

The Victims of “Democracy”

Washington’s War on Sovereign Cuba

By Ike Nahem

“I’m one of the 22 million Black people who are the victims...of “Democracy,” nothing but disguised hypocrisy.”

■ Malcolm X, April 3, 1964

In 2017, in the name of Cuba solidarity organizations in the New York-New Jersey area of the United States I wrote and submitted a document to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, Office of the Commissioner, based in Geneva, Switzerland, with the title: “The Case of Cuba: “Human Rights” as a Club.” This uploaded document is a joint submission to the same UN Commission on April 2, 2023 from the growing and expanding movement in the United States against Washington’s economic and political war on Cuba.

<https://www.us-cubanormalization.org/viva-cuba/the-case-of-cuba-human-rights-as-a-club/>

From Trump to Biden: The March of “Democracy” and the Economic War on Cuba

In 2017 I wrote, “The purpose of this submission is not to draw up a list contrasting the false propaganda narrative on Cuba over

human rights and democratic freedom, with the actual facts and reality of Cuba's legal and criminal justice systems; its prisons; its media; the rights of free speech, assembly, and the organization of labor; Cuba's actual electoral system and voting procedures; and the truth regarding mass political participation in decision-making on the island. The facts on these realities would no doubt come as a surprise to those only exposed to the propaganda and half-truths of the US government and "Western" big-business commercial media...I am rather more interested in the political framework that "human rights" becomes a cover and a false club for Washington's anti-Cuba policies.

"While it is certainly necessary to formulate principles and guidelines on human rights, as codified in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Cuba has signed, half-truths, demagoguery, and grotesque hypocrisy and double standards should never stand unanswered. Assertions, no matter how often repeated, are not necessarily facts. Half-truths can be the most dangerous type of lie."

In the nearly six years since those words were written, bipartisan Washington -- *in continuity* from Donald Trump to Joseph Biden - has continued and deepened the US economic war on Cuba. This ran counter to expectations or illusions that Biden might at least reverse or ameliorate aspects of the blockade and US sanctions. It became quickly apparent that the opposite would be the case with Biden and his Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The bipartisan US policy carries on *despite* its political isolation and the lack of any political traction at all in any Hemispheric and

international bodies that serve as platforms for world political contention.

The political problem for Washington is that posturing and platitudes about “Democracy” and “Human Rights” are the seriously fraying cover for the US policy that nobody on the world stage buys. Even as it continues, its vulnerability – and cynicism -- is on display.

Setbacks for Washington in 2022

This became quite apparent for the Biden Administration in the Summer 2022 near-fiasco at the Summit of the Americas Summit he hosted in Los Angeles. This was followed in Fall 2022 with the humiliating 185-2 vote in favor of a Cuban-introduced Resolution against the blockade at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The US and Israel voted together, although Israel has mutual unsanctioned trade and travel with Cuba; the two abstentions were the outgoing right-wing Bolsonaro government in Brazil, in its last hurrah, and Ukraine).

It was the 30th such overwhelmingly vote in the General Assembly since 1992! It is quite a feat for Washington to be even *more* isolated in the UNGA around its anti-Cuba blockade than the Russian Federation has been in votes opposing it’s “Special Military Operation” in what had been constituted as sovereign Ukrainian land. The most recent vote in the UNGA was on February 23, 2023, in favor of a Resolution, drafted by Ukraine, that passed 141-7, with 32 abstentions (including China, Cuba, and Vietnam).

“State Sponsors of Terrorism”

In recent days and weeks, Biden and Blinken have signaled clearly that they are not prepared to make any meaningful political concessions that weaken the US blockade. This was driven home over perhaps the most pernicious component of the US economic and political war, which was the re-inclusion, carried over from the last days of the evaporating Trump government, of Cuba on the State Department’s “State Sponsors of Terrorism” (SSOT) list, from which Barack Obama and his Secretary of State John Kerry had removed Cuba in 2015. On March 23, 2023 Blinken reiterated that the Biden State Department has no intention of taking Cuba off SSOT.

Cuba on the SSOT list would just be a tasteless, sick joke to be parodied and mocked – especially by actual victims of terrorist attacks in this world – except for its deleterious effect on the Cuban economy and population. It has become a weighty consideration and pretext – if not excuse -- for public and private capital and industrial and commercial entities to avoid entering into contractual exchanges and commercial deals with Cuba that are mutually beneficial. Doing so can lead to facing US government-enforced penalties, sanctions, and being cut-off from the still-largest “market” in the world capitalist economy...for the relatively tiny Cuban “market.” That is the precisely the purpose of Cuba’s inclusion on SSOT; *it has nothing to do with terrorism!* Washington is fully aware of how grotesque, on moral as well as factual and evidence-based grounds, it is to include Cuba on the spurious list. *But hey, that’s their line and they’re sticking to it.*

“Democracy With a Big D”

Washington carries on its brutal, punitive anti-Cuba campaign under the banners of “Democracy” and “Human Rights.”

