiasco was both embarrassing and humiliating to the US. In November 1961 Kennedy dismissed CIA director Allen Dulles, saying, "Your successes are unheralded and your failures are trumpeted."

After the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev reached a secret agreement with Fidel Castro in July 1962 to place Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba to deter any future US invasion attempt. However, US intelligence became aware of the Soviet arms build-up. From October 16 to October 28, 1962 there was a 13-day confrontation between the two superpowers. On October 22, 1962 Kennedy wrote to Khrushchev stating that the US would not permit offensive weapons to be delivered to, or stationed in, Cuba, and demanded that the USSR dismantle the missile bases already under construction or completed and return all offensive weapons to the USSR. There were several subsequent terse communications and, more importantly, a US naval blockade of Cuba.

Kennedy invoked the Monroe Doctrine with these words:

... It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup>

Khrushchev responded, saying the US naval blockade was an act of aggression and that Soviet ships bound for Cuba would be ordered to proceed. However, some Soviet ships did turn back from the quarantine line while others were stopped by US naval forces. The US prepared for an attack on Cuba should that be deemed necessary. On October 28, 1962 Khrushchev finally issued a public statement that Soviet missiles would be dismantled and removed from Cuba.

The incident was the closest the Cold War came to escalating into a full-scale nuclear war.

While many hail Kennedy's decision making in the crisis as masterful, there is

another view. Cuban journalist and diplomat Carlos Lechuga<sup>16</sup> argues that the naval blockade was an “irresponsible action” and that the peaceful outcome “was due to Soviet moderation and the United States’ good luck”.<sup>17</sup> Lechuga writes that the US used coercion “while turning a blind eye to its international obligations, openly ignoring the sovereign right of Cuba ... forced to defend itself.”<sup>18</sup>

Speaking to over one million Cubans on February 4, 1962, Fidel Castro proclaimed the socialist, anti-imperialist and Latin American-oriented nature of the Cuban Revolution.

### **The CIA keeps at it**

On October 9, 1967 Che Guevara was assassinated in Bolivia by the CIA and its local henchmen. Although no further evidence was needed, the scale of resources deployed to defeat Che’s Bolivian campaign showed how much the US feared the Cuban revolution and its extension.

In 1971 operatives linked to anti-Castro terrorists, with at least the tacit backing of the CIA, introduced African swine fever virus into Cuba. This was the first and, to date, only outbreak of African swine flu in the western hemisphere.

CIA agent Luis Posada Carriles, a Cuban national who had helped organise the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, was responsible for the mid-air bombing of a Cubana airliner in 1976 which killed 73 people. Some 22 years’ later, Posada admitted to having organised a series of hotel bombings in Cuba, which resulted in 11 persons being injured and the death of an Italian tourist. In 2000 Posada was arrested and jailed in Panama for planning to bomb a university where Fidel Castro was due to speak. Posada was accused of lying to US authorities about his entry into the US, and about his involvement in the bomb attacks in Havana, but he was acquitted. He was never tried for mass murder or terrorism and received enormous support from right-wing Cuban Americans. He died in Miami on May 23, 2018, aged 90. ■

# Rectification. Special Period. The Blockade

Today Cuba is facing its biggest test since the 1959 revolution.

## Neocolonial economic dependence

Cuba is perhaps the supreme example of the lasting and detrimental effects of imperial and colonial dominance and dependence. Frank Baran argued that underdeveloped countries are characterised by dual economies in the form of a large agricultural sector and a small industrialised sector.<sup>1</sup> This is especially true of Cuba.

Cuba's main crop for many decades was sugar. Tobacco (more specifically, cigars), and citrus fruits, were always secondary to sugar — so much so that Cuba, as already mentioned, basically had a single-crop economy, with one trading partner, namely, the United States.

Being almost totally dependent on one market and one trading partner “more and more subjected [Cuba] to the dictates of the United States”.<sup>2</sup> In 1900 sugar constituted some 36% of all Cuba's exports; by 1925 it was 84%.

In July 1960 the US cancelled Cuba's sugar import quota (by then some 2.72 million tonnes).

Cuba found a new trading partner in a relatively short time, namely, the Soviet Bloc. That would remain good until the collapse of the USSR in 1991. The Soviets paid 5.4 times more for Cuban sugar cane than the world market price.<sup>3</sup> This provided slightly more than 80% of Cuba's foreign exchange.<sup>4</sup>

Soviet support undoubtedly enabled Cuba to survive in the face of intense US hostility but it also had negative consequences. Many problematic Soviet methods and ideas took root in Cuba.

The period 1980 to 1985 was characterised for the most part by significant socioeconomic progress and achievement, despite the systematic and ever-increasing aggressiveness on the part of the US as well as adverse climate phenomena.

## Rectification campaign

In 1986, the Cuban government launched the Rectification Campaign (“Campaign of Rectification of Errors and Negative Tendencies”). Roberto Jorquera explained:

It aimed to increase people’s participation in the economic and political structures and was a return to the ideas of Che Guevara: relying on heightened political consciousness rather than material incentives and bureaucratic control to run the economy.

In 1987, President Fidel Castro noted: “The most serious error of economic policy between 1975 and 1985 was undoubtedly the reliance upon economic mechanisms to resolve all the problems faced by the new society, ignoring the role assigned to political factors in the construction of socialism”.

In 1991, at the fourth party congress, Castro explained that the “rectification process constituted the revolution’s strategic counter-offensive ... which provoked an extraordinary turnabout in our society, facilitating the revival of the roots, principles and genuinely humane, ideological and ethical values that gave breath and life to our own kind of socialism ...

While overall living standards dropped slightly for most Cubans, the national economy was stabilised and there was more popular participation in politics. Its success reflected the Cuban leadership’s awareness of and willingness to address the problems in a way that the Stalinist Soviet bureaucracy was incapable of doing.<sup>5</sup>

## The ‘special period’

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was devastating for Cuba. It entered the so-called “special period in time of peace” — many years of financial hardship and massive shortages of food and other essential products.

Suddenly \$8 billion a year disappeared from Cuban trade, imports were reduced by 75%, including most foodstuffs, spare parts, agrochemicals, and industrial equipment.<sup>6</sup>

Given its almost total reliance on the Soviet Bloc, Cuba went into an acute crisis — something that almost certainly would have finished most other nations. However, with Fidel Castro at the helm, Cuba, although terribly isolated, and with the blockade deliberately being tightened around it, managed to come through the special period.

With the demise of communism across the globe, Castro vowed never to give up on socialism, telling Cubans that Cuba would go it alone, if necessary, and survive. Helen Yaffe, the author of *We Are Cuba! How a Revolutionary People Have Survived in a Post-Soviet World* (2020), quoted a farmer who told her: “Some people thought ... Cuba would leave socialism, but this is real revolution and real independence.”<sup>7</sup>

The Cuban government implemented a plan that had originally been drawn up for times of war. Resources were distributed evenly. Many factories, industries and

enterprises, and transportation routes were shut down in order to maintain those activities that were most essential. No schools or hospitals were closed and a basic minimum of food and other essential items was guaranteed and maintained, despite long queues and considerable inconvenience to ordinary Cubans.

