

Washington and the Cuban Revolution Today: Ballad of a Never-Ending Policy

By Ike Nahem

Part I: The Myth of the Miami Lobby

The Obama Administration, consistent with the approach of the Bush Administration, has made a political decision to subordinate foreign policy and national interest-based decisions to domestic politics with respect to its Cuba policy. There is a bipartisan group of members of Congress – Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate – who represent Florida, a state where there are many swing votes that deliver the electoral votes for any president. These individuals not only deliver votes, but they deliver campaign finance, and generally make a lot of noise, and that combination has persuaded the White House that reelection is more of a priority than taking the heavy lifting to set the United States on the path of -normalization with Cuba for now.

Julia Sweig, director for Latin American Studies, US Council on Foreign Relations

The essential continuity of US anti-Cuba policy under the Barack Obama Administration has been a source of mystery and confusion to many who oppose US sanctions. Within the US academic, think-tank, and media meritocracies – who often go in and out of government office – many are frustrated, even embarrassed, by Washington's continued pariah status over Cuba in Latin America and internationally

as registered in annual lopsided, humiliating votes against the US policy in the United Nations.

So why does Washington's economic and political war against Cuba – the longest unchanged foreign policy in US history, entering its sixth decade – persist? Why is Cuba such an outsize question in US politics? Why does Washington continue a policy that is utterly isolated in world and regional forums, holding up US diplomats and policymakers to derision and contempt? (The stated reasons given – the supposed lack of “democracy” and “human rights” in Cuba – reek with such misinformation, half-truths, obvious hypocrisy and arbitrary selectivity that they cannot be taken seriously and must be dismissed out of hand. I will comprehensively take up the question of democratic rights, human rights, civil liberties and the Cuban Revolution in Part III of this essay.)

The most common explanation for these questions is expressed in the quotation by Julia Sweig that opens this essay. (Sweig is a scholar with the super-Establishment Council on Foreign Relations and is their Director for Latin America Studies. She is the author of the excellent book *Inside the Cuban Revolution* and is a very informed observer and analyst of Cuban history and politics. She is unquestionably a strong opponent of US sanctions against Cuba and in favor of normalized diplomatic relations between Washington and Havana.) Sweig and other dissenters within Establishment circles, as well as many elected officials purportedly opposed to US policy, point to or at the Cuban-American population and elected officials who form in Washington a so-called, and supposedly so-powerful,

“Miami Lobby.” Some even go so far as to say US policy and “national interest” is being held “hostage” by this “Lobby.” Such nonsense crosses over into virtual conspiracy theories.

This argument and explanation turns political reality on its head. It has never been true and, in today’s world, it has never been less credible. It is a myth and an illusion that the Cuban-American community and Cuban-American office-holding politicians are the driving, determining force behind US policies toward Cuba. US foreign policy in general, and Cuba policy in particular, is driven by the interests of the US ruling capitalist class of bosses, bankers, and bondholders. It is primarily mediated through its two political parties and state institutions and secondarily through its big-business media, think tanks, and academic minions. Cuban-American bourgeois politicians are part of that mix, prominent, but far from decisive.

Washington has never, and does not now, need the aging representatives of the ex-ruling powers of Cuba, or their descendants, to explain to them why they should oppose the Cuban Revolution and the domestic and international policies of the revolutionary socialist Cuban government. The actual political affect of the “Miami Lobby” myth (which through endless repetition has become almost a *mantra*) is to take the political focus off the US government and place it on the Cuban-American community and a handful of Cuban-American elected officials. It puts the cart before the horse, the caboose at the head of the train

Such politicians of Cuban origin in the US Congress as Republican Florida representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and

Mario Diaz-Balart, Democratic New Jersey Senator Robert Menendez, and Florida Republican Senator Marco Rubio can be useful as a cover or a foil for a US policy that is so unpopular. Cuban-Americans can be blamed and chided by those opposed to the policy and praised and defended by those in favor of the policy. *But they do not make the policy.*

The myth of the “Miami Lobby” cuts across building a broad protest movement and the kind of effective action that can actually force a change in the policy. By homogenizing (or worse, demonizing) the contradictory and increasingly polarized Cuban-American community, the myth of the “Miami Lobby” has become an obstacle to winning over more Cuban-Americans to oppose US sanctions.