It is necessary to snatch away this false banner of what I call “Democracy With a Big D,” which is really a thin covering for defending the grotesque social and economic inequalities of the current world capitalist system, order, and institutions.

The Caribbean, Central America, and the South American Continent have a rich history of interaction with US “Democracy,” which has been mostly a cover for bipartisan Washington’s naked pursuit of the interests of US capital and its allies, since at least the turn of the 19th Century. Washington’s policies – in recent decades labeled “the Washington Consensus” and “neoliberalism” -- has sought allies in the landlord, capitalist, semi-feudal, and military-officer castes – the ruling oligarchies -- of the various Latin American states.

Anyone with the slightest knowledge of Caribbean, Central American, and Latin American history can have no serious confidence that what Marxists and socialists call “bourgeois-democratic” institutions and rights will be able to mediate the deepening economic and financial crises and social polarization, while the threat of traditional, belligerent US interventionism is maintained. These genuinely democratic institutions and rights that have stemmed from the great epoch of 18th and 19th Century “bourgeois-democratic” Revolutions (including the US 1776, France 1789, across Europe 1848, and US 1861-65) are defended in

principle by revolutionary Marxists and the international working-class movement.

Any objective understanding and reading of the Cuban Revolution understands that Fidel Castro and the entire broad Cuban leadership took up seriously questions of democratic and electoral forms and their institutionalization, alongside the mass revolutionary organizations, mass political participation, and the constitutional, legal space for debate and criticism. The challenge of course was that these questions were debated in the midst of – but not separate from and in contradiction to – the massive revolutionary campaigns for real land reform; to eliminate illiteracy; to elevate the status of women; to deal giant blows to Jim-Crow segregation Cuban-style and make possible Afro-Cuban advancement on every level of Cuban society; to massively expand trade-union membership; and to expand and professionalize medical and education access for workers and peasants – the new class power in the state. This was in principle and political fact a massive expansion of “democracy” and actual democratic and political space for the working class and peasant majority, the Cuban youth, and the large majority of the Cuban population as a whole. And it was hated by the displaced and overthrown neocolonial ruling classes and their social and class base *precisely because* social and class relations were changed and transformed, the hallmark of any genuine social revolution, as articulated long ago in the lyrics of Bob Dylan’s “The Times, They Are A’Changin’”

The line it is drawn
The curse it is cast
The slow one now
Will later be fast
As the present now
Will later be past
The order is rapidly fadin'
And the first one now
Will later be last
For the times they are a-changin'

Unacceptable to Bipartisan Washington

It was these social advances – all of which deeply affected US capital and political domination – that was unacceptable to bipartisan Washington in principle. Under the Eisenhower Administration, the US government backed the Batista dictatorship until practically the bitter end! Under the Kennedy Administration, there was the implementation of Eisenhower's Bay of Pigs mercenary invasion, plus its very own terrorist Operation Mongoose campaign and concurrent preparations for a direct US invasion. This imperial bullying culminated in the October 1962 so-called "Cuban Missile Crisis" and real-time threats of nuclear military exchanges between the United States and the Soviet Union. (see my "Political Legacies of the Cuban Missile Crisis" <https://www.us-cubanormalization.org/viva-cuba/political-legacies-of-the-cuban-missile-crisis/>)

Cuban offers of compensation and indemnification for nationalized US property were contemptuously brushed aside by US authorities, who were already formulating other violent plans. Such measures that were enacted by the new, revolutionary government adhered to international law. There were agreed settlements successfully negotiated with European and other nationalized industries. Cuban capitalists and landlords generally fled to south Florida when the revolutionary government consolidated power and the above-cited social measures began to be implemented in 1959-60. They fully expected to return to Cuba to reclaim their social and class power piggybacked to a US military invasion. Indigenous Cuban capital was mainly tied to large landholdings and government and commercial sinecures. And giving Cuba's neocolonial status, was highly intertwined with much illicit capital, such as mafia and other criminal money-hoards amassed by *Batistiano* military and police *gauleiters*. These holdings were generally confiscated by the revolutionary government, to the great distress of the top US-based Mafia families. It is absurd to present any of this as having to do with "Democracy!" Washington's definition of "Democracy" is not compatible with the *national-democratic, revolutionary-democratic social measures* that expanded freedom and liberty for the vast majority in Cuba, who furthermore defended themselves arms-in-hand ever since.