With fuel in short supply, bicycles and walking replaced cars and buses for large numbers of Cubans. (Some Cuban health indices actually improved: people were getting more exercise and eating a leaner diet.) Oxen pulled farm equipment in place of tractors.

With the previous fertiliser, herbicide and insecticide inputs now missing, Cuban agriculture made a big turn to organic farming and permaculture. (A number of Australian experts and enthusiasts went to Cuba to assist with these efforts.) Urban gardens flourished on a large scale in Havana and other cities.

Direct election was introduced for delegates to the national and provincial assemblies. In 1993 a number of positive measures were adopted with respect to Cuba's tourism and pharmaceutical industries. The Communist Party dropped discriminatory provisions that barred religious believers from joining.

In 1997 the Cuban government allowed Cubans to rent out rooms in their houses or apartments to tourists (known as *casas particulares*). Many Cuban families were thus provided with new sources of income and the Cuban tourist industry was given a real boost. Tourism was now an important and ever-growing source of income for Cuba.

The basic socialist nature of the Cuban revolution remained firmly in place and Cuba survived the special period. Gradually, the Cuban economy "was put back on a sound footing".<sup>8</sup>

## Foreign currency reserves & international debt

The gist of Cuba's current crisis is that the country doesn't have enough foreign currency reserves (especially US dollars). As of 2021, Cuba's stock of foreign currency reserves is at its lowest ever. Cuba needs foreign currency to pay for imports and to service debts (that is, to make repayments on its loans). Some 70% of Cuba's food, and 5% of its fuel, machinery and medicines are imported. Cuba is very import-dependent — for every dollar Cuba gains through exports, it spends about five on imports.

Cuba has a lot of international debt, about \$17.8 billion in 2017. The current figure would be considerably higher. The nation is already late on its debt repayments. In 2020 Cuba signed an agreement with the Paris Club to waive \$8.5 billion of its foreign debt, with \$2.6 billion to be paid over the next 18 years. The actual foreign debt would have increased during 2020-21. It is unlikely that Cuba will be able to comply with the

agreement signed with the Paris Club and more of Cuba's foreign debt will simply have to be wiped out — or concessions extracted from Cuba.

The three main reasons why Cuba's foreign currency reserves are lower than ever are: the COVID-19 pandemic and its dramatic impact on tourist numbers; a weak export year; and the US blockade, much tightened under Trump and continued under Biden.

Tourism ordinarily makes up about 13% of Cuba's GDP and a lot of Cuba's foreign currency reserves come from tourism. Until COVID arrived, tourism was burgeoning. The pandemic has seen a dramatic drop in tourists coming to Cuba. In 2019 some 4.2 million tourists came to Cuba; in 2021 there were only about one million.

Also, in 2020, as a result of a severe drought, Cuba experienced its worst harvest of sugar cane in 100 years.

Another important source of export income is the export of medical services, ordinarily amounting to some 10% of Cuba's GDP. Because of the pandemic, many of the country's health personnel overseas had to come home to help the fight against COVID-19 within Cuba.

## Trump steps up the blockade

Over the past six decades the US embargo against Cuba, the longest in modern history, has been progressively widened and now embraces almost all economic, financial and commercial relationships with Cuba.

Worse, the embargo now extends to the imposition of restrictions on third parties (i.e., other nations and persons trading with or investing in Cuba).

There is a whole raft of US legislation that aims to destroy the Cuban economy and bring about regime change. These laws include the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 (the "Torricelli Act") and the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (the "Helms-Burton Act").<sup>9</sup>

The Torricelli Act, passed in 1992 during Cuba's special period of economic depression, prohibits foreign-based subsidiaries of US companies from trading with Cuba, travel to Cuba by US citizens (subject to some limited exceptions), and family remittances to Cuba. The legislation was enacted at a time when the US was convinced that Cuban socialism would soon collapse and it wanted to bring that about even sooner.

The Helms-Burton Act provides, among other things, that *any* company (eg French, Canadian, British, Australian or whatever) that trades or otherwise has business dealings with Cuba is prohibited from doing business in the US. Title III of the Helms-

Burton Act empowers Americans to sue US and international companies profiting from property that was nationalised or confiscated after 1959.

The extraterritorial operation of these US laws has been much criticised, as they derogate from the sovereignty of other world nations. Although some countries have stopped trading, or limited their trade, with Cuba as a result of these laws, several nations have enacted their own laws to protect their businesses from retaliatory US legal action when operating in Cuba.

Canada and the European Union have made a joint declaration stating that the extraterritorial operation of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act is contrary to international law.

However, the existence of the laws does discourage foreign investment and trade with Cuba.

From the mid-1990s to 2015 the US congress authorised some \$284 million to promote capitalist democracy in Cuba.

Each year since 1992, the UN General Assembly has condemned the US blockade of Cuba, rejecting Washington's criticism of alleged human rights violations in Cuba. Most recently, namely on June 23, 2021, a total of 184 countries voted to demand the end of the US embargo on Cuba for the 29th year in a row. Only the United States and Israel voted against the motion.<sup>10</sup> As always, this global repudiation of its policy fell on deaf ears.

The detrimental effects of imperial and colonial dominance and dependence have been greatly exacerbated in the past six decades by the ongoing US blockade. The total cost of the embargo to Cuba, from 1960 to 2020, at current prices is in the order of \$144 billion. Taking into account the depreciation of the dollar against the value of gold on the international market, the blockade has caused quantifiable damages to Cuba of over \$1 trillion.<sup>11</sup>

In 1999 the Clinton administration established the people-to-people program, ostensibly to reach out to, and assist, ordinary Cubans, but its real purpose was disinformation and destabilisation. Then, in 2002, US president George W Bush set up the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba (CAFC) which recommended that the blockade be retained, that every attempt be made to interrupt any moves by a successor regime to replace Fidel Castro, that the Helms-Burton Act be implemented, and that an American "transition coordinator" be appointed to assess when conditions in post-Castro Cuba would make Cuba eligible for aid and other assistance that usually accompany the American seal of approval.

In 2004 the Bush administration massively scaled back Cuban American family travel and remittances and stopped Cuba using the US dollar as a means of payment

inside Cuba.

In May 2004 the US Federal Reserve fined UBS AG, Switzerland's largest bank, \$100 million for allegedly sending US dollars to Cuba. This move created serious problems for Havana in depositing dollars abroad and renewing bills in circulation, and potentially frightened foreign banks into dropping commercial relations. Washington also set up a special task force to chase down Cuban assets internationally — an act of unprecedented aggression in the history of international financial relations.

In January 2011 US president Barack Obama relaxed restrictions on travel from the US to Cuba. Full diplomatic relations between the two countries were restored in December 2014,<sup>12</sup> but the embargo remained.

The brief warming of relations between the US and Cuba came to an abrupt end with the election of Donald J. Trump as US president.

In late 2016 the US claimed that a number of its embassy staff in Havana had fallen ill with a set of medical signs and symptoms that has become known as the “Havana syndrome”. Trump accused Cuba of perpetrating, in unspecified ways, invisible attacks on his nation's embassy staff. However, there is no evidence that the Cuban government caused or permitted any such attacks on embassy staff of the US or any other nation.

