



Australia-Cuba Friendship Society
Melbourne NEWSLETTER
August 2019

Next Meeting
Monday 5th
August
7.30pm
Unitarian Church
110 Grey St,
East Melbourne

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Dear Comrades

28 July, 2019

Hope you're all OK and surviving the chilly weather. It's hard to believe that we've passed the half-year mark. I reckon someone 'up there' is fiddling around with our time machine, or maybe it's just that the older you get the quicker its gets and when you look around at our shitty little world, perhaps that's a good thing. Especially when you look at what passes for leaders. **In our worst nightmare we couldn't invent Donald Trump and Boris Johnson, an unhinged crook and a weird Tory toff.** At least Ukraine had the good sense to elect a professional comedian, not just a couple of dangerous clowns. Regardless of who inhabits the White House, Pine Gap and North West Cape will always implicate us directly in America's war machine. A nasty thought, when only last week at a press conference with Pakistan PM Imram Khan, Trump spoke 'casually' of reviewing plans to 'wipe Afghanistan off the face of the earth', a blasé reference to hypothetical mass murder. But it wasn't offhand. Such a policy of total destruction could only apply to Iran with the potential for nuclear weapons being used far from hypothetical. **Reporters who dismiss his endless stream of hyperbole forget that this man is the commander in chief of the greatest military force in all time.**

Take a look at its history. **Since the United States was founded in 1776, it has been at war for 214 out of its 235 years of existence.** In other words, there were only 21 years when it wasn't waging war. To put it into perspective, since 1776 there is a 91% chance that America was involved in some conflict, with not one US leader qualifying as a peacetime president. The US has never gone for a decade without fighting a war. The only time it had a five-year lull was during its isolationist period of the Great Depression. So we shouldn't be surprised at the current outbreak of belligerence. It's what passes for 'normal' in today's crackpot society. In the latter half of the 20th century, two visionary books cast shadows over our future. One was George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, with its horrifying vision of a brutal, mind-controlling totalitarian state that gave us Big Brother and thought crime and newspeak, along with the memory hole, torture palace called the Ministry of Love and the unpleasant spectacle of a boot grinding into our faces. The other was Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, published in 1932, that offered a different and softer form of totalitarianism, one of conformity achieved through engineered and hypnotic persuasion, of endless consumption that keeps the wheels of production turning, and of officially enforced promiscuity that eliminates sexual frustration. A pre-ordained caste system ranged from a highly intelligent managerial class to a sub-group of dim-witted serfs programmed to love menial work and soma, a drug conferring instant bliss.

During the Cold War (one) Nineteen Eighty-Four had the edge, but when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, shopping took off and there were already soma-type drugs circulating throughout our society. **Promiscuity took a whack from AIDS, but on balance we seemed to be destined for a trivial, drug-enhanced spend-o-rama with Brave New World out in front.** And then we had the attack on New York's twin towers in 2001 and thought crime and the grinding boot could not be eliminated so easily, along with the Ministry of Love. But Brave New World hasn't gone away. Shopping malls stretch as far as the eye can see and there are 'believers' prattling on about the gene-rich and gene-poor - Huxley's alphas and epsilons - busily engaged in a world of genetically modified babies, boundless consumption, casual sex and drugs. I think we're edging towards a combination of the two.

Whatever your definition, we live in a political jungle, in an out-of-control, corrupt, brutal system that is run by and for powerful corporates, turning what most still think of as a democracy into a charade. Our votes conceal the reality that our so-called leaders are not there to represent us, but to promote the interests of large crooked global elites. Take a gander at the election of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn who is 'clean' but whose treatment is shameful. A handful of MPs nominated him to give the impression that the ballot was fair and open, not expecting him to win after the odious Tony Blair and his gang had done everything they could to remake Labour by eradicating any vestige of socialism, and who were furious when he won. Since Corbyn's victory, the attacks have become even more virulent in an attempt to stop him from ever becoming prime minister. Like America's attacks on Cuba. For almost 60 years, Cuba has successfully defended its revolution against a steady onslaught of US aggression, but Trump has upped the ante by blacklisting Cuba for *'using its international medical programme for human trafficking'*, accusing it of 'not doing enough' to stop it. **Trump should be frog-marched out of the White House and put into a padded cell.**

Political and economic events are telling us that justice is losing and greed is winning. Humanity has been asleep at the wheel or, more accurately, in an induced coma, for far too long. Is it too late for change? I hope not. WikiLeaks pushed everything forward, but we need to do a great deal more. Do we have enough journalists willing to stick their necks out and tell the hidden stories to a wide enough audience? The lawyers willing to suss out the evidence and build a case? I'm not holding my breath. **The British Foreign Office has just banned two Russian outlets, Russia Today and Sputnik, from attending a Global Conference on Media Freedom to be held in London.** It takes a special brand of hypocrisy and gall for a government that tortures journalists, bans inconvenient voices and slanders alternative media to advocate for freedom of the press. Viva Cuba!

