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**Australia-Cuba Friendship Society**  
**Melbourne NEWSLETTER**  
**March 2019**  
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**Next Meeting**  
**Monday 4<sup>th</sup>**  
**March**  
 7.30pm  
 Unitarian Church  
 110 Grey St,  
 East Melbourne

| Melbourne   | Sydney      | Perth       | Brisbane    | Canberra    | Hobart      | Adelaide    | Central Coast | NSW/Vic Sthn Border | New Zealand        |
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Dear Comrades

24 February, 2019

We're barely into 2019 and the global situation is unravelling at a terrifying rate. I am horrified at the level of inhumanity we have reached and ask how the hell we've allowed it to happen. But a few words about our local band of shysters that keeps pinging along, all of them as corrupt as buggery. It's hard to pick which is the most obnoxious, potato-head Dutton or his crooked soul-mate Matthias Cormann, whose guttural tones bring back memories of the Third Reich. Or maybe the king of hypocrites, Ambassador to the US Joe Hockey, who had the gall to lecture us about 'leaners' while his hands were in the till. And let's not forget the shrill union-bashing Michaela Cash or Institute of Public Affairs Supremo Tim Wilson or that private school prat Christopher Pyne or 'my' local nightmare, Josh Friedenberg, who sounds like a dill because he is a dill. And Morrison? Stupid. Ministerial responsibility has left the building and these desperadoes will dog whistle, cat whistle, or kangaroo whistle if need be to deflect attention from their crimes and stupidity.

new constitution that was supported by 71% for each of the 396 articles. These enshrined previously unheard of freedoms, such as Article 123 which for the first time recognised the human rights of mixed race and black people, of whom Chavez was one. *'Of the 92 elections we've monitored'*, said former President Jimmy Carter, ***'I would say the election process in Venezuela is the best in the world, whereas the US electoral system with its emphasis on campaign money, is one of the worst'***.

But of course my main focus is on the boss man of the world, global honcho Trump, who is preparing for a hot war with Venezuela, the latest chapter in the long and bloody history of US imperialism in Latin America. A few days ago this narcissistic nutter had the audacity to publicly threaten to assassinate the Venezuelan military if they continued to defend their government and their president. What awful stage have we got to in world affairs that this former real estate con man can openly state an intention to kill the legitimate leader of a sovereign nation while the rest of the world, the so-called civilised west, looks on and says nothing. And that includes us. Is that why John Bolton popped in to Canberra? An amoral bully and sociopath who avoided military service in Vietnam and loves war as long as he's not in it, Bolton helped write the script for the 2003 invasion of Iraq and last week publicly threatened Maduro with 'death, gaol and torture' if he refused to resign. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is another pathological crazy who works in the White House.

In the 2018 election, which most of the opposition boycotted, out of the 9,389,056 who voted, Maduro won with 6,248,864 votes or 67.84%. But Trump was having none of it. He put forward Juan Guaido as 'interim president', who no-one had voted for or had ever heard of, except for those within the National Endowment for Democracy. If this CIA stooge and his cohorts win power, this will be the 68th overthrow of a sovereign government by the United States. Since the death of Chavez in 2013, Maduro's had to cope with a slide in the price of oil that caused hyper inflation that caused internal strife, exacerbated by the Bank of England's refusal to return Venezuela's gold reserves, but oil is not the only issue in Venezuela, which isn't to say that oil companies wouldn't be interested in looting this natural resource, but that's only part of the story. The real story is the politics behind control of Venezuelan oil that is part of a broader international conflict with Russia after Maduro, desperate to get additional financing amid crippling sanctions with the loss of more than \$6billion in revenue, offered Russian mining companies access to gold mining operations. There are other mineral prizes to be had - nickel, diamonds, iron ore, aluminium, bauxite and natural gas, all of significant interest to both Russia and China.

Former Defence Secretary 'Mad Dog' Mattis recently stated at a San Diego forum: 'It's a lot of fun to fight...it's a hell of a hoot...it's fun to shoot some people...I like brawling.' And then there's the unhinged vice president Mike Pence to round off the Trump freak show. But not quite. 'Dirty war' expert Elliott Abrams has been appointed US Special Envoy to Venezuela even though he was linked to the 2002 coup attempt there. Abrams was also convicted of lying to Congress about the Iran-Contra fiasco, and supported General Rios Montt, the Guatemalan dictator who directed the torture and mass murder of its indigenous people in the 1980s and was later convicted of genocide. **We've never had an American government as full of crackpots as this one.**

In March 2018 when Bolton announced the 'Troika of Tyranny' - Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua - he was saying that the US cannot successfully defeat Russia in Eastern Europe or China in South Asia without eliminating their presence in 'America's backyard', its classic Monroe Doctrine policy. With a consolidated right-wing front already in place under Colombia's Duque, Argentina's Macri and Bolsonaro in Brazil, Washington sees Venezuela as the last major domino to fall in Latin America, although millions of working class people who live there might have other ideas and will not go down without a hell of a fight. But the vultures of Empire are circling, with a massive build-up of the most sophisticated weaponry off the Florida coast, waiting for the opportunity to strike a death blow to socialism and petro-capitalist Russia. And if they can shove it up China in the process, all the better. This could snowball into one of the largest military operations since the disastrous 2003 invasion of Iraq and could kill hundreds of thousands of people and threaten the peace and stability of the entire world. We're all involved and must do whatever we can to stop this lunacy.

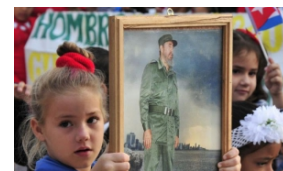
Some facts might help. As John Pilger writes, in eight years, Hugué Chavez won eight elections and referendums, a world record, and was electorally the most popular head of state in the Western Hemisphere. Every major Chavista reform was voted on, including for a

**Joan Coxledge**  
 Commentator-in-Chief, Melbourne ACFS (03) 9857 9249

***Subtle Reminder – Subs are due...please help keep the flags flying***

**[The path is never to neglect the unity of revolutionaries and to always maintain the struggle](#)**

The military threat, hostility and economic aggression of U.S. imperialism against Venezuela; the neoliberal onslaught to reverse the social gains; the interference against the sovereignty of progressive governments; the attempts to dismantle the progress in the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean, destabilize the region and pose risks to regional peace and security



**[Cuba reiterates its invariable solidarity with Constitutional President Nicolás Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution](#)**

Full text of press conference by Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez, for the national and international media, held at Minrex headquarters, February 19, 2019, Year 61 of the Revolution



**[The Islazul hotel chain is set to grow](#)**

The group is implementing a broad investment plan in the lead up to its 25th anniversary