Trump used the charges to reduce the number of embassy staff in Havana to a bare minimum, and to stop the issue of visas at the embassy, causing considerable inconvenience to Cubans who have been forced to travel to another country to apply for visas.

Trump was determined to pander to ultra-reactionary Cubans in Florida. On every occasion that he imposed some sanction on Cuba, he travelled to Florida to announce it before an audience of enthusiastic right-wing Cuban Americans. Trump wreaked havoc on Cuba from 2017 onwards, right up to the end of his presidency. The sanctions include:

- 243 new and additional sanctions including sanctions on Cuban military-run companies and hotels as well as any company or vessel involved with shipping Venezuelan oil to Cuba.
- Increased persecution of Cuba's financial and commercial transactions.
- The activation of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act.<sup>13</sup>
- A ban on flights from the US to all Cuban airports except Havana.
- A ban on US cruise ships visiting Cuba.
- Restrictions on the importation of Cuban rum and cigars.
- A ban on Americans staying at any properties owned by the Cuban government.
- A ban on sending remittances to Cuban citizens, blacklisting the Cuban company Fincimex which processed remittances for Western Union.



- Persecution and intimidation of companies that send fuel supplies to Cuba.
- The forced closure of the one US-run hotel in Havana — managed by Marriott International,<sup>14</sup> which just happens to be a Trump Hotels competitor.
- A concerted campaign seeking to discredit Cuban medical cooperation programs including the country's well-respected Henry Reeve International Medical Contingent, including pressuring other countries not to hire Cuban doctors and nurses to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

## US declares Cuba 'state sponsor of terrorism'

To top things off, on January 11, 2021, in the dying days of his presidency, US secretary of state Mike Pompeo perversely redesignated Cuba a state sponsor of terrorism. (The Reagan administration had first designated Cuba a state sponsor of terrorism in 1982. Barack Obama had taken Cuba off the list of state sponsors of terrorism in 2015.)

Cuba's ministry of foreign affairs immediately condemned the US decision in the strongest terms, saying, among other things:

Cuba is not a State that sponsors terrorism and this is a truth that has been widely recognized by everybody. Cuba's official and well-known policy and impeccable behaviour has been that of rejecting terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, particularly State terrorism, wherever and by and against whoever committed.<sup>15</sup>

The ministry went on to say that Cuba has been "a state victim of terrorism", asserting that Cubans have suffered from it firsthand, at the cost of 3478 fatalities and 2099 persons with disabilities due to the actions carried out by the government of the US or that have been perpetrated and sponsored from the territory of that country with the acquiescence of the US official authorities. Those figures were contained in a 2001 report by Cuba's permanent mission to the United Nations. The deaths and injuries to persons were the result of "terrorism", "aggression", "acts of piracy and other actions".<sup>16</sup>

Cuban foreign minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla said:

We condemn the hypocritical and cynical designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism ... The political opportunism of this action is recognized by all who have an honest concern about the scourge of terrorism and its victims.<sup>17</sup>

It is the ultimate irony that a country that for so long has been the victim of sustained acts of state terrorism should itself be accused, quite unjustifiably, of the same crime.

All of these US decisions and actions have hurt ordinary Cubans immeasurably. Many prospective overseas investors have in recent times put plans on hold and foreign firms operating in Cuba gave consideration to restructuring to lower their risk

exposure. In addition, if just 10% of the value of any product sought to be imported by Cuba — take, for example, medical supplies — is made from US parts or technical processes, the US government blocks the importation of the product pursuant to the embargo.

Prior to his election as US president Joe Biden promised to reverse Trump's policies that have inflicted harm on the Cuban people.

Eighty Democratic members of the US congress urged Biden in March 2021 to repeal Trump's cruel sanctions and renew engagement with Cuba. Also in March 2021, several political and civic leaders — Democrats and Republicans — from South Florida urged Biden to re-allow remittances to Cuba.<sup>18</sup> The congress members also said engagement on medical cooperation should be a top priority in light of the pandemic.

However, these calls for a more rational and compassionate policy approach toward Cuba have fallen on deaf ears. It seems clear that Biden will not, in the short to medium term, return to Obama's policy of engagement with Cuba.

Biden's reluctance to make any immediate changes in US policy toward Cuba is partly because of internal US politics. In key states such as Florida, US policy toward Cuba is a deeply polarising issue and the Democrats are increasingly on the defensive.

Ultra-reactionary Cuban Americans have an inordinate influence on US policy towards Cuba. The reason is simple: The Cuban American vote can swing an election in the key battleground state of Florida.

On July 22, 2021 the US treasury department announced<sup>19</sup> that it was applying sanctions to Alvaro López Miera, the Cuban defence minister and leader of Cuba's ministry of the revolutionary armed forces, as well as the Boinas Negras (the National Special Brigade of Cuba's ministry of the interior) for the purported "repression of peaceful, pro-democratic protests in Cuba that began on July 11". Biden said these actions were "just the beginning" and that the US "will continue to sanction individuals responsible for oppression of the Cuban people".<sup>20</sup>

The sanctions were imposed under by executive order under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (the "Global Magnitsky Act").<sup>21</sup> This public law authorises the US government to sanction any person or body it sees as human rights offenders, freeze their assets, and ban them from entering the US. Essentially, the legislation enables the US to punish any person or body — and thus their country — which the US finds distasteful. It is therefore not at all surprising that the legislation has been invoked against Cuba.

Cuban foreign minister Bruno Rodríguez labelled the sanctions "baseless and slanderous" and said that the US should apply its sanctions legislation to itself for the

“systematic repression and police brutality that took the lives of 1021 in 2020”.

One notorious example is the National Endowment for Democracy which funds a disparate array of projects and movements. One current project is “Empowering Cuban Hip-Hop Artists as Leaders in Society”, the ostensible aim of which is to “empower Cuban artists as cultural leaders to promote citizen participation and social change in society”. Of course, the real aim of these bodies and projects is regime change.

## **BLM movement condemns US blockade**

The Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation (BLM) issued a statement<sup>22</sup> saying that the unrest in Cuba resulted from the “US federal government’s inhumane treatments of Cubans”. BLM went on to say:

Since 1962, the United States has forced pain and suffering on the people of Cuba by cutting off food, medicine and supplies, costing the tiny island nation an estimated \$130 billion.

The US embargo, BLM noted, was “instituted with the explicit intention of destabilising the country and undermining Cubans’ right to choose their own government” and is “at the heart of Cuba’s current crisis.”. BLM then called for the lifting the US embargo which undermines “Cubans’ right to choose their own government”, and is punishment for Cuba’s “commitment to sovereignty and self-determination”.

The US government’s response to the events of July 11, 2021 is breathtakingly hypocritical, feigning empathy with the Cuban people in their quest for food, medicines and other necessities of life while its own policies, maintained over more than six decades, are the cause of the very circumstances complained of.

On July 30, 2021 the Biden administration imposed further sanctions on two Cuban police force leaders, as well as the Cuban interior ministry’s national police force.<sup>23</sup> Biden once again promised Cuban American leaders more actions were coming. Once again, the sanctions were imposed under by executive order under the Global Magnitsky Act.