The fact is that for over five decades now there has been a *bipartisan* policy and a common goal of defeating and eradicating the Cuban Revolution. None of this has ever been, or is it now, primarily motivated by the interests of the Cuban-American exile community in Miami. The origins and continuity of Washington’s hostility to the Cuban Revolution is homegrown. It flows out of the politics, policies and *example* of the Cuban Revolution – both inside Cuba and in its resonance across the Americas and internationally in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, and even inside the advanced capitalist powers.

The Impact of the Cuban Revolution on US Politics

Cuba appears and is presented as a minor question in US politics and foreign policy. This is all the more so since the end of the so-called “Cold War” and its decades-long conflict

and clash between Washington and Moscow. In those days Washington's lurid propaganda painted Cuba's revolutionary government as a "client" and "puppet" of the former Soviet Union. While this was always consciously insulting and factually absurd, the alliance of Cuba with the Soviet bloc was used to fabricate a Cuban "threat" to the US and the American people. (October 2012 will be the 50th anniversary of the traumatic "Cuban Missile Crisis, which was used to convince many working people in the United States on the "threat" from Cuba.)

Independent of the Soviet Union, the "Cuba Question," that is the political dynamics and impact of the Cuban Revolution, has always had major weight and importance in US politics and foreign policy, especially in the Americas. This remains the case today even though Cuba is a small island of less than 12 million people and the United States is a globe-straddling economic, financial, political, and military superpower, albeit in relative decline today on all these fronts.

The end of the "Cold War" and the political disappearance of the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies over 20 years ago has not seen any easing up of US anti-Cuba policy. On the contrary, it has essentially deepened. The consensus of the US ruling class and central policymakers remains that Washington's economic and political war against Cuba must remain and continue in today's post-Cold War. That world reality has developed into a new era, if not historical epoch, defined by the worst generalized economic and financial crisis of the world capitalist system since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

In public US politicians mock, deride, and denigrate Cuba, it is clear that both ruling parties in Washington continue to see Cuba as a formidable political force with significant moral and political authority, especially in the Americas, but worldwide. There is virtual unanimity in both parties that the revolutionary Cuban government needs to be confronted and defeated, not reconciled with on the basis of respect for Cuban sovereignty. From Washington's point of view, the Cuban government promotes anti-imperialist (or, as they falsely put it, "anti-American") revolutionary action, has not renounced the program of international socialist revolution, and, short of that, supports any policies and struggles that defend the interests of workers, peasants, and youth. Such a perspective clearly impacts negatively on the economic interests of US capital and Washington's political and "strategic" prerogatives in defense of those interests.

Tactical Divisions Over Cuba Policy

It is common on the "US Left" to become politically disoriented and disarmed (and safely in the hands of "lesser evil" liberals and Democrats) by the intense and even brutal forms expressed over what are in actual substance *relatively minor tactical* differences over policy between the two imperialist parties and within the ruling class in the United States. Cuba is a classic case in point.

Every year in the United Nations there is a lopsided (in 2011 it was 186 for and 2 against with 3 abstentions) anti-Washington vote on the "Necessity of Ending the Economic, Commercial and Financial Embargo Imposed by the United

States against Cuba” that gets bare mention in the US corporate media. Across the Americas, Washington’s anti-Cuba policies are routinely ridiculed and opposed in every Hemispheric and regional forum, including “Summits” of the Organization of American States, traditionally a servile tool of US policy and Hemispheric domination. Cuba’s strong defense of its sovereignty, its revolutionary ideas, and its practice of international solidarity with oppressed and exploited humanity, has given the socialist island important political and moral authority and weight in world politics – way out of proportion to its size, numbers, economic strength, or military firepower. This is a cause of great irritation and consternation for the US rulers and their acolytes of the “Miami Lobby.” But it is a great testament to the *power of ideas* in the world. In truth there is *no greater power* on earth than when progressive and revolutionary ideas inspire and grip millions and become a *material* political force.