July 11, 2021

The Biden White House deepened the criminal US blockade instead of reversing it. Why? Because they perceived Cuba as vulnerable. Why? Because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summer 2023 will mark 2 years since the abysmal failure of the campaign to exploit the unimaginable economic stresses from the US blockade, compounded by the rising deaths and hospitalizations from the COVID-19 pandemic, *that Cuba was in the midst of*. The triumph of Cuban science and medicine led Cuba to eventually to produce successful vaccines and vaccinate the entire Cuban population *even as* the Biden Administration deepened the criminal blockade under the conditions of the world pandemic (and the collapse of tourism worldwide and to Cuba). No democratic (with a small “d”) and international-solidarity-minded person should forget or overlook this imperial cruelty – even if it doesn’t take overt forms of military aggression for now.

On July 11, 2021, a relative handful of US-activated clients – in a highly orchestrated campaign directed from Washington – exploited genuine bursts of mass “protest” over conditions that were exacerbated in certain working-class neighborhoods suffering electrical blackouts in the oppressive Cuban heat, under conditions of the COVID-19 lockdown and its mounting hospitalization and death tolls. The Cuban energy crisis – which is still deepening presently – stems from the near-dilapidated Cuban electrical-grid system. The July 2021 protests, which may have reached thousands nationwide, were very short-lived, and

not necessarily directed against the Miguel Diaz-Canel government.

In fact, “repression” from police authorities – which was directed at violent assaults on property and people, including the revolutionary police -- was the *least* significant factor in the rapid demobilization of the street actions. There were in fact much larger popular counter-mobilizations by the pro-Revolution patriotic majority. But there were also governmental mobilizations and effective campaigns to address the electricity and other stresses in particular neighborhoods and nationwide...and as with everything on the island, with the resources available under blockade conditions.

Arbitrary and Selective and Proud of It

Washington is in-your-face arbitrary and selective in its condemnations of repression in Latin America. Truly murderous repression by armed forces and police in capitalist “parliamentary democracies” such as 2019-2020 Chile (where police apparently targeted the eyes of protesters with rubber bullets – how relatively “moderate”!) or in 2021 Colombia in or 2023 Peru under the “parliamentary” “constitutional” “democracy” of Dina Boluarte; the bloody toll for working people in these three “capitalist democracies” reaches in the hundreds, with at most banal expressions of “concern” from Washington.

So-called “representative parliamentary democracies” in grotesquely unequal and polarized capitalist states can only be so “stable” and only so “representative.” The pressure to narrow or

overthrow the democratic and political space within a crisis-ridden capitalist society comes from the ruling oligarchies and is directed at the inevitable struggles to defend the living standards and families of working people.

Clearly “freedom of assembly” is not – shall we say – consistently enforced in “constitutional” governments under the social domination of landed, industrial, and banking capital. If the interests of the latter *ruling classes*, or their fundamental prerogatives to rule, is threatened by too much “democratic, political, and constitutional space” for the mobilized, class-conscious, and fighting working class and majority populations (even as registered in constitutional multi-party elections) then “Democracy With a Big D” can even be abrogated altogether as has happened with indisputable US backing in the 1950s (Arbenz Guatemala 1954), 1960s (Goulart Brazil 1964) 1970s (Allende Chile 1973) and many more examples that can be cited in the Caribbean, Central America, and the South American Continent.

THE US INTERVENTION IN LATIN AMERICA



The United States tried to assassinate Fidel Castro over 600 times, although no attempts were successful.



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Cuba is a sovereign country that has the right to create its “socialist democracy” with mass participation, legal, and political rights which has, in fact, *been shaped and developed in the face of ongoing US aggression and blockade*. Cuba is not obligated to adopt or copy the US parliamentary system, rules, arcane procedures or

mechanisms that produce legislation. It is not obligated to voluntarily adopt nor have imposed on it a “2-party” electoral system whereby two wholly capitalist parties alternate in power.

Washington in fact has an ignominious and shameful history of creating, propping up, or sustaining every blood-soaked right-wing military dictatorship across the Americas and that is far from ancient history. Revolutionary Cuba, in contrast has supported earnestly all democratic, constitutional, anti-imperialist, and popular struggles in the Hemisphere that in practice expanded democratic rights against landlord, capitalist, and semi-feudal forces that were in cahoots with US and foreign capital. Revolutionary Cuba has never been sectarian or made its solidarity conditional on adherence to Cuba’s revolutionary Marxist and Leninist world outlook as they see, experience, and develop it. And this is a huge moral shield against the US blockade across the Americas in popular consciousness and government policies.