Joan Coxsedge, Commentator-in-Chief, ACFS Melbourne (03) 9857

[Cuba is a safe country, but U.S. continues its attempts to manipulate reality](#)

Yesterday, July 25, Cuba demanded that the U.S. government cease its manipulation of alleged health problems reported by its diplomatic staff in Havana, as a pretext to impose aggressive measures to harm our country, economy, and people



[New Cuban laws to regulate the computerization of society](#)

The process should contribute to economic development and improved quality of life, with a new set of regulations recently enacted

[Díaz-Canel receives Vice President of Ghana](#)

President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez received Ghana's Vice President, Dr. Alhaji Mahamudu Bawumia, who was conducting an official visit to Cuba, holding several official meetings and attending a graduation at the Latin American School of Medicine in Havana



[More food for self-sufficiency and export](#)

José Ramón Machado Ventura, second secretary of the Party Central Committee, conducted a two-day tour of agricultural sites in the eastern province of Granma, and reviewed progress on investment projects underway



[Council of State pardons 2,604 convicted prisoners](#)

Decisions were reached based on behavior in prison, time served, as well as characteristics and consequences of crimes committed

[Cuba advocates safe and legal use of the internet around the world](#)

The International Forum for the Peaceful Use of Information and Communication Technologies concluded July 10, in Havana, with more than 130 delegates from 21 countries on hand to analyze issues such as equitable access and governance of the Internet



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF PEOPLE'S POWER

[The demands of the people guide government work](#)

Legislators approved three new laws and addressed a variety of issues of special importance to the population and key to the nation's development, during this challenging period



[Raúl and Díaz-Canel preside swearing-in of new ambassadors](#)

During the ceremony, held in the Palace of the Revolution's Hall of the Ferns, reaffirmed was the commitment of new revolutionary diplomats to give continuity to the legacy of the Cuban Revolution's foreign policy



[Mariana Grajales: Mother of the homeland](#)

This July 12 marks 204 years since the birth of a quintessential Cuban woman, Mariana Grajales Coello, mother of Antonio Maceo and of all Cubans

[President calls for work with intelligence, analysis, and decency](#)

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez participated in meetings of the National Assembly of People's Power standing committees



[Prohibition on sales of Cuban cigars in Brazil withdrawn](#)

Make no mistake, Cohiba is 100% natural

[Díaz-Canel: In the defense of Cuba we continue to have Fidel at our side and stand beside Raúl](#)



The President described as tremendous the population's participation, understanding, and reception of new measures adopted by the Council of Ministers

[Cuban President and several ministers report on measures recently approved to boost the economy](#)

The President of Cuba's Councils of State and Ministers, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, and the Ministers of Economy and Planning; Finances and Prices; as well as Labor and Social Security, appear this evening on the first of two Mesa Redonda programs devoted to providing more details on measures recently adopted by the Council of Ministers

Cuba is a safe country, but U.S. continues its attempts to manipulate reality

Yesterday, July 25, Cuba demanded that the U.S. government cease its manipulation of alleged health problems reported by its diplomatic staff in Havana, as a pretext to impose aggressive measures to harm our country, economy, and people

Author: [Ana Laura Palomino García](#) | informacion@granmai.cu - July 24, 2019 10:07:25

Yesterday, July 25, Cuba demanded that the U.S. government cease its manipulation of alleged health problems reported by its diplomatic staff in Havana, as a pretext to impose aggressive measures to harm our country, economy, and people.

In statements to the press, Johana Tablada, the Foreign Ministry's director for the United States, described a new study from the University of Pennsylvania, published in the American Medical Association Journal, which compared images of the brains of U.S. diplomatic personnel who reported health problems during their stays on the island, with those of a control group, and concluded that differences between the two exist.

Tablada recalled that in March of 2018, in the same journal, an article was published that described the clinical condition of the diplomats,

yet, on this occasion, following the publication of the new article, the corporate media has immediately responded with full coverage.

"Two years later, after much speculation and little information or cooperation, not a single reason has appeared to justify the closing of consular services, the expulsion of Cuban diplomats in Washington, deceptive travel warnings, and all the unjust measures adopted by the U.S. using the pretext that its functionaries may face some kind of danger in Cuba."