How to achieve the common goal of overturning the Cuban government in real political time naturally leads to furious *tactical* differences within the US government and within and between the Democratic and Republican parties who share and exercise power in the US capitalist state. This is inevitable given how isolated and unpopular the US anti-Cuba policy is in the Americas, in the world, and even inside the United States. Maneuvers, shifts, and concessions occur from one year to the next, and from one White House to the next, all reacting to the pressure of events. It’s all aimed at positioning Washington off the defensive in order to more effectively disorient, undermine, and overwhelm the Cuban Revolution.

Obama vs. Bush

President Obama has made some shifts and even partial retreats from the anti-Cuba rules enforced by George W. Bush. These are objectively positive. It's good that some Cuban musicians, artists and scholars have been allowed into the US at the invitation of universities and cultural institutions. It's good that Cuban-Americans are allowed to travel to their country of origin without the previous insulting bureaucratic restrictions. It's better than before that rules for licenses allowing limited travel to Cuba by other US citizens have been relatively loosened.

These moves by the Obama Administration are in no way a shift away from the basic US policy of "regime change," that is, destroying the Cuban Revolution. They basically move US rules back to the norms under the Clinton Administration and the first period of the George W. Bush Administration, before they were tightened up with the triumphalist *hubris* that followed the US invasion of Iraq. At that time Bush selected Otto Reich as his Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, along with other important figures among the counter-revolutionary exile groupings such as Roger Noriega, a former top staffer for ultraright, notoriously racist North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms. Such were the personnel directing the Hemispheric policies of Bush's Administration.

But this did not work out well for US policy and position in Latin America, particularly after Washington's (and Reich's) fingerprints were found all over the failed April 2002 coup

attempt in Venezuela against the popular, elected government of Hugo Chavez. Bush was forced to remove both Reich and then later his successor Noriega and retreat from the hyper-arrogant rhetoric and posturing toward Latin America that became politically costly to Washington.

What Obama has done is shift away from the more bellicose language and Bush-style bombast around Cuba by making minimal adjustments in policy around travel and visa rules to try and undo the political damage of the Bush years. Nevertheless, Obama has been quite strikingly unsuccessful in winning any support for the US anti-Cuba position in the Americas, which remains completely isolated, excepting the right-wing Stephen Harper government in Ottawa. Canada still continues to be the largest source of tourism to Cuba and carries out considerable commercial exchange with the island.)

Under Obama, the Treasury and Justice Departments have stepped up harassments and prosecutions of US or foreign businesses deemed to “violate” US “rules” and sanctions against commercial and financial exchange and collaboration with Cuba. Cuban National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcon recently stated, in an interview with French academic and journalist Salim Lamrani, “[T]he Obama administration has been considerably more consistent in the imposition of fines and sanctions against foreign companies who violate the framework of sanctions against Cuba, that engage in business transactions with us...A number of banks have been fined several millions of dollars, more than 100 million in one case, for conducting dollar-based business transactions and for having opened dollars accounts with

Cuban companies.” On June 12, 2012 it was announced by the US Department of Justice that the Dutch Bank ING agreed to a \$619 million fine for violating the US “Trading with the Enemy Act,” by moving US currency from trades with Cuba (and also Iran) through US financial networks. According to the online *Guardian Express Newspaper*, “The fine is considered to be the largest ever in the history of the US financial system.” Since the Obama Administration took office in 2009 major European banks Credit Suisse, Barclays, and Lloyds have reached similar settlements with the US government over financial dealings with Cuba.