**[Our great strength is unity](#)**

Ministers review progress in recovery from tornado damage in Havana, noting that more than a hundred new homes will be ready, before the month is over, for families affected



**[Cuba for all](#)**

The Constitution brings us together as a society with its inclusive spirit of dialogue and respect, religious leaders emphasize



**[Communications near full recovery](#)**

Following the January 27 tornado, more than 1,200 telecommunications workers joined the recovery effort, and were able to repair 89.82% of the damage within eight days

**[New revelations about Viñales meteorite](#)**

A meteorite that made impact in the western town of Viñales is the most noteworthy event of its type recorded to date in Cuba

**[Council of Ministers focuses on development](#)**

The Council of Ministers, led by President Miguel Díaz-Canel, met in Havana recently with the participation of municipal and provincial leaders via video-conference, to discuss a variety of issues including the country's economy, computer security, and employment, among others



**[A Constitution for and by the people](#)**

The new Carta Magna establishes the legal basis for the country's development and embodies Fidel's concept of Revolution

**Final Declaration of the  
36th Southern Cross  
Brigade 2018/19.**

We, the 36<sup>th</sup> Southern Cross Brigade of Australia and New Zealand, having come to the end of a three week stay at Campamento Internacional Julio Antonio Mella, wish to express our gratitude to all who made this unique and fulfilling experience possible and to the Cuban people, who have consistently greeted us with warmth, openness and in the truest sense of solidarity.



*Brigadistas at the Che Guevara Mausoleum in Santa Clara.*

**Continued...**

We feel so fortunate to have visited during such a pivotal moment of celebration, remembrance and renewal - encompassing both the 60th Anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution and the final weeks of the extensive and far-reaching process of renewing the Cuban Constitution.

We have been deeply moved by the revolutionary vigour and courage of the Cuban people, and their deep commitment to honouring their forebears "from Cespedes to Castro", and most especially at being warmly welcomed at events to honour the Caravana de la Libertad in Ciego de Avila, Santa Clara and Havana.

We've been witnesses to the outpouring of revolutionary pride surrounding the 60th anniversary of the events of the First of January, 1959 and the subsequent Convoy of Victory, and recognise with a deep sense of gratitude the willingness of the Cuban people to allow us to stand alongside them during these poignant and exhilarating moments.

A profound highlight for many Brigadistas was the opportunity to meet and speak with veterans of Cuba's revolutionary struggle.

We are also deeply impressed by what we've seen, heard and learnt about the process to rejuvenate the country's Constitution through a vigorously democratic process.

The process of consultation around the new Constitution and subsequent amendments displays an exceptionally high commitment to a truly participatory democracy, the likes of which is unheard of in our own countries. The proposed new Constitution, which will be put to the Cuban people in a referendum on the 24th of February this year, has been preceded by an extensive period of consultation during the past year, including among the Cuban diaspora. This process resulted in thousands of suggestions being received, many that were included in the document currently being circulated to the Cuban people, which - if approved by a majority of the people - will become the new Constitution. We wholeheartedly support this referendum and the will of the Cuban people.

We've heard from distinguished scholars, historians, authors and physicians, who have used their expertise to bring so many aspects of the history and current reality of Cuba to life. We've been honoured by cultural performances across the country, including a gala performance of the Cuban National Ballet, and been welcomed into the Barrio of Caimito by a local branch of the CDR.

We've visited monuments of intense significance, such as the Che Guevara Mausoleum in Santa Clara, and the Memorial to the Martyrs of Moncada in Artemisa. Through our visit to a provincial Hospital in Ciego de Avila and to the Central Unit of Medical Co-operators in Havana, we've learnt about Cuba's radical and long standing accomplishments in providing health care as a fundamental human right, as well as the exemplary commitment to internationalism that sees Cuba send tens of thousands of health care

practitioners to many of the most underserved parts of the world. We've gained insight into Cuban civil society through representatives of political and civil society organisations such as the Cuban Communist Party, the Federation of Cuban Women, the Federation of University Students, the Young Communist League and many others.

The Southern Cross Brigade strongly reiterates its solidarity with the Cuban people.

We will return home renewed and re-inspired by the courage and revolutionary spirit of this great country, ready to work at every turn to strengthen the friendship between the peoples of Oceania and Cuba and to counteract anti-Cuban propaganda.

We call on the Australian and New Zealand governments to deepen their economic and diplomatic relations with Cuba.

As extremists and demagogues proliferate around the world, the humanist principles the Cuban project is based on, take on ever more global significance and urgency.

We loudly declaim the brutality of the absurd and devastating US Blockade on Cuba, the impacts of which were painfully visible at every turn, from daily minutiae to life saving medical equipment and call for its immediate end, the return of occupied territory at Guantánamo Bay and an end to the hostilities and regime change policies sponsored by the US government.

We take with us from Cuba the messages we've learnt from this dignified and sovereign society that centres humanity, that fosters a community that cares for one another, that provides free education and access to health care as core human rights, prioritising from the start of its existence the struggle to eliminate illiteracy, disease, poverty and discrimination.

We are deeply grateful to the excellent emissaries of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the People (ICAP) who served as leaders, translators, historians, guides, teachers and friends, specially to the ICAP Brigade Director Rafaela Valerino, to our interpreter and veteran of many Brigades, Ezequiel Morales, and to our Amistur official guide Candida Rosa Sanson Abascal, who all worked with the utmost professionalism and kindness to ensure our Brigade was such a success.

The stimulating program came off with barely a hitch, and the level of thought and preparation that went into creating the many and varied experiences was evident.

We also extend our gratitude and affection to the many staff at CIJAM who went above and beyond to facilitate our successful brigade and highly enjoyable stay at this beacon of international solidarity.

**Havana, January 16<sup>th</sup> 2019**

Written by Keiller MacDuff [NZ Brigadista] on behalf of and approved by us all.

**Note:** An earlier draft of this statement was published in "The Guardian" - The Workers Weekly Issue: #1855 - February 6, 2019 as was the photo.

# We remain committed to a possible better world and we believe that the basis of that desire is education

Speech by President Díaz-Canel at the closing of the 2019 International Pedagogy Congress, February 8

Author: [Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez](mailto:Miguel_Diaz-Canel_Bermudez@granma.cu) | [internet@granma.cu](mailto:internet@granma.cu) - february 22, 2019 10:02:20

## Speech by Miguel M. Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, President of the Councils of State and Ministers, at the closing of the 2019 International Pedagogy Congress, Havana International Conference Center, February 8, 2019, “Year 61 of the Revolution”

I believe that La Colmenita has moved us all, it excited Sosita, we are all thrilled, and it is good that educators do not lose that ability to be moved, because when we get excited, we are able to inspire our students (Applause).

