



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on July 14, 2021

What Caused the Cuban Protests? Biden Admin Says COVID, Cubans Say Communism

The Biden regime cannot quite bring itself to recognize what is happening in Cuba or why it is happening. The former island paradise has been under the control of a communist dictatorship since 1959. Over the past weekend, the Cuban people took to the streets protesting communism and demanding freedom. The White House has spun the whole affair in terms of a reaction to COVID-19 and five “Squad” Democrats aligned with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) have simply ignored the protests entirely.



AP Images

Police detain protestor in Havana, Cuba

Following a bloody communist revolution, Fidel Castro seized control of Cuba in 1959 and converted Cuba into a one-party, socialist state under Communist Party rule. He executed hundreds of agents, policemen, and soldiers that had been loyal to the former republic — often without a trial or anything approaching due process. He ruled Cuba in one capacity or another until 2011 when he was succeeded by his brother, Raúl Castro. In April 2021, Raúl turned the reins over to Miguel Díaz-Canel — the first non-Castro to rule Cuba since 1959.

In all of the years since 1959, the people of Cuba have suffered under the heavy-handed rule of one communist dictator after another. Perhaps the best illustration of just how bad life is for the Cuban people is the number of them who — over the years, sometimes in droves — have risked their lives on makeshift rafts in attempts to escape Cuba and come to America. It is noteworthy that the opposite never happens.

Due to communist rule there, Cuba has seen only brief periods where the lives of Cubans were not marked by scarcity. And even that was an indirect result of American subsidies. As even [NBC News admits](#):

The 1980s were a period of little scarcity in Cuba, thanks to subsidies from the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, subsidies dried up, and Cuba struggled with extreme deprivation and massive food shortages, its economy contracting by over 35 percent. Many economists say Cuba never really recovered.



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What is left out of NBC's admission is that during the period when the Soviet Union was subsidizing Cuba, the United States was subsidizing the Soviet Union through loans neither side ever expected to be repaid. The United States gave to the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.S.R. handed some of it over to Cuba. That is not proof of a successful political system; on the contrary, it is proof of the opposite.

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And while liberals blame the Cuban embargo — in place for decades and tightened by the favorite whipping boy of the Left, President Donald Trump — for Cuba's woes, the reality is, as that NBC article also admits,

One of the most important factors that has led to years of economic stagnation is the country's Soviet-style, centrally planned economy and its hesitation to adopt market-oriented reforms that other remaining communist countries have taken.

Of course, the article also hints that communism works just fine, if done properly. But while the downturn in an already-bad economy may have served as the straw that finally broke the camel's back, sending Cubans to the streets in protest Sunday, it is important to note that their chanted slogans were not about food, but about freedom.

The protesters shouted, "'Libertad!' — 'Freedom!' — and, standing the cry of the revolutionaries on its head, they shouted, 'Patria y Vida!' — 'Fatherland and Life!' The communist revolutionaries had shouted, 'Patria o Muerte!' — 'Fatherland or Death!' — meaning they preferred death over a failure to seize Cuba for their revolution. Just in case it wasn't clear, the protesters crowded outside the Communist Party headquarters and shouted, 'Cuba isn't yours!'

So, food, the economy, the embargo — those were not the reasons for the protests. Those were not the battle-cry of the protesters. They did not demand bread and circuses; they demanded life and liberty and they reject Communism.

But leftists here in the United States refuse to acknowledge those truths.

In a press conference Monday, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki was asked, "Why is it that yesterday the State Department was saying that this was all happening out of concern about rising COVID cases?" Psaki [spent the next minute stumbling her way through an answer that sounds like what we have come to expect from her boss](#) (without the creepy whispering he has introduced of late). Her answer conflates everything, but "circles back" to COVID by the end. The one thing she *never* mentions is that Cubans have taken to the streets because they are tired of living under communist rule.

Later that day, the current resident of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue issued a statement on the protests in Cuba. That statement — in full — is 94 words and reads:

We stand with the Cuban people and their clarion call for freedom and relief from the tragic grip of the pandemic and from the decades of repression and economic suffering to which they have been subjected by Cuba's authoritarian regime. The Cuban people are bravely asserting fundamental and universal rights. Those rights, including the right of peaceful protest and the right to freely determine their own future, must be respected. The United States calls on the Cuban regime to hear their people and serve their needs at this vital



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moment rather than enriching themselves.

While making sure to pretend that the protests are about wanting “relief from the tragic grip of the pandemic” — something conspicuously absent from the actual cries of the protesters — Biden spends exactly zero of his 94 words on the real issue; he does not use the word “communism” even once, though he did mention “repression” and “authoritarian regime.”

But at least the White House acknowledged that there were protests, even if missing the point while doing so. That is more than five members of Congress aligned with the Democratic Socialists of America have been able to bring themselves to do. Known as the “Squad,” these members of Congress have rarely met a protest they didn’t like. This time, though, something is different.

Representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.), Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.), Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.), Cori Bush (D-Miss.), and Jamaal Bowman (D-N.Y.) have simply ignored the protests thus far. Not one of them has issued a statement showing support for the protesters. Perhaps those protesters need a catchy name, such as Cuban Lives Matter, and to come to American cities, burning, pillaging, and looting. They could blame America and racism for their woes. Perhaps then the Squad would not be able to resist supporting them. As it is, the protesters hate living under the very type of government the Squad is working to bring to America. So, no support. Cuban Lives Don’t Matter. Because Anti-Communist Lives Don’t Matter.

It is a sad commentary that Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) is the only Democratic Socialist in Congress who expressed any support for the protesters. That is one low bar. But even at that, Bernie went out of his way to miss the point — blaming the plight of the Cuban people on the embargo.

But perhaps that is about the best one can expect from the man who has spent his career praising Cuba’s communist dictatorship. Way back in 1989, Sanders — then mayor of Burlington, Vermont — went on a trip to Cuba. On his return, he [told the *Burlington Free Press*](#), “Cuba has solved some very important problems,” adding, “I did not see a hungry child. I did not see any homeless people. Cuba today not only has free health care but very high-quality health care.” He went on in that interview to compare the “imperfect” nature of “political prisoners” in Cuba to the “imperfect” nature of “homelessness, illiteracy, and unemployment” here in America.

Of course, in 1989 when Sanders visited Cuba, the island was the recipient of American subsidies via the Soviet Union. And it is highly unlikely that he was allowed a free and unguided tour of the island. So what he saw or did not see likely did not reflect the actual living conditions of those who could wind up as political prisoners if they dared speak up.

All that is wrong with Cuba is that it is under the thumb of a communist regime. But leftists would rather either ignore the whole thing completely or blame COVID and the U.S. embargo. The unthinkable alternative is to dig too deeply into their own favored political system.



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