The Obama Administration continues to support and promote State Department and CIA overt and covert programs that aim at subverting and undermining the Cuban government, and which landed State Department agent Alan Gross in a Cuban prison. (The idea that Gross’s conviction and incarceration is the *impediment* to improved US-Cuban relations which Obama wants to pursue is a very bad joke. Washington’s actions in dispatching agents like Gross – just one instance of a large-scale *policy of unremitting economic and political war against Cuba* funded to the tune of many dozens of millions of dollars in openly budgeted allocations, not counting resources used for *covert* programs – represents the real impediment to improved and normalized relations.) Obama’s State Department continues to keep Cuba on its list of “nations supporting terrorism,” a huge lie and vile slander. Obama continues to ignore Cuban diplomatic initiatives for bilateral cooperation around issues such as drug trafficking and hurricane response coordination. Obama continues to resist the unanimous opinion of Latin American and Caribbean member states of the Organization of American States to end the exclusion of

Cuba. Obama continues to dismiss and resist any attempts to negotiate mechanisms, including any “exchanges,” that would release the Cuban Five, four of whom are in their 14th year of incarceration, while one, Rene Gonzalez, was released after serving his full term, but is not being allowed to return home to Cuba. Another clear sign of the essential continuity in Obama’s anti-Cuba policy from the Bush Administration – and really all previous White Houses since Eisenhower – is in Obama’s appointment of Ricardo Zuniga as “Director for Western Hemispheric Affairs” for the White House National Security Council. Zuniga was formerly a key player in the US Interests Section in Havana under Bush, organizing the extreme provocations against Cuba led by Interests Section Chief James Cason.

Looking at the balance sheet of Obama’s policies toward Cuba compared to that of George W. Bush, recalls the classic line of Groucho Marx: “I’ve worked myself up to nothing from a state of extreme poverty.”

Waves and Patterns of Cuban Emigration to the US

There have always been Cuban workers who emigrated to, lived, and worked in the United States. However, the origin and formation of a mass Cuban-American “community” began with the large-scale emigration after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Like all genuine social revolutions, the Cuban Revolution was marked by deep-going and irreversible class struggle and polarization. In the first period after the Cuban Revolution some 5% of the then Cuban population of 6 million made its way to Florida and the US where it was received with open arms and special

privileges as “refugees from communism,” obviating regular immigration requirements.

The first wave of exiles were overwhelmingly from the Cuban ruling classes, their supporters, hangers on, and enforcers in the military and police apparatuses, as well as the extensive organized-crime networks – narcotics marketers, brothel owners and pimps, casino magnates, and so on – that flourished in the Batista era. As the Cuban Revolution began to implement radical economic and social policies that benefited peasants, agricultural and industrial workers, and the impoverished majority in general, large layers of the relatively small Cuban middle and professional classes followed the largest landowners, capitalists, army officers, cops, and gangsters into exile. While a small minority, it was nevertheless hundreds of thousands of people. (One example of this pattern was in the over 50% of the 6,000 doctors in Cuba who left the country after the Revolution. These doctors overwhelmingly served the Cuban upper and middle classes. The average Cuban rarely, if ever, saw a doctor their entire life. Life expectancy was in the low 50s. Infant mortality was over 60 per 1000, among the world’s highest. Today Cuba graduates 10,000 new doctors every year; life expectancy is approaching 80 and infant mortality is 4.5 per 1000, among the world’s lowest.)

Additionally it should be noted that these first waves of emigrant-exiles were overwhelmingly Caucasian; among the most far-reaching policies of the revolutionary Cuban government was the smashing of Jim Crow-style segregation laws and policies on the island. Cuban’s of African origin were among the strongest and most enthusiastic supporters

and protagonists of the Revolution, which was echoed in the wide support for the Cuban Revolution among African-Americans in the United States.