She noted that these measures have had a significant human cost to our population, now obliged to travel to third countries to seek U.S. visas to visit relatives, or participate in professional events, with no guarantee that they will actually be granted - despite the fact that specialized agencies in the U.S. and Cuba, such as the FBI

and the Directorate of Criminal and Criminal Investigation, agree that there is no evidence of any kind of attack on diplomats in Havana.

Tablada denounced U.S. National Security advisor John Bolton and the State Department, which in their public documents have maintained the irresponsible use of the term "attacks", which deliberately "implies malicious intentions and has never been substantiated."

She stressed that Cuba is a safe country for diplomats from the U.S. or any other country, and for the millions of travelers from the entire world who visit Cuba every year, and reiterated the Cuban government's desire to develop a respectful dialogue and cooperate on this and other issues for the benefit of both peoples.

Cuban female handball team wins spot in world championship

Cuba's women handball team won undefeated the North American and Caribbean Handball Tournament (Norca)

Author: [Sports news staff](#) | informacion@granma.cu - June 21, 2019 12:06:42

Cuba's women handball team won undefeated the North American and Caribbean Handball Tournament (Norca), which awarded a single ticket for the World Championship to be held in the Japanese city of Kumamoto from November 30 to December 15, 2019.

The girls led by Jorge Coll arrived on Mexican soil without the favorite label; however, they were, day after day, leaving each of their rival teams on the way to ratify the growth of handball as one of the best collective sports in Cuba today.

In their competitive stint, the Antilleans, who won the bronze medal in the Central American and Caribbean Games in Barranquilla 2018, defeated Canada (30-17), Greenland (25-17) and the United States (27-21) to lead the group A in the eliminatory phase. At semifinals, Cubans defeated the Dominicans 30 goals per 23. In the finals, it was Puerto Rico who lost the throne with a slate of 27 goals per 24.

"It is an achievement that showcases the work of our whole team and encourages us to continue improving in order to get in better shape for the Pan American Games in Lima and the World Championship itself," said Franklin Guevara, national commissioner of this sport discipline to sports publication JIT. "Players such as Lisandra Luzón, Shakira Robert and Eyatne Rizo played a leading role in the organization and synchronization of the team," the director added.

The North American and the Caribbean Handball Tournament was an excellent opportunity to train ahead of the Panamerican Games in Lima, scheduled to be held from July 26 to August 11. The women's team becomes the second Cuban handball team to win a ticket to the World Championship this year. The U-24 men team won the Norca back in April, also securing a spot to the World Championship in this category.

Cuba seeks to surpass Toronto ranking in upcoming Lima games

Cuba has already 397 athletes classified to the games in 28 sports

Author: [Yosel E. Martínez Castellanos](#) | informacion@granma.cu - June 21, 2019 13:06:33

A few days remain for the start of America's sports festival: the 2019 Pan-American Games in Lima and the Cuban delegation has completed a good preparation in order to face a highly competitive challenge event.

Cuba has already 397 athletes classified to the games in 28 sports. The delegation could increase to 425, since the registrations of 28 more representatives of track and field and tennis are yet to be confirmed.

According to the 31st National Preparation Seminar for the 2019-2020 Academic Year, held at the Convention Center of Cojimar, the Pan-American Games of Lima represent a high level scenario where multiple Olympic and World champions will attend since 19 of the 39 registered sports will confer direct places for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

According to Jorge Polo Vázquez, Vice-President of the National Institute for Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (INDER by its Spanish initials), the Cuban representation must achieve an efficiency of above 80%, as an attempt to overcome the number of medals achieved in Toronto 2015 (36 gold, 27 silver and 34 bronze medals). About the real possibilities of the athletes, the directive argued that the design of the training plans of each discipline has been evaluated monthly, enhancing the technical-methodological work in coordination with the Institute of Sports Medicine.

Polo Vázquez reported that, according to analysis carried out on the athletes composing the Cuban delegation, 44 athletes distributed in 13 sports have potential to win gold medal options; 21 athletes or collective disciplines in 11 sports have prospects of winning silver medals and 101

athletes in 23 sports could achieve bronze. Lima will host 419 events (Cuba will take part in 279). Surpassing the 36 titles and the fourth place by countries in Toronto 2015 is possible since, according to Polo Vázquez, we have studied the rivals and prepared our athletes accordingly. In the last year, Cuba competed in more than one hundred international events, earning 95 gold medals.

