

Statement (Cuba): On recent events in Cuba

Wednesday 27 January 2021, by [Comunistas](#) (Date first published: 29 December 2019).

On 1 January 2021, the reform of the Cuban monetary system came into effect. It marks the end of the dual currency system and is part of a process of liberalization of the economy that began ten years ago, with the opening up of several sectors to private capital. These measures were inevitably accompanied by the rebirth of a bourgeoisie in Cuba, with, in addition to the deepening of inequalities, a cultural and ideological impact.

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We reproduce below a statement published at the end of November on the blog Comunistas under the title “Declaración sobre algo más que los sucesos de San Isidro”. Comunistas is an online publication launched in June 2020 in Cuba, which aims to be a platform for expression and encounter of the voices of the critical Cuban left, in favour of the construction of socialism.

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Today Cuba is experiencing a completely new political scenario. For the first time, sectors of civil society, mainly linked to culture, and significant figures from the arts and the Cuban intelligentsia - who have never had any connection with so-called dissidence - publicly defended the civil rights of an opposition group. An organization that, moreover, calls for the fall of the “dictatorial” government while one of its main leaders openly supports Trump.

The reductionist logic would translate that, if the aforementioned sectors of civil society, the intelligentsia and the arts are fighting for the liberation of important spokespersons for that group, the self-styled San Isidro Movement, then they also want to overthrow the “regime”. However, reality is much more complex than this one-dimensional thinking.

Events have happened quickly. The silence maintained by the state for days and the mismanagement of communication afterwards caused an information vacuum in society, a space which was immediately occupied by the manipulation of the right-wing press.



So, what happened?

So what happened? In short: they arrested a public figure of the San Isidro Movement, because he verbally assaulted a police officer. As a result, his colleagues demanded his release through a hunger strike. The authorities' response was to prevent access by everyone to where the strikers were. Days later, the strikers were removed from the house where they held their protest.

But there is a detail that we must not miss: the San Isidro Movement has always presented itself as a group linked to art. In addition, at the beginning of all these events, the reason why they were together was to read poems. This was one of the main aspects causing a high political sensitivity among artists and intellectuals.

It happens that this sector has seen its creations and positions censored more than once. At a certain point, some of the films produced by them were banned, certain songs silenced, books and articles unpublished, their criteria ignored, omitted or penalized. It is not unusual, then, that among those who have stood out the most in this political scene have been young audio-visual producers.

When the strikers were removed from their homes by the authorities, by chance, social networks stopped working in Cuba. These two events -the arrest and the momentary digital censorship - together with the ambiguous information on the whereabouts of the detainees, caused the accumulated tension of artists and intellectuals who demanded compliance with citizens' rights to detonate.

Here is another aspect without which we could not understand what happened: most of the artists, intellectuals and young people linked to the world of culture and the intelligentsia who protested from social networks, did not themselves support the San Isidro Movement. Rather, they demanded compliance with the civil rights of a group of people, who formed an organization linked to culture.

The day after the strikers had been removed from the place where they held their protest, a diverse group of intellectuals and artists - mostly young - stood at the gates of the Ministry of Culture, demanding to talk with Vice Minister Fernando Rojas, something that they gradually achieved. In the evening, the film director, Fernando Pérez, and the actor, Jorge Perugorria, both recognized for having strongly critical positions with government institutions, but who have never been linked to dissent, appeared at the scene and served as mediators in the discussions that were held within the ministry.

Finally, an important agreement was reached which, basically, was summarized in granting guarantees to Cuban artists and intellectuals, as well as the recognition of broad demands demanded long before the events and the maintenance of a systematic dialogue with the cultural authorities. One of the agreed points was to resolve the issue of the members of the San Isidro Movement.

In less than 24 hours, the San Isidro Movement aged and its demands were superseded. The release of one of its members and the normalization of the legal status of the others was one more point in the great agreement that will set a precedent between civil society and the state. As proof of this, the San Isidro Movement has ignored the valuable agreement that has been reached.

The counterrevolution was disappointed and upset. What they wanted did not happen: for one of the kids from San Isidro to die so that protests could break out and destabilize the country.

But it is true that in all this there was a large dose of political and media manipulation carried out by far-right groups - who knew how to take advantage of the government's mismanagement of

communication. It is true that the classic interference by foreign powers did not take long to appear, this time, led by a Mike Pompeo who refuses to accept that his president was defeated and a European Parliament which, due to its own imperialist character, has not gone beyond the colonial mentality. But what the state must take into account is that it is facing a different civil society than the one it imagines exists, in the midst of a serious economic crisis and that it should not - unless it is to face major crises - postpone dialogue.