Of course there was no mechanical one-to one political correspondence in the class polarization that accompanied the Cuban Revolution. Not every middle-class Cuban opposed the Revolution and split to Miami; a good number were in support or ambivalent but patriotic. (For an excellent portrayal of this early period of the Revolution from the vantage point of an alienated middle-class Cuban, see the masterful, world-acclaimed Cuban film *Memories of Underdevelopment*, directed by Tomas Gutierrez Alea.) And there were a small number of workers, peasants, and Afro-Cubans who actively supported the counter-revolution. Nevertheless, it is an indisputable fact that the large majority of the Cuban population at the time, and overwhelmingly so among working people, peasants, youth, and Black Cubans, embraced the Revolution as their own work and actively defended it.

Many thousands of Cuban exiles were recruited by the US military and intelligence apparatus for covert action against Cuba. Business and financial opportunities were established for the Cuban ex-bourgeoisie in south Florida by their US government and business benefactors. The US Congress passed the Cuban Adjustment Act in 1966, which allowed for quick permanent residency and expedited citizenship for declared opponents of the Revolution. Over \$1.3 billion, nearly \$10 billion in current dollar value, was allocated for direct financial assistance to exiles.

The Mariel Boatlift

Over several months in 1980, a series of provocations against Cuba by the James “Jimmy” Carter Administration, working with the conservative Peruvian military government, led to gatherings of up to 10,000 Cubans at the Peruvian Embassy in Havana wanting to leave the country. (Millions of Cubans mobilized at this time in support of the Revolution.) The death of a Cuban police guard at the Peruvian Embassy led the Cuban government to declare a policy of allowing all Cubans who wanted to leave the island to bypass existing legal processes. Cuban-Americans were invited to come pick up their relatives at the Mariel Harbor. Some 125,000 additional Cubans arrived in the US during the so-called Mariel Boatlift. (Today the Brazilian government and companies are working with Cuba in a major industrial project to make Mariel a state-of-the-world port for freight and trade which, when completed and operational, will be a major boost for the Cuban economy.)

This wave of exiles was of a much different social and class composition than the first waves. They were more on the margins of Cuban society, unassimilated into the working class, indifferent or hostile to the revolutionary process in Cuba. Many had histories of petty criminal activity in areas with no operating space or “market” in Cuba such as gambling, loan sharking, commercial sex, and narcotics trafficking. Most simply wanted to leave Cuba and go to the United States to join relatives or friends and pursue perceived business opportunities. They thought that the United States would be a far more fertile arena and market for their social and business – and criminal – proclivities. US

propaganda accused the Cuban government at the time of emptying its prisons and even mental hospitals and shoving “the dregs of Cuban society” onto boats bound for the US. Cuban authorities vehemently denied this and demanded proof of such deeds, which was never delivered, although the slander lived on. (For Fidel Castro’s passionate explanation of the entire affair and response to US slanders see, *An Encounter With Fidel: An Interview With Gianni Mina*, Ocean Press, pages 61-67.)

The “Special Period” Wave

In the 1990s, under the severe economic conditions of what was called in Cuba the “Special Period,” following the collapse of the governments of the Soviet Union and Eastern European “socialist camp,” thousands more Cubans left the island lured by the Cuban Adjustment Act and the refusal of the US to implement agreements for legal, organized immigration. The relative improvement of the Cuban economy in recent years and the ending of travel restrictions for Cuban-Americans under President Obama, combined with the onset of economic depression and crisis in the US and Europe, has reduced the volume and political volatility of Cuban emigration to the United States.

There are higher proportions of Irish and Israeli emigrants to the United States than Cubans, and this without either the expedited privileges of the Cuban Adjustment Act or the accompanying demonization and propaganda attacking those countries from the US government and big-business media. Given the economic catastrophes currently gripping Greece, Spain, Portugal, and other “Eurozone” economies

millions of working people have been displaced and forced to consider emigration. It would be interesting to look at immigration statistics in those countries compared to Cuba today. Many from Spain and Portugal are today even emigrating *to* Latin America.