The 28th Pan American Games will mark the arrival of the 900 gold medal for the Cuban delegation, which currently have 874 golden medals and holds the second position by countries after the United States (1,948 gold medals) and before Canada (456).

The seminar was chaired by the member of the Secretariat of the Party Central Committee Olga Lidia Tapia.

New Cuban laws to regulate the computerization of society

The process should contribute to economic development and improved quality of life, with a new set of regulations recently enacted

Author: [Susana Antón](#) | informacion@granmai.cu - July 24, 2019 10:07:47

The computerization of society is a process that contributes to economic development and the population's quality of life. The Cuban government has taken important steps in this regard, such as the approval in 2017 of a comprehensive policy for the improvement of computerization in Cuba.

This process has reached a new level of organization with the publication in the Official Gazette of a set of regulations to support the application of this policy.

For the first time, legal dispositions are issued at the highest level to regulate the process of computerization of society: a Law Decree, two decrees, an agreement from the Council of Ministers and six resolutions, which promote the development and use of information and communication technologies (ICT) by legal persons and individuals.

In the case of Law Decree No. 370, on the computerization of Cuban society, the purpose is to increase technological sovereignty to benefit society, economy, national security and defense, counter cybernetic aggression, and safeguard the principle of security in our networks and services.

Wilfredo López Rodríguez, policy director at the Ministry of Communications (MINCOM) explains that Decree 359 establishes for the first time the concept of industry, which is an essential aspect for the economy of the country.

This document establishes the general rules applicable to the scope of the Cuban software and applications industry, to promote, overhaul, and increase national production and import substitution.

Ernesto Vallín Martínez, director of the Computer Sciences Industry, explains that the socialist state enterprise is being promoted as the main agent with the complementary participation of non-state actors. Likewise, these agents must include computer solutions in their products, which contribute to national sovereignty.

The new regulation also seeks to boost the development of Technological and Scientific Parks as an integral part of the industry. These facilities will make better use of infrastructure and human capital, and further deepen links between universities and local governments, the producers of computer applications, and research centers.

Another highlight of this regulation is that it stipulates the prioritized use of open code applications for incorporated entities, and the migration to these open code platforms in all the Central State Administration bodies.

Decree No. 359 also provides legal backup to the incorporation of domestic informatics applications to devices sold in the country.

Decree No. 360 regulates the safe employment of ICT in the computerization of society and defense of the nation's cyberspace; while establishing the security of ICT, as well as support services and applications.

In this sense, the Policy Director at MINCOM said that there can be no computerization of society without cybersecurity, since these two concepts work together.

With the entry into effect of Decree No. 360, questions related to the computerization of society will be updated and enriched, since the decree lays the foundations for secure computerization, focusing work on critical infrastructures, with objective measures that impact applications and computerized processes.

Critical infrastructure is the combination of informatics applications, electronic devices, and procedures to guarantee the safety of operations such as the delivery of transfers, messages, or any other type of

communication in the digital environment, explains Miguel Gutiérrez Rodríguez, general director of Informatics at the Ministry.

This decree sets the legal framework for the protection of the ICT and domestic cyberspace from possible threats. Moreover, it aims to preserve national sovereignty in cyberspace; create a strategy for sustainability; and to build capacity to prevent and manage cybersecurity incidents, including the recovery of the damages in case of occurrence.

It also provides, for the first time, the authentication of digital signatures for legal persons, with the use of digital certificates from the Public Key National Infrastructure, which guarantees greater transparency for government procedures and e-commerce, greater security and speed in transfers, as well as the authenticity of information.

Likewise, it establishes the compulsory use by entities of a national antivirus and the possibility to use a foreign one authorized by MINCOM.

Council of Ministers Agreement 8611 on the implementation of a strategy for broadband development in Cuba mainly targets optic fiber and wireless networks, Wilfredo López Rodríguez stresses.

It organizes, regulates, and establishes, in general terms, the lines of development for integral broadband development at a national level. It will also serve as a guide for the development, exploitation and use of communication services, and designates MINCOM as the organization in charge of overseeing implementation.

Furthermore, six ministerial resolutions are coming into effect. Resolution 124 contains the rules for production and assessment of national informatics applications, which include assessments requested by developers or marketers of national or imported products, or by any person interested in purchasing them.

Resolution 125 provides for the registration of commercial informatics applications, enables administrative supervision by MINCOM, to be implemented through an existing procedure, through the budgeted technical unit of spectrum control.

This new system for the registration of products and software, intends to organize processes of production and commercialization in the software and informatics applications industry. It also seeks to monitor, store, and update information about products existing in the country.