Dear educators, representatives of international organizations;

Ministers participating in the 2019 Pedagogy event;

Colleagues from around the world (Applause and exclamations of: “Thank you!”):

First of all, our congratulations to the best teacher-researchers of our country. (Applause)

When I was invited to close this event, I asked myself what to say to you, how to honor the work of the founders of this gathering, one of the broadest, most diverse and most popular educational events in the world.

How to summarize precisely, when today we need so even more, the dialogue that for so many years the participants in this Pedagogy Congress held with our Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz, educator of the masses, and with comrade José Ramón Fernández, educator of educators. (Applause)

But it has been enough for me to be twice among you over these days to sense their presence. Not only because you mention them or quote their words, but because in the program and in what I have been able to learn of the different symposia, workshops and meetings, the great motivation remains alive and active: the unity of educators. Not only Latin Americans or Ibero-Americans. Educators, such a beautiful word, which means so much.



Photo: Endrys Correa Vaillant

A quick review of the history of these events reminds us that when they began, the decision to unite for a better world took precedence over all others, an idea that has prevailed over time. Then, you fought against the criminal foreign debt that asphyxiated our

peoples, cutting educational budgets in most of the sister nations of the continent. And educators of the region came en masse, not only to gather experiences, but also to bring and share solidarity, which is the most beautiful and useful expression of unity.

It is very difficult to forget the magnitude of the first, and the following encounters, which became extraordinary events for the capital, for its schools visited by delegates, and for all Cuba, a country that cannot be ignored when it comes to education, literacy, teacher training, solidary cooperation, progress and shared practices.

With the accumulated experience of 15 previous encounters, you have now focused on the universal agenda directed toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal which is aimed to “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

I would say that here are the best conditions to interpret, thoroughly analyze and make practicable that ideal.

The 60-year history of the Cuban Revolution vouches for that truth, almost like a mathematical axiom. The first step was the Literacy Campaign. Just two years after the revolutionary triumph, Cuba was declared a Territory Free of Illiteracy.

Then came the battle for the sixth and ninth grades, which drove enrollment in worker-campesino schools, to complete the upper middle educational level among workers.

Today we have one of the highest averages of university graduates – 21% of the total population of the country – of Latin America and the Caribbean, and much of the world.

This strength led us to promote and extend our cooperation with the entire Third World, creating literacy programs in our language and in indigenous languages.

And, logically, an event such as this needed to be born and grow, capable of showing and sharing the best experiences – with respect for the diversity and identity of each nation – that among Cuban educators has generated an extraordinary movement from schools, fostering creativity, innovation, experimentation, research and exchanges among them and their colleagues in the world.

As had been said more than once, the Pedagogy Congress is the most important scientific event of the Cuban teaching profession.

And it is also an inexhaustible source of solidarity among our peoples, with expressions of great political and social commitment in each concrete historic moment. The final declarations of each edition attest to what I say.

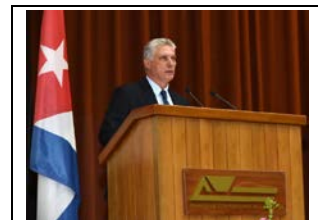


Photo: Estudio Revolución

On Fidel’s passing, a young Cuban singer-songwriter, Raúl Torres, created a song that is like an anthem for Cubans. Although its title is “Cabalgando con Fidel” (Riding with Fidel), many call it “Los agradecidos” (The Grateful), because thus the poet defines those of us who haven’t stopped thinking of him and defending his ideas.

Among the grateful of all professions, are Cuban educators. (Applause). They, you, like Fidel, know that we have much to achieve, and that all that we do for the dissemination of the knowledge that humanity has accumulated over centuries will never be enough. A lifetime is not sufficient to learn everything. Nor to teach everything.

The merit is in the struggle, to always advance further, not being stopped by the obstacles. The case of this Pedagogy Congress can be cited as an example. Not even in the toughest years of the economic crisis of the 1990s, did these gatherings for the unity of educators cease to be held.

The Pedagogy Congress is the voice of the grateful in Education, of those who work for more and better access to knowledge, aware of what we are lacking, but also conscious of just how much we must defend, save and perfect.

Cuba, in recent months, has become a gigantic Constituent Assembly, on taking our new Constitution to a popular debate, prior to a Referendum, for which on February 24 we will vote Yes en masse, without a doubt.

Teachers and students of all levels are among the segments of the population that discussed with greater depth and enthusiasm the changes and new formulations for our Magna Carta.

I believe that this is due to the fact that, despite the criminal blockade that is being tightened, the financial limitations that hit us and delay the fulfillment of many of our dreams, the Cuban state has ratified, once again, its responsibility in terms of the absolutely free nature of education, from preschool to the conclusion of an undergraduate degree. And even more: to guarantee schools and full employment for graduate teachers at any level. This is something that surprises and is admired by many of our visitors. And it is simply a right, together with that of health, to which the Revolution devotes the largest budgets, as these are universal human rights and fundamental to our Martí inspired ideal of “conquering all justice.” (Applause)

Without any chauvinism, I feel that Cuba has long guaranteed that “inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all,” something that unfortunately remains an aspiration for many countries.

And the new Constitution reinforces all these concepts, is at the forefront of the most progressive trends in the world, and aspires to more, particularly in terms of quality, as the more educated and better informed people are, not only are they freer, as Martí stated, but they demand more.

Education and culture have the power to expand the horizons of knowledge infinitely. The desire to learn grows in as far as knowledge does.

In the coming months, two new special schools for children with physical and motor disabilities should be inaugurated, stemming from an idea of our First Party Secretary, Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, who was strongly impressed after his recent visit to an emblematic school of Cuban education.

The “Solidarity with Panama” school, inaugurated by Fidel 30 years ago, with all its facilities and services available to children with serious physical and motor disabilities who, nonetheless, achieve impressive development of skills and knowledge, thanks to Special Education, will very soon have the company of similar institutions, strengthened in specialties such as Vocational, Artistic and Scientific Education.

We are also immersed in the repair of those schools damaged by the devastating tornado that hit five municipalities of Havana on the eve of Martí’s birthday. And we have proposed to rebuild them even more beautiful and with better facilities for the education of their students. (Applause)

At the same time, the more than 300 teachers from those areas, who were affected to some degree, and yet did not abandon their teaching responsibilities, must be recognized, encouraged, and supported. (Applause)

The extraordinary solidary spirit of our people, the very values that Cuban education shapes, with all its imperfections, which we recognize and constantly criticize, has allowed us to break records in recovery times of basic services.