In any case what stands out is that the large majority of Cuban working people continue to stand their ground in Cuba and to fight for their revolution despite the Cuban Adjustment Act, despite unremitting US threats, sanctions, and a sense of siege, and despite often grinding economic conditions. Today these Cubans are debating and fighting to improve and change what has to be changed

Elian Gonzalez

The case of Elian Gonzalez in the 1990s was a political turning point that highlighted the developing and roiling contradictions within the Cuban-American community. It set in motion politically centrifugal tendencies.

Public opinion in the US at the time overwhelmingly favored the right of Elian's father to return to Cuba with his son. The right-wing counter-revolutionary circus in Miami acted out by Elian's distant relatives, manipulated by right-wing Cuban American organizations, was viewed as distasteful and inhumane. Washington tried every lure and trick to keep Elian in this country and – in what would have been a real propaganda coup – to entice his father to “defect.” But eventually they had to face the reality that this was not going to happen and that Cuban, Latin American, and US public opinion was becoming indignant. Father and son were finally

let go. The issue had riveted US politics for many months and was a real blow to the authority and political standing of the counter-revolutionary exile organizations and personalities.

The Cuban-American Community Today

Over 1.5 million people whose family origins are in Cuba are now citizens of the United States. Cuba's current population is nearly 12 million people. Cuban-Americans are 4-5% of the Spanish-speaking US *Latino* population of over 40 million people. (Accurate figures are hard to specify given the large layers of undocumented working people who have migrated to enter a vast, illegal "black market" in labor to work in the fields, factories, and cities of the United States when such jobs were relatively plentiful.) These Spanish-speaking (or English, French, or Creole-speaking from the Caribbean, or Portuguese-speaking from Brazil) immigrants seeking to labor in the US came from every country and nationality, but only those of Cuban origin, under the Cuban Adjustment Act, get a very fast track to US citizenship and a legal existence to work and live.

Over three-fourths of Cuban-Americans live in Florida, 1.2 million people according to the 2010 US census. The next four states see a large numbers drop to a little over 80,000 in New Jersey and a little less than 80,000 in New York, some 75,000 in California and 35,000 in Texas. Florida is the fourth most populous US state with 18.8 million people; Cuban-Americans are less than 10% of that total. Cuban-Americans are 30% of Florida's Latino population. African-Americans are around 16% of Florida's population, figures

that in most counts include Black immigrants from the Caribbean. The Haitian population of south Florida is between 100-200,000 including many undocumented workers. Cubans make up 32 percent of eligible Latino voters, Puerto Ricans 28 percent, and Mexicans 9 percent.

It is absurd to extrapolate out of the size of the Cuban-American electorate an assertion that this “bloc” is *decisive* in “delivering” Florida’s electoral votes to a future President who must therefore “pander” to “extreme anti-Castro” positions. By manipulating statistics this could be said about any group, grouping, religious denomination or sect. In a close race between Republicans and Democrats, don’t the 3% of Florida’s Jews become “decisive?” What about the 725,000 Puerto Ricans? Why aren’t the Presidential campaigns pandering to the “pro-Aristide” views of Florida’s large Haitian population who by a large majority support the former Haitian President who was ushered out of country by the US military after a coup? (The anti-Aristide campaign was directly led by the above-mentioned Roger Noriega.) The absurdity is further underscored by the fact that Florida’s Jews, Puerto Ricans, Haitians and the 70% non-Cuban Latinos are more preponderantly Democratic in their voting tendencies (if they bother, like a near-majority of eligible voters in general, to vote at all given the dismal choices), and opposed to US sanctions against Cuba than Cuban-Americans are supposedly preponderantly Republican and obsessively, knee-jerkedly, “anti-Castro.”