Resolution 126 provides rules for monitoring of informatics networks and safety tools for private data networks, registered under the administrative control of MINCOM.

In the case of Resolution 127, dated June 24, 2019, it provides rules for suppliers of public internet hosting services. It regulates the organization, function, and issuance of operation licenses for the use of Internet within Cuban territory.

Wilfredo López Rodríguez stressed that this resolution is mainly aimed at legal persons or any individual interested in providing this service, as long as Ministry requirements are met.

Resolution 128, which lays out the rules for ICT security, complements Decree 360, and establishes the functions of individuals responsible for this matter. It also provides legal support to conditions and needs of the process of society computerization.

Last but not least, Resolution 129 sets the methodology for management of cybersecurity nationwide, the design of a cybersecurity system, and the creation of a plan for each organization.

<http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2019-07-24/new-cuban-laws-to-regulate-the-computerization-of-society>

A book review of 'The Plot to Overthrow Venezuela'

Posted in [Latin America & The Caribbean](#), [Reviews](#), [Venezuela](#)

By Mike Kuhlenbeck - July 21, 2019

The latest book by human rights attorney Dan Kovalik, "The Plot to Overthrow Venezuela," is a critical primer on the U.S. government's efforts to sabotage the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the future of its people.

This is the fourth title in Kovalik's "Plot" series, starting with "The Plot to Scapegoat Russia" (2017) followed by "The Plot to Attack Iran" and "The Plot to Control the World" (both 2018). This series exposes U.S. foreign policy and acts of "humanitarian intervention" perpetrated by the Star-Spangled Empire with impressive clarity.

"The Plot to Overthrow Venezuela" features a foreword by filmmaker Oliver Stone, director of the documentary "South of the Border" (2009). As Stone writes, "With its one thousand or so bases around the globe, the U.S. is an empire dwarfing all others that preceded it by a huge magnitude, and yet, unlike all other empires, the U.S. will never consciously admit to its imperial status."

Washington has overthrown legitimate governments through military invasion and more covert means, investing in the leadership of oligarchs and military tyrants. "The Plot to Control the World" presented "emblematic cases" of U.S. interference in Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, which "had catastrophic results for the people and their pursuit of democracy and freedom."

As this review goes to press, the Trump administration is trying to bestow such a cruel fate upon Venezuela. "The Plot to Overthrow Venezuela" investigates the crimes, motives and historical context of the situation with intelligence and insight. In Kovalik's words, "This 'humanitarian intervention' of the U.S. is nothing but an old-fashioned bank heist dressed up as something altruistic."

Washington has imposed barbaric sanctions upon Venezuela with deadly results. These sanctions have killed thousands of people, weakened infrastructure, prevented medicines from reaching those whose lives depended on them, and ended purchasing food from abroad.

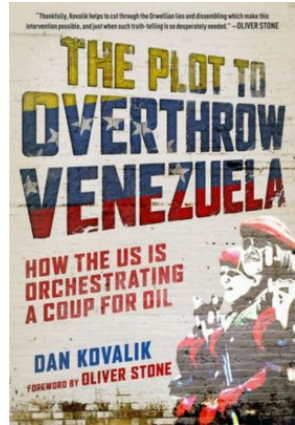
There are several motives for U.S. interference. The plundering of Venezuela's natural resources, particularly oil, is at the top of the list.

Venezuela is home to the largest amount of proven oil reserves in the world (opec.org), giving the country "a considerable advantage over the North American rival in terms of capital requirements and extractions costs," according to worldatlas.com. This motive is what inspired the book's subtitle, "How the U.S. Is Orchestrating a Coup for Oil."

Historical background

In 1998, Hugo Chávez was elected president of Venezuela. He ran on a platform to uplift oppressed and marginalized peoples, oppose the imperialist entities robbing the country of its wealth and build a movement against neoliberal policies.

When Chávez assumed office in 1999, the wheels of D.C. think tanks and the Pentagon were already in motion, devising ways to remove him.



The majority of U.S. media outlets often act as stenographers and mouthpieces for the State Department. For example, The New York Times referred to the April 12, 2002, U.S.-backed kidnapping and attempted overthrow of Chávez as a "resignation," calling him a "would-be dictator," and sided with businessman and would-be replacement Pedro Carmona Estanga.