I believe we owe much to the emphasis that our education places on history, and on its most prestigious protagonists. We are in a period of patriotic commemorations for the 150 years of the beginning of the independence wars, and the 60th anniversary of the revolutionary triumph of 1959.

Our young people know, even though they didn’t live it, that Cuba suffered 60 years of dependence on and neocolonial subjugation to the United States. The Revolution, in that same period, 60 years, has erased its consequences of profound inequality, racism, elitist education and exclusion. But schools have a duty to maintain that awareness in each generation that is educated in our classrooms.

We defend and exalt historical memory, culture and identity as a shield of sovereignty, “so that our children will not have to beg on bended knee, for the homeland which their forefathers won for us on their feet,” as Rubén Martínez Villena said, a young Cuban poet and revolutionary of the 1930s.

The current technologies have imposed new communication codes, and we are committed to their knowledge and healthy, critical, creative use.

Fidel was the first to realize the value of the Internet to truly democratize communications. He said that it appeared as if created for revolutionaries, due to the ability to spread messages at a negligible cost and with an infinite reach.

But he also warned us of the risks of plunging into the oceans of information of the Network of Networks, without the necessary knowledge and critical awareness to use it without being used.

The greatest and most serious problems of the world today are settled in this immense network, that connects us subtly or openly, and it is necessary to confront such scenarios with sufficient knowledge to avoid being objects at the service of the worst interests, or uncritical subjects of an environment that compromises even the survival of the species.

Back to schools. Without them, the most wonderful instrument of human intelligence would be just a useless toy, or a mirror to satisfy vanity. With them, with the tools that they contribute and the critical awareness that they shape, a better world will be possible in a shorter time.

In her opening remarks, Minister Ena Elsa Velásquez spoke to you of the four pillars on which government management is built. The fundamental aspect is the connection with the

people, and addressing their problems and demands, appealing to the participation of all, and the search for more than one alternative solution, in a permanent exercise of communication.

For this management to be effective, it is necessary to apply knowledge in depth, in the use of new technologies, and we are committed to this with the talent and contributions of our technical schools and our universities. But, at the same time, we defend an education that informs students of the political complexities of today’s world, of the causes and origins of conflicts, the interventionist and overwhelming vocation of empires, and the right of the peoples to defend their dignity and sovereignty, as well as to value integration among nations of a similar composition, development, and interests, as a destiny essential to survival.

That knowledge is what makes us despise wars, defend just causes, practice solidarity with those who suffer, resist and overcome all forms of punishment that they attempt to impose on us for trying to forge our own path.

Under that conviction, we consider any scenario as useful to demand respect for International Law, non-interference or intervention in Venezuela (Applause), an end to the blockade and the threats against Cuba and sister nations like Venezuela and Nicaragua. (Applause)

In a text that every educator of our lands should know — “Maestros ambulantes” (Itinerant Teachers) — José Martí said: “Men need someone to stir their compassion often, and cause their tears to flow, and to give their souls the supreme benefit of feeling generous; through a marvelous law of natural compensation, he who gives of himself grows, and he who turns inward and lives from small pleasures, is afraid to share them with others, and only thinks avariciously of cultivating his appetites, loses his humanity and becomes loneliness itself. He carries in his breast all the dreariness of winter. He becomes in fact and appearance an insect.

“(…) Men grow, they grow physically and visibly, when they learn something, when they begin to possess something, and when they have done some good.

“Only fools or egoists talk of misfortune. Happiness exists on earth, and it is won through prudent exercise of reason, knowledge of the harmony of the universe, and constant practice of generosity.”

He wrote this in May 1884, but they are words that have the value of eternity, like almost everything we know about Martí.

Compañeras and compañeros:

I allow myself to approach these words to thank you for your presence here, your contributions to Cuban, Latin American and universal education. To express our permanent willingness to cooperate and exchange experiences and knowledge. To confirm that in Pedagogy, as in the Cuban Revolution, there is no rupture, there is continuity. (Applause)

We remain committed to a possible better world and we believe that the basis of that desire is education.

Thank you very much for making it possible every day.

See you at the next Pedagogy event! (Ovation)

<http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2019-02-22/we-remain-committed-to-a-possible-better-world-and-we-believe-that-the-basis-of-that-desire-is-education>

## THE WAR ON VENEZUELA IS BUILT ON LIES

21 February 2019

Travelling with Hugo Chavez, I soon understood the threat of Venezuela. At a farming co-operative in Lara state, people waited patiently and with good humour in the heat. Jugs of water and melon juice were passed around. A guitar was played; a woman, Katarina, stood and sang with a husky contralto.

"What did her words say?" I asked.

"That we are proud," was the reply.

The applause for her merged with the arrival of Chavez. Under one arm he carried a satchel bursting with books. He wore his big red shirt and greeted people by name, stopping to listen. What struck me was his capacity to listen.

But now he read. For almost two hours he read into the microphone from the stack of books beside him: Orwell, Dickens, Tolstoy, Zola, Hemingway, Chomsky, Neruda: a page here, a line or two there. People clapped and whistled as he moved from author to author.

Then farmers took the microphone and told him what they knew, and what they needed; one ancient face, carved it seemed from a nearby banyan, made a long, critical speech on the subject of irrigation; Chavez took notes.

Wine is grown here, a dark Syrah type grape. "John, John, come up here," said El Presidente, having watched me fall asleep in the heat and the depths of Oliver Twist.

"He likes red wine," Chavez told the cheering, whistling audience, and presented me with a bottle of "vino de la gente". My few words in bad Spanish brought whistles and laughter.

Watching Chavez with la gente made sense of a man who promised, on coming to power, that his every move would be subject to the will of the people. In eight years, Chavez won eight elections and referendums: a world record. He was electorally the most popular head of state in the Western Hemisphere, probably in the world.

Every major chavista reform was voted on, notably a new constitution of which 71 per cent of the people approved each of the 396 articles that enshrined unheard of freedoms, such as Article 123, which for the first time recognised the human rights of mixed-race and black people, of whom Chavez was one.

One of his tutorials on the road quoted a feminist writer: "Love and solidarity are the same." His audiences understood this well and expressed themselves with dignity, seldom with deference. Ordinary people regarded Chavez and his government as their first champions: as theirs.

his was especially true of the indigenous, mestizos and Afro-Venezuelans, who had been held in historic contempt by Chavez's immediate predecessors and by those who today live far from the barrios, in the mansions and penthouses of East Caracas, who commute to Miami where their banks are and who regard themselves as "white". They are the powerful core of what the media calls "the opposition".

When I met this class, in suburbs called Country Club, in homes appointed with low chandeliers and bad portraits, I recognised them. They could be white South Africans, the petite bourgeoisie of Constantia and Sandton, pillars of the cruelties of apartheid.