The truth is that, once given the legal right to do so, Cuban-Americans are defying the threats and admonitions of the Ros-Lehtinens, the Diaz-Balarts, the Menendezes, and the

Rubios, that is, the Congressional faces of the “Miami Lobby,” and flocking to Cuba and reconnecting with their homeland and families. Flights are packed and leave every day from Miami and weekly in a growing number of cities. They also rush to buy tickets and fill concert halls to see popular Cuban musicians like Los Van Van, who happen to identify *with* the Cuban Revolution. (On April 27, 2012 a fire was set at the company Airline Charters, one of the companies that arranges legal flights to Cuba.)

The fact is that the political domination of the old Batistaite ruling oligarchy and Cuban ex-bourgeoisie that became ensconced in south Florida and some enclaves in northern New Jersey is sputtering to the end of its era of sway. That ex-bourgeoisie was set up and established comfortably in business and with a cozy niche in US bourgeois politics *over the broader Cuban-American community*, and enjoyed a degree of immunity from US law by the US government

Very important, if not decisive, in this dynamic is the broader development and growth of the Latino population in the US that is not of Cuban origin and with a very different history and relationship to the “Cuba Question.” Over decades there has been a growth and accumulated political weight in US society and politics of this broader Latino community, with a mass component of undocumented workers who were a needed source of cheap labor and high profits for US capitalists. This broader Latino community comprises peoples of many national origins: Mexicans, Central Americans, Haitians (also concentrated in Miami as well as New York City) none of whom share the views toward Cuba, Fidel Castro, and the Cuban Revolution of the

surviving first waves of immigrant-exiles from the 1960s.

The fact is that among many Latinos living and working in the United States there exists a significant degree of pride and respect, if not solidarity and affection, toward Cuba for standing up to the *Yanquis* with dignity, even among those far from agreeing with Fidel Castro's revolutionary Marxist views.

In fact, it can be said that the children and grandchildren of the first waves of Cuban émigrés, who, in general, are hardly partisans of the Cuban Revolution, are nevertheless more objective and curious about Cuba, and more generally in favor of normalized relations and an end to US sanctions. This generation of Cuban-Americans has undoubtedly been shaped as much by their experiences as Latinos in the US and by their interaction in the workplace with other Latino workers and other workers, Black and Caucasian, than by their status as second or third generation exiles from Cuba and the Cuban Revolution *with all that political baggage*.

The ex-bourgeoisie of Cuba, although many have prospered in business and bourgeois politics from their connections and status, is in no way integrated into the US ruling class. The bulk of Cuban-Americans today are wage workers, professionals, and small business owners. Their political views are shaped and developed primarily by the broad issues of class politics in the United States and much less, and certainly not decisively, by the imperatives of "anti-Castro" exile politics. This is all the more true as so many Cuban-Americans visit the island and become familiar with the economic and political discussions and debates

dominating Cuban society today.

The ultra-right grip of the ex-Cuban bourgeoisie, and the violent terrorists trained by the CIA, on Cuban-American political viewpoints regarding US-Cuba relations is unraveling. Ever-growing numbers, at or near majority levels, of Cuban-Americans favor normal relations with the island and an end to economic and travel sanctions. It is precisely the growing pressure from Cuban-Americans that led the Obama Administration to lift the travel restrictions on that (and only that) section of the US population.

It is of great political significance that Washington finds it more difficult to credibly hide behind the Cuban American community to justify or rationalize its anti-Cuba policy. The “Miami Lobby” has always been the directed not the directors, the puppets not the puppeteers. Hopefully the purveyors of the false “Miami Lobby” line will catch up with political reality.

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Ike Nahem is a longtime anti-war, labor, and socialist activist living in New York City. He is the coordinator of Cuba Solidarity New York (cubasolidarityny@mindspring.com) and a founder of the New York-New Jersey July 26 Coalition (www.july26coalition.org). Nahem is an Amtrak Locomotive Engineer and member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, a division of the Teamsters Union. These are his personal political opinions.