When the 2002 coup attempt failed, the New York Times backpedaled with a follow-up editorial, which read in part, "Forcibly unseating a democratically elected leader, no matter how badly he has performed, is never something to cheer." (April 6, 2002) And yet, the Times cheered, as did most U.S. corporate media, according to a report published by Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting. (June 1, 2002)

Once again, these same media push for the most recent efforts to destabilize Venezuela. The current administration appointed neocon ideologue and Iran-Contra convict Elliot Abrams to lead these efforts, as he had in Guatemala and El Salvador decades earlier. While many journalists questioned Abrams' appointment, few questioned his mission.

Despite the media's repeated attacks on the presidency of Donald Trump, when the Trump administration sounded the shrieking trumpets of regime change in Venezuela, many in the press corps lined up to defend this potential call for war. Media coverage has even influenced some who oppose the administration.

Stone touches on the media's impact, writing, "[I]f the U.S. is an Empire in this morality tale, then surely Venezuela and its people are the outgunned rebels. And yet, many Americans who should know better, including many liberals and self-proclaimed 'leftists,' find themselves rooting against them and for the Empire and its culture of death."

Unlike many of those who repackage White House talking points as news, Kovalik has been to Venezuela. Last year, he witnessed the May 20 elections when Maduro won the presidency with 67 percent of the vote. The election results were ignored by the Trump administration, which last January recognized an unelected, dubious Juan Guaidó as interim president.

Why Venezuela matters

Besides presenting a wealth of information and sources, the book describes the resilience of the Venezuelan people and their collective strength in the ongoing struggle against external and internal subversion aimed at their country.

Venezuela has suffered devastating power blackouts, oil tanks catching fire, assassination attempts on government leaders (most notably the attempt on Maduro via drone last Aug. 4) and other events that many believe the U.S. either organized or at least supported. The people of Venezuela have stood their ground in the face of such tribulations.

As Kovalik correctly emphasizes, "The battle for Venezuela has huge implications for all humanity. None of us can stay neutral on this issue. And given the nefarious designs of the U.S. upon Venezuela, the suffering the U.S. is already bringing to the Venezuelan people through its regime change operations and the threat of global conflagration, it is incumbent upon us to resist the latest intervention."

"The Plot to Overthrow Venezuela" is now available from Hot Books, an imprint of Skyhorse Publishing.

UN expert criticizes States for ‘ganging up’ on Wikileaks’ Assange; warns against extradition, fearing ‘serious’ rights violations

*Professor Nils Melzer, UN Special Rapporteur on torture, at a press conference at UN Headquarters in New York.
31 May 2019*

[Human Rights](#)

After visiting Julian Assange in a London prison, an independent UN human rights expert expressed urgent concern on Friday, for the Wikileaks co-founder’s well-being, accusing “a group of democratic States” of “ganging up” on the prisoner to “isolate, demonize and abuse” him and warned against extraditing the controversial publisher to the United States.

“My most urgent concern is that, in the United States, Mr. Assange would be exposed to a real risk of serious violations of his human rights, including his freedom of expression, his right to a fair trial and the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,” said Nils Melzer, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture, in a statement.

Mr. Assange’s health has been seriously affected by the extremely hostile and arbitrary environment he has been exposed to for many years – *UN expert*

He said he was “particularly alarmed” at the recent announcement that the US Department of Justice had lodged 17 new charges against Mr. Assange under the Espionage Act, which could lead to a sentence of 175 years in prison.

“This may well result in a life sentence without parole, or possibly even the death penalty, if further charges were to be added in the future,” said the Special Rapporteur, who was also following up on earlier concerns for Mr. Assange’s health.

On Thursday, according to reports, he was too ill to appear via video-link from a British prison in a hearing over an extradition request from the US.

Although Mr. Assange is not being held in solitary confinement, Mr. Melzer said he was gravely concerned over the limited frequency and duration of lawyers’ visits and lack of access to case files, which make it impossible to prepare an adequate defense.

“In 20 years of work with victims of war, violence and political persecution I have

never seen a group of democratic States ganging up to deliberately isolate, demonize and abuse a single individual for such a long time and with so little regard for human dignity and the rule of law,” Mr. Melzer asserted.

“Since 2010, when Wikileaks started publishing evidence of war crimes and torture committed by US forces, we have seen a sustained and concerted effort by several States towards getting Mr. Assange extradited to the United States for prosecution, raising serious concern over the criminalization of investigative journalism in violation of both the US Constitution and international human rights law,” the expert spelled out.

Since then, he said that there has been a “relentless and unrestrained campaign of public mobbing, intimidation and defamation” against the defendant – not only in the US, but also in the UK, Sweden and more recently, Ecuador – that includes humiliating, debasing and threatening statements in the press and online as well as by senior political figures and magistrates involved in proceedings.