Cartoonists in the Venezuelan press, most of which are owned by an oligarchy and oppose the government, portrayed Chavez as an ape. A radio host referred to "the monkey". In the private universities, the verbal currency of the children of the well-off is often racist abuse of those whose shacks are just visible through the pollution.

Although identity politics are all the rage in the pages of liberal newspapers in the West, race and class are two words almost never uttered in the mendacious "coverage" of Washington's latest, most naked attempt to grab the world's greatest source of oil and reclaim its "backyard".

For all the chavistas' faults - such as allowing the Venezuelan economy to become hostage to the fortunes of oil and never seriously challenging big capital and corruption - they brought social justice and pride to millions of people and they did it with unprecedented democracy.

"Of the 92 elections that we've monitored," said former President Jimmy Carter, whose Carter Centre is a respected monitor of elections around the world, "I would say the election process in Venezuela is the best in the world." By way of contrast, said Carter, the US election system, with its emphasis on campaign money, "is one of the worst".

In extending the franchise to a parallel people's state of communal authority, based in the poorest barrios, Chavez described Venezuelan democracy as "our version of Rousseau's idea of popular sovereignty".

In Barrio La Linea, seated in her tiny kitchen, Beatrice Balazo told me her children were the first generation of the poor to attend a full day's school and be given a hot meal and to learn music, art and dance. "I have seen their confidence blossom like flowers," she said.

In Barrio La Vega, I listened to a nurse, Mariella Machado, a black woman of 45 with a wicked laugh, address an urban land council on subjects ranging from homelessness to illegal war. That day, they were launching Mision Madres de Barrio, a programme aimed at poverty among single mothers. Under the constitution, women have the right to be paid as carers, and can borrow from a special women's bank. Now the poorest housewives get the equivalent of \$200 a month.

In a room lit by a single fluorescent tube, I met Ana Lucia Ferandez, aged 86, and Mavis Mendez, aged 95. A mere 33-year-old, Sonia

Alvarez, had come with her two children. Once, none of them could read and write; now they were studying mathematics. For the first time in its history, Venezuela has almost 100 per cent literacy.

This is the work of Mision Robinson, which was designed for adults and teenagers previously denied an education because of poverty. Mision Ribas gives everyone the opportunity of a secondary education, called a bachillerato. (The names Robinson and Ribas refer to Venezuelan independence leaders from the 19th century).

In her 95 years, Mavis Mendez had seen a parade of governments, mostly vassals of Washington, preside over the theft of billions of dollars in oil spoils, much of it flown to Miami. "We didn't matter in a human sense," she told me. "We lived and died without real education and running water, and food we couldn't afford. When we fell ill, the weakest died. Now I can read and write my name and so much more; and whatever the rich and the media say, we have planted the seeds of true democracy and I have the joy of seeing it happen."

In 2002, during a Washington-backed coup, Mavis's sons and daughters and grandchildren and great-grandchildren joined hundreds of thousands who swept down from the barrios on the hillsides and demanded the army remained loyal to Chavez.

"The people rescued me," Chavez told me. "They did it with the media against me, preventing even the basic facts of what happened. For popular democracy in heroic action, I suggest you look no further."

Since Chavez's death in 2013, his successor Nicolas Maduro has shed his derisory label in the Western press as a "former bus driver" and become Saddam Hussein incarnate. His media abuse is ridiculous. On his watch, the slide in the price of oil has caused hyper inflation and played havoc with prices in a society that imports almost all its food; yet, as the journalist and film-maker Pablo Navarrete reported this week, Venezuela is not the catastrophe it has been painted. "There is food everywhere," he wrote. "I have filmed lots of videos of food in markets [all over Caracas] ... it's Friday night and the restaurants are full."

In 2018, Maduro was re-elected President. A section of the opposition boycotted the election, a tactic tried against Chavez. The boycott failed: 9,389,056 people voted; sixteen parties participated and six candidates stood for the presidency. Maduro won 6,248,864 votes, or 67.84 per cent.

On election day, I spoke to one of the 150 foreign election observers. "It was entirely fair," he said. "There was no fraud; none of the lurid media claims stood up. Zero. Amazing really."

Like a page from Alice's tea party, the Trump administration has presented Juan Guaido, a pop-up creation of the CIA-front National Endowment for Democracy, as the "legitimate President of Venezuela". Unheard of by 81 per cent of the Venezuelan people, according to The Nation, Guaido has been elected by no one.

Maduro is "illegitimate", says Trump (who won the US presidency with three million fewer votes than his opponent), a "dictator", says demonstrably unhinged vice president Mike Pence and an oil trophy-in-waiting, says "national security" adviser John Bolton (who when I interviewed him in 2003 said, "Hey, are you a communist, maybe even Labour?").

As his "special envoy to Venezuela" (coup master), Trump has appointed a convicted felon, Elliot Abrams, whose intrigues in the service of Presidents Reagan and George W. Bush helped produce the Iran-Contra scandal in the 1980s and plunge central America into years of blood-soaked misery.

Putting Lewis Carroll aside, these "crazies" belong in newsreels from the 1930s. And yet their lies about Venezuela have been taken up with enthusiasm by those paid to keep the record straight.

On Channel 4 News, Jon Snow bellowed at the Labour MP Chris Williamson, "Look, you and Mr Corbyn are in a very nasty corner [on Venezuela]!" When Williamson tried to explain why threatening a sovereign country was wrong, Snow cut him off. "You've had a good go!"

In 2006, Channel 4 News effectively accused Chavez of plotting to make nuclear weapons with Iran: a fantasy. The then Washington correspondent, Jonathan Rugman, allowed a war criminal, Donald Rumsfeld, to liken Chavez to Hitler, unchallenged.

Researchers at the University of the West of England studied the BBC's reporting of Venezuela over a ten-year period. They looked at 304 reports and found that only three of these referred to any of the positive policies of the government. For the BBC, Venezuela's democratic record, human rights legislation, food programmes, healthcare initiatives and poverty reduction did not happen. The greatest literacy programme in human history did not happen, just as the millions who march in support of Maduro and in memory of Chavez, do not exist.

When asked why she filmed only an opposition march, the BBC reporter Orla Guerin tweeted that it was "too difficult" to be on two marches in one day.

A war has been declared on Venezuela, of which the truth is "too difficult" to report.

It is too difficult to report the collapse of oil prices since 2014 as largely the result of criminal machinations by Wall Street. It is too difficult to report the blocking of Venezuela's access to the US-dominated international financial system as sabotage. It is too difficult to report Washington's "sanctions" against Venezuela, which have caused the loss of at least \$6 billion in Venezuela's revenue since 2017, including \$2 billion worth of imported medicines, as illegal, or the Bank of England's refusal to return Venezuela's gold reserves as an act of piracy.