In any case Washington lacks the moral or political high ground – and lacks it ridiculously so! – to lecture Cuba on such issues. And also, Mr. Biden. Clean Your Own House!

Victory to the French Working Class!

As I finish this submission, I am following the intense working-class and popular mass struggle in France where the current President Emmanuel Macron, who is trying to raise the retirement age in France another two years to 64, is undoubtedly, and has been for some long time, the most despised political

figure in the country, despite having being elected twice in the distinct French electoral two-round system of a representative parliamentary “democracy.”

Perhaps this highly advanced European “democratic capitalist welfare state,” is breaking down over Macron’s ramming through a decision, even though he lacked the votes to do it, under an arcane legislative rule. It remains to be seen whether Macron will have overplayed his hand with an arrogant outrage that goes too far, and whether the damage and fallout can be contained within the existing parliamentary forms.

Then I’m sure it can and will be said that “democracy” saved the day.

But, whatever happens to Macron’s “reform,” does anyone think the French capitalists and their allies will turn away from austerity and attacks on the French working class in the context of France’s place in the increasingly tumultuous world capitalist economic, financial, banking, and currency turmoil?

Cuba’s governmental and electoral forms are impossible to separate from US aggression and blockade...and the world knows it! As long as Washington insists on its *right* to promote “regime change” against sovereign Cuba, then revolutionary and socialist Cuba will not let down their guard on any level against the myriad agents and clients of Washington. Washington creates the conditions whereby any self-respecting Cuban government would have to defend themselves against US subversion by any

means necessary. That means they are prepared to use their small but powerful voice to counter the very loud – but diminished because of its isolation – voice of US imperialism.

Again, if Washington actually wants to increase the space *inside Cuba* for its clients and paid agents in the Cuban population that are, then the very minimum it has to do is end the blockade. Let's test the ideas of Washington's clients against those of the Cuban working-class vanguard and youth – *in a context where the US blockade boot is not on Cuba's neck!* Then we can see who will win the Battle of Ideas! Washington cannot – and in reality does not believe – that its agents represent any substantial part of the Cuban population, but it must put on its ridiculous “democratic” face which nobody buys into in any world platform.

One impact of the deepening of the blockade and the accumulating economic stresses, shortages, blackouts and more under Biden and Blinken's direction has been a large increase in Cuban emigration and the enlargement of the Cuban diaspora with unintended political consequences for US policy. This will be an increasingly important factor in the overall struggle to end the criminal US blockade and for US-Cuba Normalization.

Cuba is not obligated to adopt US political and governmental forms and rituals. It has its own rich history and experience to draw on.

Mass Popular Alienation in US Electoral Politics

In any case, the current US electoral system in practice is nothing to bow down to awe and reverence. It has developed – and overdeveloped -- into a undecipherable maze and labyrinth that is also a massive industry and commercial enterprise, a “Dollar Democracy” that generates business-models and parasitic corporate and commercial entities in both major capitalist parties.

Every serious survey or objective polling shows that the US population, particularly the working-class as a whole, African Americans, and youth are fully alienated from the US capitalist-party duopoly. These layers, the majority, usually large majority of whom do not vote, and, if they do, they hold their nose, searching for the “lesser evil.” There is no sterling affinity and attachment by the US population to the current forms of “democratic” capitalist rule, although there is no viable electoral alternative to the Republican and Democratic parties at present. This is an unloved system first and foremost that the US population disdains in reality! And it should be imposed on the Cuban people?

Nevertheless, there are — under the rubble and corrupted detritus of the US electoral system -- constitutional freedoms and codified democratic rights embodied in the Bill of Rights and the operative US Constitution that represent gigantic, historical conquests, including in the democratic and class consciousness of US working people, that would carry over in any revolutionary-democratic coming to power of a workers and farmers government in the United States. These would include: regular elections with universal franchise; alternation of formal power; limitations on permanent holding of formal power (term limits).

In the United States, the Bill of Rights and the Constitutional Amendments that promote and codify democratic freedoms and extension of them through the “Civil War”-era revolutionary 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments are especially part of the revolutionary-democratic legacy of US history.

Conversely, there are many clauses and requirements in the (amended and updated) Cuban Constitution and legal code that would be welcomed with enthusiasm by US working people. Rather than petulant, belligerent demagogy and stunning US hypocrisy under the banner of “Democracy” and “Human Rights” Washington should cease its economic war and let the political chips fall where they may.

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New York City

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