

Political Repression in Cuba

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Introduction

Cuba, officially named Republic of Cuba is an island country in the Caribbean. Havana is Capital and largest city of Cuba.

Situation before Cuban Revolution of 1959

Cuba was under dictatorship of President Fulgencio Batista, a close ally of United States, before revolution led by Fidel Castro and 26th of July Movement ousted him on January 01, 1959. Cuban economy was somewhat advanced before revolution but there were great disparities in social and economic status of Cubans. Most of the business was owned by foreigners mainly U.S citizens which had hegemony over Cuban (Lally, 2013).

Before the revolution in Cuba a majority of the population was in complete misery. There were an approximate 600,000 Cubans out of work and 500,000 farmers living in small shacks at the best. A large portion of the people only worked 4 months of the year and tried not to starve the rest. The average national annual income was only \$91.25 (US). This caused infant mortality to be 60 per 1,000 born and also life expectancy which was 59 for males. Only 2% had running water and 43% were completely illiterate. Also, women made up only a tiny portion of the workforce, an estimated 9.8% and many were only doing degrading low paying jobs such as prostitution (Lally, 2013).

Situation Post Cuban Revolution of 1959

Fidel Castro came into power after revolution. Castro believes in unitary democracy rather than adversary democracy. Unitary democracy is a government system in which all governmental power is vested in a central government and from that the regional and local governments obtain their powers. Country was made a Socialist Communist state with close ties of USSR (Gonzalez, 2012).

Political Repression and Human Rights Situation

After the revolution there was censorship placed on certain types of publications. The censorship was not as wide spread as the Americans seemed to portray it to be, but definitely was present. Anyone in Cuba could read or write almost anything they please from Mein Kampf because believe that students learning about history need to learn about Hitler and his Nazism. Even religious books such as the Bible and Quran were allowed for analysis and books that analyze capitalism or socialism are encouraged. All that's forbidden is any type of publication that condemns socialism or the revolution from the perspective of a capitalist. This is one of the attempts Castro made to make sure that people do not break away from revolutionary class, with ideas that capitalism and democracy are better. Now from the eyes of any democratic citizen they would say that there should be no limit on what they are allowed to read and form opinions about. It makes many Cubans think there is something that the communist are hiding from them. It starts to make many of the wonder if maybe it will offer them a better lifestyle then being just barely above the poverty line (Lally, 2013).

From time to time Cuban government has been accused of numerous human rights violation and repressionist tactics, including torture, arbitrary detentions, unfair trials and

extrajudicial executions. The Human Rights Watch accuses the government of "suppressing nearly all forms of political dissent "and that" Cubans are systematically denied basic rights to free expression, association, assembly, privacy, movement, and due process." Citizens cannot leave or return to Cuba without first obtaining an official permit (Donnelly, 2013).

The numbers show a trend of unfavorable developments in the last twenty years. In 1978 there were between fifteen and twenty thousand political prisoners in Cuba, that number rose to about 112 000 in 1986. In 2006, despite a substantial reduction, there was, according to Amnesty International, between eighty thousand and eighty thousand five hundred prisoners politicians are on the island. This number continued to drop significantly in the following years.

Cuba had the second highest number of imprisoned journalists in 2008, according to various sources, including the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), one NGO International, and Human Rights Watch . As a result of the ban on ownership, computer ownership rates are among the lowest in the world. The right to use the internet is monitored and is granted only to selected people. The connection to the Internet illegally can lead to a penalty of five years in prison (Donnelly, 2013).

The dissident Cubans face arrest and imprisonment. In 1990, the Human Rights Watch reported that Cuba's prison system, one of the largest in Latin America , consists of some 40 maximum-security prisons, thirty Minimum security prisons, and over two hundred labor camps. According to Human Rights Watch, political prisoners, along with the rest of the prison population of Cuba, are confined to cells with substandard and unhealthy conditions.

The government defends emphasizing respect, Cuba, the rights to health and education , to freedom of religion and association (Donnelly, 2013).

Relations to USSR/Russia

Russia and USSR before its dissolution in 1991 were main international supporters of Cuban Communist regime. The Communist regime of USSR provided great support and aid to Cuban government after revolution to counter influence of U.S in the region. Many trade and defense agreements were signed between Cuba and USSR and Soviet military was positioned on Island to block intervention and occupation of Island by U.S after failed invasion of Bay of Pigs (Gonzalez, 2012). Cuba was also focal and geographic point of Cuban Missile crisis of 1962 a confrontation due to which U.S and USSR were closest to war during cold war. The trade agreements and aid from USSR stopped after collapse of USSR in 1991 and Cuban economy suffered immensely but economic condition has significantly improved since start of this millennium and collaboration with Russia has been resumed (Gonzalez, 2012).

References

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