“In the course of the past nine years, Mr. Assange has been exposed to persistent, progressively severe abuse ranging from systematic judicial persecution and arbitrary confinement in the Ecuadorian embassy, to his oppressive isolation, harassment and surveillance inside the embassy, and from deliberate collective ridicule, insults and humiliation, to open instigation of violence and even repeated calls for his assassination”, the UN expert asserted.

Cellblock meeting

On 9 May, the Special Rapporteur visited Mr. Assange with two medical experts who specialize in examining victims of ill-treatment. The team spoke to the prisoner and conducted a thorough medical assessment.

“It was obvious that Mr. Assange’s health has been seriously affected by the extremely hostile and arbitrary environment he has been exposed to for many years,” the

expert said. “Most importantly, in addition to physical ailments, Mr. Assange showed all symptoms typical for prolonged exposure to psychological torture, including extreme stress, chronic anxiety and intense psychological trauma.”

Calling the evidence “overwhelming and clear,” Mr. Melzer said that Mr. Assange “has been deliberately exposed, for a period of several years, to progressively severe forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the cumulative effects of which can only be described as psychological torture”.

The Special Rapporteur condemned “in the strongest terms” the “deliberate, concerted and sustained nature of the abuse inflicted” on the prisoner.

“By displaying an attitude of complacency at best, and of complicity at worst, these governments have created an atmosphere of impunity encouraging Mr. Assange’s uninhibited vilification and abuse”, the expert argued.

In official letters, Mr. Melzer urged the four involved governments to cease all activities prejudicial to Mr. Assange’s human rights and to provide him with redress and rehabilitation for past harm.

He appealed to the UK not to extradite the prisoner to the US or any other State that would not provide guarantees against his onward transfer to the US; and reminded Britain of its obligation to ensure Assange’s unimpeded access to legal counsel and adequate preparation for his proceedings.

“The collective persecution of Julian Assange must end here and now”, concluded the UN expert.

Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based [UN Human Rights Council](#) to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

International Action Center Statement: **U.S. Role in Hong Kong Protests**

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U.S. imperialism is the greatest enemy of the world's peoples struggling for a future with dignity, sovereignty and full human rights. Wall Street and finance capital maintains its dominance through the threat of over 800 foreign military bases, aircraft carriers, constant coups, targeted assassinations, drone attacks and starvation sanctions imposed on over 30 countries around the world.

Wall Street also uses the soft power National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to fund many thousands of NGOs, reactionary political parties, and alliances with corrupt dictators all over the world.

U.S. aid or interventions have never protected human rights or democracy.

Recent mass protests against a proposed modification of extradition laws have rattled Hong Kong. It is the natural response of all progressive forces to rally to the side of mass demonstrations. **But it is the duty of revolutionaries to look deeper, to ask what forces are behind a movement, and who stands to benefit.**

Background

Britain stole Hong Kong from China at the conclusion of the 1st Opium War in 1842. Through the Opium Wars, Britain and the U.S. military imposed the opium trade, unequal treaties and occupation. One hundred years of imperialist looting completely impoverished and underdeveloped China.

The victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949 radically changed China and began the efforts to build socialism. But for 30 years, from 1949 to 1979 China was completely walled off, blockaded and sanctioned by the U.S. and western imperialist countries.

In 1979 under the 'reform and opening up' initiated under Deng Xiaoping China made the concession of capitalist market reforms. This finally gave China access to some technology and capital from the industrialized world but was a deal with the devil, strengthening the capitalist class in China.

The British colony of Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997 under the 'one country, two systems' principle that preserved much of the British colonial legal/judicial system in the former colony.

Hong Kong is a center of world finance capital. It is deeply hostile to the social measures that have lifted hundreds of millions of people in mainland China out of extreme poverty and provided high standards of health care, education and modern infrastructure.

Finance capital has made strong inroads into China. Hong Kong is the West's base of operations, encouraging the growth of a capitalist class in China that threatens the foundations of socialism.

Today China is a deeply contradictory society, characterized by the struggle between a re-born capitalist class and the aspirations of Chinese workers and peasants to maintain and expand a planned economy.

It is in the context of this struggle, as well as the escalating U.S. military encirclement and trade war against China that the current protests in Hong Kong must be understood. The forces of finance capital in Hong Kong and their allies in the U.S. and Europe want to pull Hong Kong away from China so it can function as an economic and political outpost in the region. This means limiting legal and political integration with China as much as possible. To this end the U.S. has provided extensive political, financial and media support to the protests.