Biden has stated that his government is “taking concerted action to bolster the cause of the Cuban people”.<sup>24</sup>

Biden said that he had asked the treasury and state departments to report back to him on how to allow remittance payments from Americans to Cubans without the Cuban government profiting.

Biden is also working on a plan to try to provide “wireless communications to Cuban”. For starters, Cubans already have the benefit of the internet — in 2005 only 10% of Cubans had access to the internet; by 2021, the figure had risen to about 60%.

What Biden is proposing is simply code for beefing up the US government's longstanding campaign, partly overt and partly covert, to destabilise the Cuban socialist regime by further empowering ultra-reactionary Cuban Americans in Florida to continue their campaign of purveying disinformation and inciting insurrection in Cuba, even if that be at the expense of the lives of ordinary Cubans.

Biden has clearly decided to sing from the Trump songbook. Being the career politician that he is, Biden is fully aware that his party has been on the receiving end of criticism from right-wing Cuban Americans for some time now. It is therefore no surprise that the recent sanctions imposed by Biden come hot in the heels of resolutions passed by the Florida Democratic Party calling for additional sanctions against the leaders of the Cuban government. Also, there will be congressional mid-term elections in 2022 and the Democrats hope to unseat US senator Marco Rubio.

The US president can grant certain exemptions to the US embargo. It is also theoretically possible for Cuba to import food and medicine from the US, but Washington's red tape and licensing requirements make it extremely difficult for that to occur.

In recent times, the US blockade has led to international banks avoiding transactions involving Cuba. According to Cuba's central bank, at least 24 banks have stopped doing business with Cuba since Trump tightened the embargo on Cuba.

In recent years, tourism has become Cuba's most important industry but the pandemic and more than 200 additional draconian sanctions imposed by the Trump administration and continued by the Biden administration have had a devastating effect on the Cuban economy.

## The COVID-19 pandemic

The fact that the Trump administration chose to impose the some 243 additional sanctions on Cuba and its inhabitants, on top of the existing set of sanctions, prohibitions and restrictions constituting the US embargo, during a global pandemic — and that Biden has retained them — shows the criminal nature of the US ruling circles.

The US blockade, together with the pandemic, has exacerbated shortages of food, medicine and fuel in Cuba, as well as power outages caused by a lack of fuel and plant breakdowns. Many Cubans are resorting to the black market in US dollars.

Vaccine inequity has left Latin American countries with limited access to vaccines. In addition, two long-time German providers of laboratory and other medical supplies, Sartorius and Merck, both stopped selling pharmaceutical equipment and supplies to Cuba in 2020 for fear of the sanctions the US government has been applying internationally. This has prevented Cuba from obtaining purification equipment

needed as it worked to develop its own COVID vaccines.

Cuba managed without the supplies from Germany, and is now giving doses of two domestically produced vaccines that have shown good efficacy in clinical trials. Cuba is the only nation in the Latin American and Caribbean region that has developed its own vaccines against COVID-19. Despite the blockade, Cuba now has four entirely domestically produced COVID vaccines.

Cuba reacted quickly in 2020 to COVID-19 and avoided the worst of the pandemic throughout that year. However, that all changed the following year. On January 1, 2021 Cuba reported just 169 new cases. By February 1, the nation was recording over 1000 new cases daily. Things have been getting steadily worse since then.

On January 1, 2021 Cuba introduced new rules requiring all visitors to produce a negative PCR test for COVID-19 before travel.

As at August 5, 2021, the cumulative number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Cuba is 431,013, with the total number of virus-related deaths being 3184. The number of daily new cases has been steadily rising since January 2021, pushing health centres to the point of collapse. The BBC reports having spoken to several Cubans who claim that their relatives died at home without them receiving medical care they needed.<sup>25</sup>

Tourism, ordinarily a very important engine of the Cuban economy, has been greatly affected by the pandemic. In 2021 foreign arrivals in Cuba crashed and no other nationality has stayed away as much as Canadians. Overall visits have been down about 90% compared to 2019, but Canadian visits have plunged by 99.5%. Russia, by contrast, actually sent more visitors in 2021. The loss of tourist income has been enormously damaging to Cuba's economy.

Nevertheless, despite some recent public health challenges, Cuba's response to COVID-19 has been much better than many other countries including the United States. ■

# The July 11 Protests & the Future

On July 11, 2011 there were protests in Havana and in some other towns and cities in Cuba. The protests were triggered by a demonstration that broke out in the city of San Antonio de los Baños, about 100km from Havana and quickly spread to the Cuban capital where some two to three thousand Cubans gathered in protest. Similar events unfolded in Bayamo, Manzanillo, Camagüey, Holguín and Santiago de Cuba.

The last time major protests broke out in Cuba was in August 1994, on Havana's Malecón waterfront, during the fourth year of the special period, and they were only in Havana.

The western media generally overlooked the fact that many thousands also came onto the streets to *support* the Cuban government. Worse, some western media outlets printed or otherwise misrepresented photos showing Cubans *supporting* their government as the very opposite, even going as far as to misrepresent some photos of right-wing Cuban Americans in Miami demonstrating against the Cuban government as purportedly having been taken in Cuba itself!

However, an objective analysis of the protests leads to the conclusion that the bulk of the protestors weren't counter-revolutionaries, nor were they linked to counter-revolutionary organisations, nor were the protests led by counter-revolutionary organisations.<sup>1</sup>

Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canel blamed the unrest on the United States, saying that many protesters were sincere but were being manipulated by US-orchestrated social media campaigns from Miami-based Cuban American influencers and YouTubers encouraging Cubans on the island to take to the streets.<sup>2</sup> These campaigns, aided and abetted, if not actually incited, by the US government are part of an attempted "colour revolution", the goal of which is to slowly and steadily built chaos and instability in Cuba until a US puppet government can finally be installed.

The Cuban protests appear to have been a mixture of US backed contra types and people who have lost perspective and been driven to desperation by the terrible shortages of food and other necessities in Cuba.

It is undeniable that much of the Cuban population is hurting. To the extent to which there are angry, hurting people, it's natural that some of that anger and hurt will be directed at the Cuban government. Social media from right-wing Cuban Americans only fans the flames — something Washington and the Cuban American right are only too happy to see.

The Cuban novelist and journalist Leonardo Padura has written:

It is quite possible that everything that happened in Cuba, starting last Sunday, July 11, was encouraged by a certain number of people opposed to the system, some of them even paid, with the intention of destabilising the country and creating a situation of chaos and insecurity. It is also true that later, as often happens in these events, opportunistic and regrettable acts of vandalism occurred. But I think that, true or not, these events do not make the scream that we have heard the least bit unreasonable. A cry that is also a product of the desperation of a society that is going through not only a long economic crisis and a specific health crisis, but also a crisis of confidence and a loss of expectations.<sup>3</sup>

In a similar vein Cuban author Julio César Guanche writes:

Article 3 of the Constitution states that the nation's sovereignty lies in the people "*pueblo*", "from whom the State's power emanates". This text — approved by 86% of voters — requires us to respect popular sovereignty and fundamental rights ...