Rebirth of a bourgeoisie in Cuba

However, there is a socioeconomic factor without which these events would not have happened. The rebirth of the bourgeoisie in Cuba, or, as it is customary to say: the private sector of the economy. The bourgeoisie, as a social class, is not only born with economic implications, but also cultural and political ones. This class, which has been reborn after the measures implemented by the government throughout the decade that is ending, has had a strong political and cultural impact on society, specifically, on civil society and the university youth of Havana, even more so in the university sector linked to the arts, literature and humanities. This class, as a civil society in itself, has strongly promoted the expansion of a whole new civil society consisting of press media, associations, private galleries, independent film studios, while its conservative sector promotes conservative churches.

The Cuban bourgeoisie did not do this as the agent of a macabre plan prepared by the imperialists. The expansion of civil society from the bourgeoisie is an intrinsic phenomenon within it which was born with it as a social class.

Most of the sector of civil society that fought for the civil rights of the detainees has two important points of contact with the proposals of the San Isidro Movement. Both have as their goal the expansion of civil rights. Both support, in different ways, the expansion of the private sector of the economy in Cuba. The only thing that differentiates them is that the San Isidro Movement openly supports Trump and submits to imperialism.

That is to say, we are facing three positions which support the expansion of the private sector of the economy. On the one hand, the surrender to neoliberalism of San Isidro (submission to imperialism + private economy + civil liberties), on the other, the artistic and intellectual sector of civil society that was implicated in the events (expansion of the private sector of the economy + civil liberties + democratic socialism). And finally, in a certain way faced with both and without being able to understand why this has happened, justifying everything with only part of the problem (that is, counterrevolution and foreign media manipulation), is the state, which promotes expansions of the private sector, while trying to build socialism and limit civil rights.

This is something that the state does not understand: from its own hands a social class has been born that supports its economic measures - even demands to deepen them - while attacking it politically, in relation to democratic issues. From this impossibility of analysis, the state then understands that the measures are to attack civil society.

A socialism without liberties perishes. The examples from history are overwhelming

Due to this, in this great debate provoked by a political crisis, there is a great absentee: the great majorities of the working class.

Due to this, and stimulated by the position of dialogue that the Ministry of Culture, that is, the Cuban authorities, maintains with sectors of civil society

Comunistas makes public the following demands:

1. Prohibit - in the Constitution and the Penal Code - the exercise of all kinds of censorship that falls on intellectuals, artists, press media -state and non-state - blogs and other forms of expression.
2. Promote total transparency of information.
3. Encourage through the state socialist cultural policies focused on overcoming the alienation of the working class. As part of them, ensure that the areas of the urban and rural peripheries can access cinemas and theatres again without having to travel to the city centre, while establishing quality cultural offers in a systematic way. The modification of leisure time is fundamental in the process of transformation of communities plagued by alcoholism, as well as various types of violence, among which the increase in femicide is of concern.
4. Encourage social policies that guarantee a dignified life to all of the most vulnerable sectors of society, prioritizing the elimination of begging and not its criminalization.
5. Stop the elimination of subsidies and gratuities planned for the coming months and announced by comrade Marino Murillo.
6. Stop the policies of expansion of the private sector of the economy.
7. Guarantee workers hired in the private sector of the economy the same employment rights as those who work for the state.
8. Establish legislation that requires employers in the private sector of the economy to strictly comply with these rights.
9. Grant the right to strike to workers hired in the private sector of the economy. The interests of the bourgeoisie will never be the interests of the working class.
10. Immediately legalize equal marriage.
11. Delete subsection D of article 22 of the Constitution where constitutional guarantees are granted to the private sector of the economy, that is, to the bourgeoisie. Something that can easily be legislated without having to be present in the Constitution.
12. Inclusion in the Constitution of an article legislating that no bourgeois may be part of the government, or of the leadership of the Communist Party.

Next year we will be faced with an even more critical scenario: the referendum for the approval of equal marriage will be held, a process where Cuban churches openly receive funding from the United States from their mother churches, representatives of the rightist and conservative American ideology; these Cuban churches will constitute a massive and organized opposition to the government, which will be permitted and protected by law. An opposition which will have the opportunity to propagandize a reactionary and fanatical ideology at the national level, generating national polarization. This, added to the serious economic crisis, would lead to a dangerous scenario which could have an unpredictable end, in the event that the conservative churches defeat same-sex marriage, that is, defeat a state policy.

The working class will only be saved by the working class and not by right-wing led groups. The working class has never had its future in capitalism, least of all the working class living in countries that for centuries were subjected to colonialism, later to neo-colonialism; and then, in the case of Cuba, decades of imperialist aggression, which, together with the mistakes made, has led us to an atrophied economy. In order for the construction of communism to be accomplished and not be defeated in the attempt, the working class must live in a free and socialist society.

Down with imperialisms!

No to capitalist restoration!

No to right-wing manipulation!

Neither kings, nor bourgeois, nor censors:! forward to Communism

Editorial Committee of *Comunistas*

Somewhere in Cuba, during the night of Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 November 2020.

The document has not been approved by the whole of the editorial committee.

P.S.

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