The former United Nations Rapporteur, Alfred de Zayas, has likened this to a "medieval siege" designed "to bring countries to their knees". It is a criminal assault, he says. It is similar to that faced by Salvador Allende in 1970 when President Richard Nixon and his equivalent of John Bolton, Henry Kissinger, set out to "make the economy [of Chile] scream". The long dark night of Pinochet followed.

The Guardian correspondent, Tom Phillips, has tweeted a picture of a cap on which the words in Spanish mean in local slang: "Make Venezuela fucking cool again." The reporter as clown may be the final stage of much of mainstream journalism's degeneration.

Should the CIA stooge Guaido and his white supremacists grab power, it will be the 68th overthrow of a sovereign government by the United States, most of them democracies. A fire sale of Venezuela's utilities and mineral wealth will surely follow, along with the theft of the country's oil, as outlined by John Bolton.

Under the last Washington-controlled government in Caracas, poverty reached historic proportions. There was no healthcare for those could not pay. There was no universal education; Mavis Mendez, and millions like her, could not read or write. How cool is that, Tom?

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# On the doorstep of February 24 referendum

A brief summary of Cuba's transcendental Constitutional Reform process

Author: [Granma](mailto:granma@granma.cu) | [internet@granma.cu](mailto:internet@granma.cu) - february 22, 2019 16:02:20



Photo: Granma

## 1. START OF THE REFORM PROCESS

By agreement of the National Assembly of People's Power (ANPP), in an extraordinary session held on June 2, 2018, it was agreed to initiate the Constitutional Reform process and approve, as a first step, the creation of a Commission in charge of preparing the proposed Constitution.

The Commission, chaired by Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, First Secretary of the Party, and with the presence of the President of the Councils of State and Ministers, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, and the Second Secretary of the Party, José Ramón Machado Ventura, worked intensely in the drafting of the first version.

## 2. APPROVAL OF THE PROPOSED CONSTITUTION BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

After several sessions of debate, in July of 2018, deputies approved the proposed Constitution of the Republic, and voted to submit the document to an extensive popular consultation.

## 3. POPULAR CONSULTATION

The process of popular consultation extended from August 13 to November 15 and mobilized the entire country, even Cubans living abroad had the opportunity to participate.

## 4. APPROVAL OF THE CONSTITUTION BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The final draft of the proposed Constitution, discussed and analyzed by deputies and enriched with proposals from the population, was approved, by a roll-call vote, by the National Assembly of People's Power, during the Second Ordinary Period of Sessions of the IX Legislature. Esteban Lazo Hernández, president of the parliament, summoned citizens with the right to vote to a Referendum, on February 24, 2019.

## 5. APPOINTMENT OF THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION AND OTHER ELECTORAL BODIES

Members of the National Electoral Commission, presided by Alina Balseiro Gutiérrez, were appointed December 28, 2018, while provincial, municipal, district and special electoral commissions were named and constituted later.

To carry out the Referendum, electoral authorities received extensive training that allows them, in addition to fulfilling their responsibilities, to explain the significance of the constitutional reform process, as well as the contents of the Magna Carta that is submitted to ratification.

## 6. TEST RUN

Electoral authorities described the February 17 test run as satisfactory, noting that the all processes functioned well.

## 7. CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM

The Referendum will take place on February 24 throughout the country. The vote has already taken place abroad, which went according to plan: with transparency and total adherence to the law.

On the importance of these elections, Miguel Díaz-Canel said, at the conclusion of the Second Ordinary Session Period of the Ninth Legislature of the National Assembly of People's Power:

“On a date as dear to us as February 24, 124 years after the resumption of the independence struggle led by our National Hero José Martí, Cubans of these times, faithful to our tradition of struggle, will go to the polls to approve the Constitution, as an expression of firmness and loyalty to the legacy of Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro, and we will say with our vote: Yes to the Revolution, to the sovereignty and independence of the homeland, to unity. Yes for socialism and for the commitment to our heroes and martyrs over more than 150 years of struggles for freedom.”

## 8. PROCLAMATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

If the Constitution is ratified by the free and secret vote of the people, it will be proclaimed and will govern, from that moment, the destiny of the country.

<http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2019-02-22/on-the-doorstep-of-february-24-referendum>

# Self-employed street artists

*IN the golden kilometer of Havana's Historic District, which stretches from Cuba Street to Avenida del Puerto, crossing the Cathedral, Armas, San Francisco de Asis, Vieja and Cristo squares*

Author: [Yenia Silva Correa](mailto:YeniaSilvaCorrea@granma.cu) | [informacion@granma.cu](mailto:informacion@granma.cu) - february 19, 2019 16:02:42

IN the golden kilometer of Havana's Historic District, which stretches from Cuba Street to Avenida del Puerto, crossing the Cathedral, Armas, San Francisco de Asis, Vieja and Cristo squares, it is common to stumble across fortune tellers, caricaturists, painters, musicians, street vendors, and residents. But among all of them, the area's living statues are something special.

These figures work in an area that scarcely exceeds two square kilometers, and their performances are both artistic and orderly.

“The living statues had been in public spaces for about 20 years. We wanted to know who they were, and how they were organized,” explains Elpidio Alemán Velázquez, head of the Revenue Department, part of the General Services Budget Unit of the City Historian's Office.

“We took on the task of ensuring they were working in public spaces according to the legal norms that had been promulgated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security regarding self-employment. We reached an agreement and established the areas where they were going to work,” he notes.



Olisdrey Isaac Rivera, in the character of Pepe Rivera, “El Santiaguero.”  
Photo: Ariel Cecilio Lemus Alvarez



The Cultural Heritage Directorate is responsible for evaluating and authorizing these self-employed workers. Once their status is legalized, they are given a license, as is the case with other non-state workers.

There have been various campaigns to try to undermine the measures taken by the Cuban government to regulate self-employment, but the truth is that this sector is already a part of everyday life across the country. The oldest area of the capital city is no exception.

“We hold systematic meetings with everyone,” Alemán continues. We have 131 local characters today, and they (living statues) represent eight of that total. Everyone knows them as living statues, and they have been supporting the patrimonial theme of the Office.”



Alberto Sánchez's Tribute to Claudio José Domínguez Brindis de Salas, “King of the Octaves.” **Photo:** Ariel Cecilio Lemus Alvarez

He highlights another essential element in the daily work of these artists: “They are expected to contribute to the maintenance of the Historian’s Office. Here any maintenance is very expensive, but there is no doubt that they make an important contribution through their taxes, and this serves them in the end for their retirement.”