The first step is to seek political solutions to the protests. Next, declare a state of emergency with guarantees of fundamental rights. To skip over these measures and simply claim the "right to resist" is an illegitimate use of this concept, and it would augur a tragic situation for the nation ...

The people in the streets [on July 11, 2021] are the Cuban people, or part of it, who belong to the people as much as anyone else, regardless of whether one likes the way they speak, how they act, or how they think. The Cuban people, as a whole, is sovereign.

The Cuban state must listen to, respect, and protect the people.<sup>4</sup>

While the US blockade is indeed the prime cause of Cuba's woes, the Cuban government must take some responsibility. In the opinion of the Editorial Board of *Comunistas* the "political legitimacy of the [Cuban] government is considerably diminishing."<sup>5</sup>

The Republican mayor of Miami Francis Suarez, whose father was that city's first Cuban-born mayor, seized on the opportunity to proclaim loudly that the US government should explore air strikes against Cuba, telling Fox News on July 13, 2021 that "what should be contemplated right now is a coalition of potential military action in Cuba", similar to US interventions in Panama and Yugoslavia. Ultra-reactionary Cuban Americans in Miami were ecstatic.

## Important economic changes in Cuba

A series of reforms starting in 2010 have allowed Cubans to work as self-employed people in the private sector, but they could only have jobs in 127 fairly narrow categories defined by the Cuban government.

In 2020 the Cuban government opened shops where ordinary Cubans could buy food and other basic necessities in foreign currencies, (of which there is a shortage of on the island). However, the BBC reports that the shops have angered the majority of Cubans, who are paid in Cuban pesos.<sup>6</sup>

However, under pressure from the economic impact of COVID-19 and US sanctions, the Cuban government accepted that it had to move towards a more market-oriented economy. Thus, Cuba scrapped a ban on most private businesses in early 2021. There is now a list of 124 jobs prohibited for the private sector and the list of authorised activities has now been expanded from 127 to more than 2000. Self-employed people currently make up around 15-20% of Cuba's workforce. A right of "private ownership", exercisable over specific means of production by natural or legal persons, Cubans or foreigners has a "complementary role in the economy" and is recognised in Article 22(d) of the Cuban Constitution of 2019.

The Cuban economy contracted about 11% in 2020-2021. The Cuban government was forced to devalue its currency in 2021. In theory, this should make exports cheaper and result in an increase in foreign currency reserves. In that same year, the Cuba government eliminated its dual currency system by abolishing the Cuban convertible peso (CUC). The CUC, first introduced in 2004, was pegged to the US dollar (one CUC to one US dollar) and was most frequently used by tourists. However, the CUC was extremely unpopular with those ordinary Cubans who didn't have access to CUCs.

The first six months of 2021 saw a currency unification, with all CUCs being converted into CUPs (at a rate of one to 24) by June 20, 2021. There is now only the Cuban peso (CUP), which is currently pegged to the US dollar at the rate of one US dollar to 24 CUPs. On paper, these changes equate to a 95% devaluation of Cuba's currency. However, the real change in devaluation is probably around 80%.<sup>7</sup>

On June 21, 2021 Cuban banks and other financial institutions ceased accepting US dollars due to the US government tightening the embargo restrictions on American and foreign banks. Cuba has found it increasingly difficult to redeem US dollars abroad as a result of the additional restrictions imposed by the Trump administration — restrictions which have not been reversed by Joe Biden. Suspending cash deposits in US dollars was seen by the Cuban government to be necessary in order to protect the local financial system.<sup>8</sup> However, the change will almost certainly not eliminate the black market for US dollars in Cuba.



Inflation in Cuba is likely to be in the order of 500-900% in 2021, according to Pavel Vidal Alejandro, a former economist with Cuba's Central Bank.<sup>9</sup> At present, inflation is skyrocketing (some 500%) and still increasing.<sup>10</sup> As a response to this hyperinflation, the Cuban government has announced that public sector wages and pensions will be increased by 400%, but this hasn't been enough, especially for the 15-20% of the population who work in the private sector.

## International aid to Cuba

The detrimental effects of the six-decades-long United States blockade of Cuba, combined with the cruel impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, are hitting Cuba very hard.

While the US government is blaming Cuba's own government for its current malaise many other countries of the world see the situation quite differently. Russia, China, Vietnam, Mexico, Jamaica, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Bolivia are just some of the countries that are friendly to Cuba which either have already sent, or have promised to send, food and other supplies to assist its people in the present crisis.

Mexico, Nicaragua and Bolivia are leading the solidarity actions for Cuba in Latin America.

In July 2021 some six million syringes were donated to Cuba by US-based non-profit organisation Global Health Partners, for use in connection with Cuba's COVID vaccination campaign. The first shipment of two million syringes arrived at the Cuban port of Mariel on July 17. Typically, the shipment was delayed almost a month by US red tape.

On July 25, 2021 two aircraft arrived in Havana from Russia delivering 80 tonnes of food and protective equipment including one million medical masks. Vietnam despatched 10,900 tonnes of rice and China provided 30 lung ventilators, among other supplies. Jamaica's health workers sent a 200kg batch of syringes, needles, masks and disinfectants to fight the Covid-19 pandemic in Cuba's Santiago de Cuba province.

Five days later, Cuba began the process of delivering the food sent by these friendly nations to its people in several municipalities. In addition to food, various other products including sanitary material have been provided to Cuba free of charge. These products are also being provided free of charge to Cubans.

On July 28, 2021 Cuba's minister of domestic trade Betsy Díaz Velázquez announced that La Lisa, in Havana, will distribute a module consisting basically of rice, grains, pasta and sugar. This standard module will be distributed throughout Cuba to the more than 3.8 million families registered in the nation's consumer registry offices.

Humberto Cardoso, Cuba's director of the Trade Enterprise in Havana, has said that the first deliveries will be made in 18 warehouses in that locality, with the first

deliveries being made to the homes of those who are most vulnerable.

The households of the inhabitants of 15 out of the 18 Popular Councils of Pinar del Río municipality, which is at the western end of Cuba, will receive canned meat.

In addition, the households of the inhabitants of the entire province of Cienfuegos, a city on Bahía de Cienfuegos, a bay on Cuba's south coast, will receive a pound of oil per house, although this process will now begin in the mountainous locality of Cumanayagua.

Rodrigo Malmierca, Cuba's minister of foreign trade and investment, has said that while the US government tightens the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba, his nation continues to receive solidarity aid from several other nations.

## Who has the high moral ground?

The fundamental cause of Cuba's current crisis is the US blockade and the other draconian strictures imposed on Cuba by the US government. Of course, the pandemic has made things that much worse.

Whenever the annual motion to condemn the US embargo is debated by the United Nations General Assembly, the US representative seeks to raise the issue of Cuba's alleged human rights violations. However, the UN routinely rejects Washington's criticism.

The Biden administration says support for democracy and human rights is at the core of its policy toward Cuba. Of course, this is complete rubbish. US government policy is formulated in the interests of US imperialism and nothing else. Just consider, for instance:

- Since 2000 the US has given nearly \$12 billion to Columbia, a country ruled by an oligarchy of latifundists and drug barons. Most of that money goes to Columbia's security forces, which are notorious for their involvement in massacres and death squad activity.
- Israel is the largest cumulative recipient of US foreign assistance since World War II — some \$146 billion, mainly military aid. Israel was founded on the basis of massive ethnic cleansing and subjects the Palestinian people to a harsh apartheid regime.
- The US doesn't have any right whatsoever to criticise Cuba or any other nation for human rights abuses. The BLM movement has shone a spotlight on the racist killer cop forces across the country. And about one quarter of the world's prison population of almost 10 million is in US jails! <sup>11</sup> Florida, the state so important to both Democrats and Republicans, has the highest rate of incarceration of any jurisdiction on the planet.

- The US runs an illegal torture complex in Cuba at Guantánamo Bay. The worst treatment of people in Cuba comes not from the Cuban government but from the US government.

The Cuban Revolution must be defended. Every effort must be made to assist Cuba and its people during the present crisis.

Cuba has gone through crises before. The Cuban people are extremely courageous, resilient and resourceful. The majority of Cubans support the Cuban revolution and their government and oppose US aggression.

However, it is very difficult to be optimistic regarding the US lifting its economic, financial and commercial blockade of Cuba. Biden is anxious to win over as many Cuban American hardliners as he can, especially in the 2022 US midterm congressional elections. These hardliners, who were further emboldened under Trump, want to maintain maximum national and international pressure on the government in Havana, regardless of the suffering that imposes on the Cuban people.

In a meeting with Cuban American leaders in July 2021, Biden administration officials reiterated the somewhat tired and clichéd United States position that the problems Cuba is currently experiencing are the direct result of a “failed communist government” rather than the embargo.

Right-wing Cuban Americans are fond of saying, “When the dictatorship ends, so will the embargo.” The Machado and Batista regimes were true dictatorships — and they were backed by the US government. If the Cuban Revolution is overthrown that is the sort of regime that will be imposed once more.

Most of the world’s countries — but not, of course, the US imperialist superpower — have accepted the reality of the 1959 Cuban Revolution and appreciate the achievements of the Cuban government and its people.

It is gratifying to see so many countries and organisations defying the United States and its illegal and immoral six-decades-long blockade of Cuba. What is needed is even more solidarity.

## Where to from here?

There is no simple resolution of the current crisis. The massive externally imposed constraints are augmented by internal problems. But any solution must be found and implemented by Cubans themselves.

From Cuba Alina Barbara López Hernández has written:

My view is that we are witnessing the definitive exhaustion of an economic and political model, that of bureaucratic socialism. Those in power are unable to move the nation forward with the old methods, but are unable to accept more participatory

forms, with a greater weight of citizens in decision making ...

There is no doubt that the nation has stopped moving forward: The economy has not been growing for years, the foreign debt is steadily increasing, as are poverty levels, and yet reforms have been inexplicably delayed. It is clear that those at the top can no longer administer and govern as before. But what about those below?

Without the maturation of the subjective factor, such a transformation was not possible. It required the will of the people to want to change, a civic energy that had been crushed by political, educational and media conditioning. "Learned helplessness" also exists in a socialist model in which the system controls to some extent how its citizens behave.<sup>12</sup>

While supporters of the Cuban revolution abroad will continue to discuss and seek to understand the crisis on the island, the clear need is for international solidarity. ■

## Appendix

# Cuba Today: Homeland, People & Sovereignty

*By Julio César Guanche*

Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canel has just called for “the unity of all Cubans, for respect among Cubans, and that we strip ourselves of any feelings of hatred.” Given the concrete circumstances of last Sunday, his statement may be very important.

At the same time, three historic days have already been documented in verified videos that will never be erased from our collective memory. Every effort—civic and patriotic—must be made to process the situation in ways that lead to positive solutions rather than worsen the crisis the nation is undergoing.

### **Who are the Cuban people?**

Article 3 of the Constitution states that the nation’s sovereignty lies in the people “pueblo,” “from whom the State’s power emanates.” This text—approved by 86% of voters—requires us to respect popular sovereignty and fundamental rights.

The constitutional “right to resist” may be used against “anyone who attempts to overthrow the political, social, and economic order established by this Constitution,” and use any means. Such an extreme measure requires the prior use of other measures before invoking it.

The first step is to seek political solutions to the protests. Next, declare a state of emergency with guarantees of fundamental rights. To skip over these measures and simply claim the “right to resist” is an illegitimate use of this concept, and it would augur a tragic situation for the nation.

---

From *On Cuba News*, July 21, 2021. *Julio César Guanche* is the author of *La libertad como destino: Ideas y tradiciones en el siglo XX cubano* and other books. He serves on the editorial boards of the journals *Cuban Studies* and *Temas*.

Democratic nationalism—inclusive, anti-imperialist, anti-xenophobic—has been a central element of Cuban history up to the present. Its key element is its popular, non-elite content and meaning. The 19th-century slave owners are no longer in Cuban streets today, nor are the oligarchs of 1912, nor the bourgeoisie of 1952.

The people in the streets today are the Cuban people, or part of it, who belong to the people as much as anyone else, regardless of whether one likes the way they speak, how they act, or how they think. The Cuban people, as a whole, is sovereign. The Cuban state must listen to, respect, and protect the people.

### **Cubans have been called on to intervene & participate in the violence**

An extremist sector of the Cuban exile community in the United States has called for U.S. intervention. They finance violent acts, deliberately spread fake news, and encourage people to commit arson, loot property, kill police officers, and join the battle from their cell phone trenches. However this situation works out, and whatever the suffering endured by people in Cuba, those extremists will stay where they are.

That line of thought—which by no means represents all exiles, and much less the Cuban diaspora—will do whatever it takes to achieve its version of “it’s over.” In my opinion, it is absolutely essential to distance ourselves from and oppose the agenda of that so called Cuban patriotic sector, no matter how radical the objections against the State and the conditions on the island.

Under no circumstances does that sector explain why the protests as a whole took place nor should its agenda be automatically projected on all protesters. It is important to distinguish and separate the instrumental use of these calls to civic violence from the current popular demands and actors that are part of this situation, and to recognize the full range of competing demands.

Intervention itself is absolutely unacceptable. Intervention itself is absolutely unacceptable. But beyond its real possibility, the mere perception of the threat of intervention promotes the closure of all potential criticism of the domestic arena, reorienting attention toward the unified defense of the nation from an external threat, and justifiably so.

Cuba has major problems with U.S. policies, but it also has problems that are internal, and it is essential that space be created to face them.

### **The United States & the soft coup**

President Biden has upheld the existing policies of sanctions, and has left them unchanged even in the midst of the most serious phase of the Covid-19 pandemic thus

far. The embargo is an affront to the Cuban nation. Strictly colonial in nature, it is a crime against the Cuban people. Biden's attitude contradicts the very policy that he advocated during the Obama administration, claiming that new objectives could not be achieved by using the same failed means.

Anyone who thinks that this situation begins and ends here, or that it can only be explained as a "soft coup," confuses the core of the problem. Anyone who thinks that this situation begins and ends here, or that it can only be explained as a "soft coup," confuses the core of the problem.