### ON THE MOVE

Questions abound when speaking to these self-employed street artists: How do they choose the characters? How much time do they spend on makeup? Why did they choose this profession? But one question is a must: How can they stay in the same position for so long?

Alberto Sánchez, who defines himself as a street artist, reduces the response to a mathematical equation and reveals the secret. “For me it’s a myth, we’re not totally still. The main idea is to be still, but my experience and my own experience told me that wasn’t so. I threw myself in the deep end, and did a sum: poetics of the clown + technique of stillness = performance.

“This means that living statues are 100% communicative. The poetics of the clown allows one to achieve greater communication with the public, in this case with the youngest audience, for whom the illusion that we are statues lasts longest.”

Trained in the world of theater, Olisdrey Isaac Rivera emphasizes an interesting detail: “Our work is hard; we need to have a lot of endurance, a lot of knowledge, even of makeup. Around the world, there are people who do not have resources and use any type of substance.

“We have studied and sought suitable ways to make ourselves up. Make-up is very expensive and we self-manage our materials. We also create our own characters.”

With almost six years experience working in the city’s historic center, he confesses: “Before I looked at statues and said: What would it be like to be inside of that? I abandon my state as a human being and I become a statue, and I see how day and night pass by.

“This is very important to me, as before, when I was doing theater, I worked for a specific audience, I had performance times, training, but in all that I noted that I acted for a specific audience. Here I perform for all kinds of audiences.

“I have had the pleasure of having spectators from infants to others who are almost a hundred years old; people of all social classes. I had the chance to shake hands with the creator of the Internet, to see Madonna in front of me, and millions of others things just because of being located specifically here.”

### SERIOUS ART

These living statues are not just a simple attraction of Havana’s historic center. The series of characters portrayed is also a way to let younger generations learn about men and women who existed here in previous eras.

“To create each of these characterizations, we undertake a previous study of the site, the origin, the age in which they existed. We prepare where we are going to position ourselves, the costumes that were used at that time, and how to make the message clear to our audience,” explains Arigneyis Cruz Fernández, a chemical engineer turned “messenger of the angels.”

“About four years ago, I started my career as a living statue. I began to delve into each of the characters I portray. In this case, the character is the Dama de la Buena Ventura (Lady of Good Fortune), the messenger of the angels. It’s a really nice character because she gives messages of love, peace, and people like her.

“Another of the characters is Homenaje a Caridad Suárez, la Venus de Bronce (Tribute to Caridad Suárez, the Bronze Venus), one of the best 19th century singers of Cuban Zarzuela. She is a very beautiful character, very friendly, very Cuban, very Creole; people are very curious about her.

“The biggest audience we have are children,” she notes. “It’s they who most appreciate us, who are most curious to see if you are really a statue or not. It’s they who make us the happiest every day.”

### THANKS TO THE THEATER

Some of those who today are living statues in Old Havana have a previous link to the stage, be it studies at the Higher Arts Institute, as a member of the Contemporary Dance company, or working with the Korimakao and Giganterías street theater groups. Others emerge from acting workshops, festivals. Today, they all thank the theater for where they are.



Arigneyis Cruz Fernández as La Dama de la Buena Ventura (Lady of Good Fortune), alongside a real statue in tribute to Chopin. **Photo:** Ariel Cecilio Lemus Alvarez

“In 1997, with Vicente Revuelta, we took theater to the streets,” recalls Andrés Pérez, who transforms himself to become El Caballero de París (The Gentleman from Paris). “More than living statues, the street is the theater,” he notes.

It is precisely this daily exchange with the public that has made Beatriz Estévez, a former law student at the University of Havana and today “Silver Fairy” of the city’s historic center, fall in love with street theater, and appreciate the reactions of passersby: “The spectator does not even realize that he is part of what he is looking at, that he is also an actor in everything that happens. People come to thank you for the work you do, and that encourages you to return and continue working.”

David Rouco first worked in an art instructors school, in the supplies area. Later he devoted himself to children’s activities in the squares of Old Havana, and finally chose to portray a cigar roller as a living statue.

“The character has a table with all the instruments with which a cigar is made: the guillotine, the press, the rolling board, the chaveta (broad-bladed knife)... He’s a stationary cigar maker, a depiction of what is used to make a cigar.”

The skill of these artists, the rigor and professionalism with which they assume their work, allows them to transform their appearance in just 30 minutes and exchange with the public for hours, in an apparent state of immobility.

May marks 20 years since the arrival of living statues in Cuba. This team of street actors is preparing to celebrate the Tenth Street Theater Festival in Matanzas, two decades of their art, and the 500th anniversary of the founding of the Cuban capital. Meanwhile, they continue to offer their art to those who visit the oldest streets of this Wonder City.

## Yellow Vests movement battles repression in France

*Posted in Europe, Labor solidarity, World - By G. Dunkel - February 22, 2019*

For the 14th consecutive Saturday, tens of thousands of Yellow Vests marched throughout France on Feb. 16. The cops gave the number of marchers as 41,500, while the Yellow Vest movement claimed the figure was 104,070.

While the major focus of media attention was on Paris, there were also significant marches in Rouen, Lyons and Bordeaux, where the main slogan was “Death to the rich.” The cops broke up the march in Bordeaux with water cannons and tear gas grenades. (Le Monde, Feb. 16)

The French government, under highly unpopular President Emmanuel Macron — whose approval index has dipped as low as 24 percent — has attacked the Yellow Vests from three directions: physical, legal and political.

Over 1,700 people have been seriously injured by French cops during Yellow Vest protests, most of them by “flash balls,” hard rubber projectiles copiously fired by the cops, or by GLI-F4 grenades, which combine a loud bang (165 decibels), tear gas and a hard blast. From pictures on Google and Flickr, most of the injuries have been to eyes and limbs.

The intensity of feeling by Yellow Vest protesters is such that even after they have been severely injured, they keep on protesting.

### Legal and political reprisals

In legal reprisals, Éric Drouet, a truck driver and prominent member of the Yellow Vests, was recently convicted of organizing two demonstrations in January without “prior notification.” Under the state of emergency in force in France because of the threat of “terrorist attacks,” this charge carries major penalties. Drouet has thus far received only a month in prison, perhaps because of the ferocity of the protests. He has another trial set for June. (Le Huffington Post, Feb. 17)

Christophe Dettinger, an ex-champion boxer, was arrested when he kicked a cop during a demonstration in January and then punched another one, over his shield and through his face mask, down and out. Dettinger was sentenced to a year of prison, though he will be able to work during the day and be locked up at night.