The project of promoting a soft coup has been present in various situations around the world. If there are any confirmed agents working to that end in Cuba, they must answer for putting themselves at the service of a foreign power. But the entire social protest should not be depicted as if it were just a product of such an effort.

The excessive use of this approach carries a great political danger: it leaves no room for the legitimacy of social demands expressed through protest. That interpretation can only lead to the repression of all protests. Moreover, the act of recognizing the legitimacy of the demands at stake today would be a serious blow to any claim that this is a soft coup.

## What can be done

Several things can and should be done right now. The recommendations I share stem from a sense of urgency and the need to be useful. They are surely insufficient, though not irrelevant.

Immediately halt all police repression against the unarmed population which expresses itself peacefully. Contain violent civil actions taken against people and property, using norms of proportionality and clear rules of responsibility. Prohibit the use of lethal weapons except in the case of the imminent danger of death to any person. Members of the military should not be on the streets in civilian clothing. People should not be called to report to work centers, military service units, etc., to participate in violent acts against protesters.

At the same time, take the following measures: prosecute only those people who have committed serious crimes against other people or property, taking into account the seriousness of the harm these actions caused and the context in which they occurred; promise, with guarantees, a review of police actions and serious sanctions for cases of excess force; offer specific information on detainees; withdraw charges for all peaceful protesters; and provide due process for civilians who have committed violent acts with damages as defined by the law; ensure internet service; provide "fake-news" verification services; call for social peace, in the strongest sense, including the expansion and

application of rights of participation and expression, such as the right to peaceful demonstration.

In addition, it is urgent to advance the legislative plans for all pending laws related to civic and political rights. In addition, it is urgent to advance the legislative plans for all pending laws related to civic and political rights. These should be immediately accelerated and implemented, providing precise information on timetables, as well as measures of their popular benefit, such as promoting nation-wide food-producing initiatives. Long-term investments should be temporarily suspended and resources reallocated to emergency social plans (measures of this nature have already been announced, but much more is needed). Improved special social protection measures must be directed toward the most disadvantaged sectors of the population, such as the elderly, single-person low-income households, single mothers, and the most impoverished neighborhoods. There should be customs exemptions for imported basic necessities, and the acceleration of the review and acceptance of demands of Cuban emigrants regarding their rights in and pertaining to the country.

We now know that Diubis Laurencio Tejeda died in these protests. For years it was often said that the “first death” would benefit the official U.S. agenda of aggression against Cuba, but something else antecedes this: the revolutionary ethic of life is such that a single death is intolerable, no matter on which “side,” or whoever “benefits” from the death.

Part of this ethic lies in asking oneself to examine seriously the causes of political rage and radical hatred that we have seen throughout the country, beyond using labels such as the “same old haters,” or the “habitual mercenaries,” which only serve to stigmatize people and to cover up and reproduce the problems.

Peaceful protest is a right, while attacking people or collective property is not. All revolutionaries have the right to defend their convictions, also peacefully. We don't need soft coups nor embargos, but we do need democratization. As José Martí once said: “bread and freedom,” as the verse says, they are either saved together, or both are lost. ■



# Notes

## Colonisation & Imperialism

- 1 *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* (Merit Publishers: New York, 1968).
- 2 E. Cirules, *The Mafia in Havana: A Caribbean Mob Story* (Ocean Press: North Melbourne, 2017), p. 16. This book won the Casa de las Américas Prize for Latin American literature and the Critics' Prize in 1994.
- 3 *Ibid*, p. 26.
- 4 *Ibid*.
- 5 *Ibid*.
- 6 E. Cirules, *The Unknown Hemingway* (Ediciones Cubanas, Artex: 2015), p. 243.
- 7 P.W. Bonsal, *Cuba, Castro, and the United States* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), p. 8.

## The Cuban Revolution & US Aggression

- 1 C. Slee, *Cuba: How the Workers and Peasants Made the Revolution* (Resistance Books: Chippendale, 2008). Available: [https://socialist-alliance.org/sites/default/files/cuba\\_how\\_the\\_workers\\_peasants\\_made\\_the\\_revolution.pdf](https://socialist-alliance.org/sites/default/files/cuba_how_the_workers_peasants_made_the_revolution.pdf)
- 2 Spanish title: *La historia me absolverá* (Editoria Política: La Habana, 2002). First published in New York in 1961 by Lyle Stuart, and also the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.
- 3 F. Castro, *History Will Absolve Me*, p. 54.
- 4 F. Batista, *Cuba Betrayed* (Vantage Press: New York, 1962), p. 152.
- 5 D. Holmes, Cuban Revolution: challenges and changes, *Links: International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, October 6, 2010. Available: <http://links.org.au/node/1939>
- 6 S. Babbitt, Book review of *We Are Cuba! How a Revolutionary People Have Survived in a Post-Soviet World*, in *New York Journal of Books* [online], n.d. (but 2020). Available: <https://www.nyjournalofbooks.com/book-review/we-are-cuba>
- 7 H. Yaffe, *We Are Cuba!: How a Revolutionary People Have Survived in a Post-Soviet World* (Yale University Press: 2020).
- 8 "436. Memorandum of a Conference With the President, White House, Washington,

January 25, 1960, 11:15–11:55 am”, Office of the Historian, Department of State, United States of America. Available: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v06/d436>

- 9 “499. Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Mallory) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom)”, April 6, 1960, Office of the Historian, Department of State, United States of America. Available: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v06/d499>
- 10 Official History of the Bay of Pigs Operation, Vol. III: Evolution of CIA’s Anti-Castro Policies, 1959-January 1961 (pp. 1-203), CIA Historical Review Program, MORI Doc ID:369610 [declassified CIA documents], pdf, p. 310. Available: <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB355/bop-vol3.pdf>
- 11 *Ibid.*, pdf, p. 311.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pdf, p. 311.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pdf, pp. 311-312.
- 14 The Bay of Pigs (Bahía de los Cochinos) is an inlet of the Gulf of Cazones located on the south-western coast of Cuba.
- 15 President John F. Kennedy’s Speech Announcing the Quarantine Against Cuba, Washington DC, October 22, 1962. See *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: Selected Foreign Policy Documents from the Administration of John F. Kennedy, January 1961–November 1962* (The Stationery Office: London, 2001), p. 226. Available at: <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/kencuba.htm>
- 16 Carlos Lechuga was Cuba’s ambassador to the U.N. in the early 1960s and Cuba’s last ambassador to the Organization of American States (OAS). He was Cuba’s initial point man in secret talks with the US during the Cuban missile crisis. At the time of Kennedy’s assassination, Lechuga had just received diplomatic instructions from Fidel Castro to discuss negotiations on improving relations between Cuba and the US.
- 17 C. Lechuga, *Cuba and the Missile Crisis* (Ocean Press: Melbourne, 2001), translated M.Todd, p. 54.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 54.

## Rectification. Special Period. The Blockade

- 1 See also J. Martinussen, *Society, State & Market: A Guide to Competing Theories of Development* (Zed Books: New York, 1997), p. 86.
- 2 S.G. Vilaboy & O.L. Vega, *Cuba: A History* (Ocean Press: North Melbourne, 2010), p. 46.
- 3 See P.M. Rosset, “Agricultura Alternativa Durante La Crisis Cubana”, *FoodFirst*, May 7, 2002.
- 4 See L.J. Enríquez, “Cuba’s New Agricultural Revolution”, *Development Report* No 14,

2000.

- 5 R. Jorquera, “Cuba survives with principles intact”, *Green Left Weekly*, Issue 390, January 26, 2000 [online]. Available: <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/cuba-survives-principles-intact>
- 6 F. F. Monzote, quoted in N. Parker, Cuba Campaign: Policy Think Tank Releases New Report on Cuba’s Successful Organic Farms. *Global Exchange*, January 28, 2002.
- 7 Quoted in S. Babbitt, book review, *op. cit.*
- 8 *Cuba: A History*, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
- 9 See I. Ellis-Jones, “How the United States punishes Cuba’s people”, *Green Left*, Issue 1315, July 13, 2021 [online]. Available: <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/how-united-statespunishes-cubas-people>
- 10 UN General Assembly calls for US to end Cuba embargo for 29th consecutive year. United Nations: UN News. Available: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/06/1094612>
- 11 See Report by Cuba on resolution 74/7 of the United Nations General Assembly (“Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba”). Available: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3889682?ln=en>
- 12 The United States and Cuba had previously established limited diplomatic relations in 1977 by opening interests sections in Washington DC and Havana.
- 13 American Airlines, Amazon Inc, Melia Hotels International and the French lender Société Générale SA are just some of the companies that have been slapped with lawsuits under Title III of the Helms-Burton Act.
- 14 Marriott was also prevented from opening other planned hotels in Cuba. The company had also planned to enter into a lease of Havana’s oldest hotel, the Inglaterra.
- 15 See I. Ellis-Jones, “US redesignates Cuba a state sponsor of terrorism”, *Green Left*, Issue 1294, January 23, 2021 [online]. Available: <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/usredesignates-cuba-state-sponsor-terrorism>
- 16 See Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations, Report of Cuba to the Anti-terrorism Committee of the Security Council pursuant to Resolution 1373 (2001), submitted pursuant to para 6 of Security Council Resolution 1373, contained in UN Doc. S/2002/15 (January 2, 2002). Available: [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2021\\_48.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2021_48.pdf)
- 17 See B. Chappell, “US Puts Cuba Back On List Of State Sponsors of Terrorism”, *NPR*, January 11, 2021. Available: <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/11/955641839/u-s-puts-cuba-back-onlist-of-state-sponsors-of-terrorism>
- 18 <https://www.plenglish.com/index.php?o=rn&id=65449>
- 19 Press Releases: Treasury Sanctions Cuban Minister of Defense and Special Forces Brigade for Abuses Against Protestors, U.S. Department of the Treasury, July 22, 2021. Available:

<https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0288>

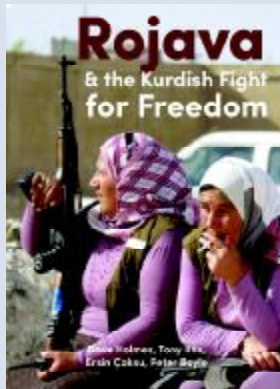
- 20 K. DeYoung, “Biden administration imposes sanctions on Cuban officials following attacks on protesters,” *The Washington Post*, July 22, 2021. Available: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/biden-cuba-sanctions/2021/07/22/b058c69cea93-11eb-8950-d73b3e93ff7f\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/biden-cuba-sanctions/2021/07/22/b058c69cea93-11eb-8950-d73b3e93ff7f_story.html). See also I. Ellis-Jones, “United States: Biden imposes additional sanctions on Cuba”, *Green Left*, Issue 1316, July 30, 2021 [online]. Available: <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/united-states-biden-imposes-additionalsanctions-cuba>
- 21 See The Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act, In Focus, Congressional Research service, updated October 28, 2020. Available: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10576>
- 22 Ny Magee, “Black Lives Matter condemns US government amid Cuba crisis”, *TheGrio*, July 15, 2021. Available: <https://thegrio.com/2021/07/15/blm-condemns-u-s-government/>
- 23 Press Releases: Treasury Sanctions Cuban Police Force and Its Leaders in Response to Violence Against Peaceful Demonstrators, US Department of the Treasury, July 30, 2021. Available: <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0298>
- 24 J. Mason & S. Holland, “US issues new Cuba sanctions, Biden promises more to come”, *Reuters*, July 31, 2021. Available: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/biden-meetcuban-american-leaders-amid-calls-tougher-action-havana-2021-07-30/>

## The July 11 Protests & the Future

- 1 See the collection of articles posted in *Links: International Journal of Socialist Renewal*.
- 2 J. Mason & S. Holland, “US issues new Cuba sanctions, Biden promises more to come”, *Reuters*, *op. cit.*
- 3 L. Paduro, “A scream: Leonardo Padura on the recent protests in Cuba”, *Links: International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, July 21, 2021 [online]. Available: <http://links.org.au/a-screamleonardo-padura-recent-protests-cuba>
- 4 J.C. Guanache, “Cuba today: Homeland, people and sovereignty”, *Links: International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, July 21, 2021 [online]. Available: <http://links.org.au/cuba-todayhomeland-people-and-sovereignty>.
- 5 Editorial Board of *Comunistas*, trans. H Sierra, revised by R. Fidler, “From Cuba: a description of the protests”, *Links: International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, July 22, 2021 [online]. Available: <http://links.org.au/cuba-description-protests>
- 6 L. Lima, “Cuba protests: Three key issues that explain the rare unrest”, *BBC News* [online], 12 July 2021. Available: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-57802170>
- 7 L.R. Luis, “Monetary Bang and Inflation after the January 2021 Devaluation of the Cuban Peso”, Cuba Capacity Building Project, Horizonte Cubano, December 29, 2020. Available:

<https://horizontecubano.law.columbia.edu/news/monetary-bang-and-inflation-afterjanuary-2021-devaluation-cuban-peso>.

- 8 See I. Ellis-Jones, "Cuban banks no longer accepting US dollars", *Green Left*, Issue 1312, June 18, 2021 [online]. Available: <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/cuban-banks-nolonger-accepting-us-dollars>
- 9 L. Lima, "Cuba protests: Three key issues that explain the rare unrest", *BBC News* [online], *op. cit.*
- 10 O. Lopez & E. Londoño, "Everyone Has a Tipping Point: Hunger Fuels Cuba's Protests", *The New York Times*, July 12, 2021. Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/12/world/americas/cuba-protests-usa.html>
- 11 United States incarceration rate. *Wikipedia*. Available: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_incarceration\\_rate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_incarceration_rate)
- 12 A.B.L. Hernández, trans *Observatorio Internacional*, "Social explosion in Cuba: The ignored signals", *Links: International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, July 24, 2021 [online]. Available: <http://links.org.au/social-explosion-in-cuba-the-ignored-signals> ■



[resistancebooks.com](https://resistancebooks.com)

*Resistance books*