Government political pressure has come down on the Yellow Vests. Minister of the Interior Christophe Castaner has regularly denounced the movement in Parliament. On Feb. 14 he announced he was “watching” Christophe Chalencón, a Yellow Vest member, on the far-fetched charge that he was planning a coup and organizing a paramilitary band.

On Feb. 16, a well-known right-wing member of the French Academy, Alain Finkielkraut, got out of a Paris cab when it was stopped by the Yellow Vest march. Protesters recognized him and began calling him a “dirty Zionist.”

Some cops who escorted him out of the crowd said they heard an anti-Semitic epithet, which, if uttered in a public place in France “with the intent to injure or defame someone,” carries a penalty of 12 years in prison and a 45,000 euro fine. However, Finkielkraut did not file a complaint.

Nevertheless, the whole bourgeois political establishment piled on, treating the incident as being essentially anti-Semitic. Those feigning outrage included Emmanuel Macron, his Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, Marine Le Pen, head of the Front National — whose roots are anti-Semitic and neo-Fascist — and every other right-wing party. It was a clear case of the French establishment working as hard as they could to take down the Yellow Vests.

# Who is Teo Babún and why is he going after Cuba?

*The new Constitution establishes that the state recognizes, respects, and protects freedom of religion*

Author: [Yudy Castro Morales](mailto:YudyCastroMorales@granma.cu) | [internet@granma.cu](mailto:internet@granma.cu) - february 21, 2019 16:02:55



Efforts by the United States government to disrupt unity between Cuban religions and the Revolution have a long history. Attempts have been made to manipulate ties between religious institutions and the state on several occasions, over the past 60 years.

But the current administration of Donald Trump – along with resuscitating the Monroe Doctrine and expanding subversive projects in Cuba – has been more explicit about its intention of promoting division.

The position of the Cuban government has been entirely ignored, and its express disposition, as stated by the Comandante en Jefe during a trip to Jamaica in 1977, to “work together, so that when the political idea triumphs, the religious is not set aside, or appears to be an enemy of change. No contradiction exists between the objectives of religion and the objectives of socialism.”

Party First Secretary, Army General Raúl Castro, reiterated in his Sixth Congress report, “The unanimity of revolutionary thought and doctrine with respect to faith and believers has its roots in the very foundations of the nation.”

Additionally, the Constitution that will be submitted to a referendum for approval, this coming February 24, defines in Article 15, that the state is secular and that it “recognizes, respects, and protects freedom of religion,” adding later, “Religious institutions and fraternal organizations are separate from the state and all have the same rights and responsibilities.”

But, who does the Trump administration have to sow discord and revitalize the so-called Plan Bush, which asserted, “Churches and other religious institutions have an important role in the construction of a free Cuba”? The United States has for this dirty work the mercenary Teo A. Babún Jr. and his group, the Evangelical Christian Humanitarian Outreach for Cuba (ECHO Cuba.)

Let’s start with Teo. Before the triumph of the Revolution, the Babún family owned the second largest sawmill in the eastern part of the country; the Diamante construction company; a cement factory; the Sevilla estate; and the Santiago de Cuba ship line.

In 1959, after the triumph of the Revolution, the Babún family left the country, and, once established in Miami, built relations with the “annexionist” mafia. Among the sad passages of this story was Babún’s support of the mercenary invasion at Playa Girón and a terrorist attack on the coastal town of Boca de Samá in 1971. He provided the boat used in the attack executed by the counterrevolutionary organization Alpha 66.

Teo founded ECHO Cuba in 1994. According to the article “Charity made in Miami” by Iroel Sánchez, this organization was denounced in the Cuban TV news series Razones de Cuba for promoting subversion on the island, with funding from the U.S. government. The methods? Counterrevolutionary blogs, printed propaganda, and public events.

According to U.S. State Department documents, ECHO Cuba has significant experience with USAID programs and in combating “the totalitarian Fidel Castro regime.”

Iroel Sánchez additionally reports that Babún received from USAID, in 2009, “an allocation of 1,033,582 dollars and in 2010 signed a contract for 320,000 more, according to the website Cubamoneyproject, which also reported that, in March of 2010, ECHO Cuba was offering grants of 75,000 dollars to ‘promote religious freedom in Cuba.’”

It would be interesting to know what type of religious freedom they are referring to.

More recently, in 2017, in his article entitled, “Obama’s money,” Néstor García Iturbe denounced the National Endowment for Democracy’s funding of Babún’s Evangelical Christian Humanitarian Outreach projects, advocating religious freedom in Cuba, to the tune of \$60,074 in 2014; \$70,000 in 2015; and \$100,000 in 2016. Such programs sustain subversive activities with the promotion of events and materials on “freedom of religion” and “democracy.”

As a good mercenary, Teo Babún today has extended his activity via a few Protestant denominations, promoting the Muralla & 1st Frontera projects, which complement Trump’s goals, outlined in June of 2018, to perfect the subversive U.S. policy toward Cuba and the manipulation of Protestant denominations with a view toward a “transition” in Cuba.

It is well-known that Babún, looking to complete his missions, met with a small group of religious Cubans in Miami, who were thrilled with his supposed desire to provide humanitarian aid with the same funding he used to deprive families of their loved ones, killed in Boca de Samá and Playa Girón.

Perhaps they do not know that the majority of Cuban believers agree that our actions should contribute to “the unity, harmony, and peace of our homeland,” to which they are committed.

## **THE INFAMOUS BUSH PLAN**

- Churches and other religious institutions have an important role in the construction of a free Cuba.

- In relation to the church and its role in the “transition,” the strength of the Catholic Church is emphasized.

- Dismissing the representative authority of the National Council of Churches, “The U.S. government should not deal directly with the Council during the transition, but with individual members and other religious organizations.”

- Support the transition by encouraging aid organizations to work directly with the ministries of the transitional government. Encourage these aid organizations to work with emerging local institutions such as churches to manage relief efforts.

## **FROM THE NEW CONSTITUTION**

- ARTICLE 15. The State recognizes, respects, and protects religious freedom. The Cuban state is secular. In the Republic of Cuba, religious institutions and fraternal associations are separate from the state and all have the same rights and responsibilities.

Different beliefs and religions enjoy equal consideration.

ARTICLE 57 - Everyone has the right to profess religious beliefs or not, to change them, and to practice the religion of their preference, with due respect for others, in accordance with the law.

ARTICLE 42 - All persons are equal before the law, receive the same protection and treatment from authorities and enjoy the same rights, freedoms, and opportunities, without discrimination based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ethnic origin, skin color, religious belief, disability, national or territorial origin, or any other condition or personal circumstance that implies a distinction which is harmful to human dignity.

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