The vocabulary of protest is available to both the left and right. Through the NED the U.S. has financed coup attempts, often involving a component of mass protest in Honduras, Nicaragua, Venezuela,

Haiti, Ukraine and Syria. Any movement has the potential to sweep into it many well-meaning progressive people, often with legitimate grievances whose interests are not those of the movement's leadership.

FACTS about the Hong Kong protests.

Multiple member organizations of the Civil Human Rights Front, the coalition behind the recent protests receive or have received funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) a U.S. funded soft-power organization that doles out money in the interests of U.S. imperialism. These include the: Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management, Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions, Hong Kong Journalists Association, Civic Party, Labor Party and Democratic Party.

Over 37,000 NGOs, with staff in the tens of thousands are registered in Hong Kong, many of which receive funding from the U.S. and Europe. Martin Lee, founder of the Democratic Party, a member organization of the Civil Human Rights Front met with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during the protests. Pompeo expressed support for the protests at the meeting. If the protests are in fact serving a progressive end, they would not be supported by the reactionary leadership of U.S. imperialism, the very force attempting to carry out a coup in Venezuela, threatening Peoples Korea and trying to start a war with Iran.

Hong Kong's independent judicial/legal system is a relic British colonialism. Nowhere else in the world does a city have independent extradition laws, with authority above that of a sovereign country.

Despite decades of multi-million dollar western funding Hong Kong has a poverty rate of 20% (23.1% for children) compared to less than 1% in mainland China. In the past 20 years poverty in Hong Kong has remained high while mainland China has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. Recent protests, much like the 'Occupy Central' protests in Hong Kong in 2014 have not raised this issue. The protests have been directed at leadership connected to mainland China while ignoring the U.S. connected banks and ultra wealthy capitalists based in Hong Kong who clearly show no interest in addressing poverty or other desperate needs.

The U.S. claims to be concerned with free speech and politically motivated extraditions, while it aggressively pursues the extradition of Julian Assange for exposing the crimes of U.S. imperialism.

The corporate media in the U.S. and Europe have enthusiastically reported on Hong Kong protests, in stark contrast to the meager, often critical coverage of mass protests in Gaza, Honduras, Sudan, Yemen, France or the recent general strike in Brazil. The difference in coverage exposes a difference in the forces behind the protests, a difference in who stands to benefit from them.

U.S. imperialism has a long history of 'color revolutions' in which protests with a progressive, even revolutionary patina are used as cover for a reactionary, pro U.S. agenda.

The world finance capital forces in Hong Kong are allied with U.S. imperialism and opposed to socialist ownership and the leadership of China by the Chinese Communist Party.

**International Action Center
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**U.S. Hands Off China!
Hong Kong is part of China!**

Nicaragua's success pains imperialism



FOTO: misiones.minrex.gob.cu

July 19, First Vice President Salvador Valdés Mesa participated in the national commemoration of the Sandinista Revolution's 40th anniversary, in Managua

Author: [Bertha Mojena Milián](#) | internet@granma.cu - July 22, 2019 14:07:58

Cuban First Vice President Salvador Valdés Mesa, participated July 19 in the national commemoration of the Sandinista Revolution's 40th anniversary, in Managua, Nicaragua, stating that the triumph of the Sandinistas represents a victory against foreign intervention in the nation, and reaffirming the willingness of our peoples to struggle and resist imperialism.

Gathered in the Plaza La Fe, more than 500 international guests accompanied thousands of Nicaraguans during the celebration, where the vice president of this sister nation, Rosario Murillo, insisted "The brave and honorable people of our Nicaragua, always blessed and free, never sells out or surrenders."

"At 40 years, full of glory, youth, history, and future, the Sandinista Popular Revolution marches on successfully and proudly," she said.

"Nicaragua pains them, love pains them, we sing, on the 40th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution, that changed Latin American history," wrote Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez on Twitter, while congratulating Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, Vice President Rosario Murillo, the Sandinista National Liberation Front, and this sister people.

Cuba's Foreign Minister, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, recalled the words of Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro, who said, "The Sandinista victory is not only a victory over 45 years of Somoza; it is a victory over 150 years of foreign domination."

<http://en.granma.cu/mundo/2019-07-22/nicaraguas-success-pains-imperialism>

Koreans protest outrageous U.S. seizure of ship

Posted in [Asia](#), [Korea](#)

The International Action Center reprints below in full a statement from the Foreign Ministry of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on the seizure by the U.S. of a Korean cargo ship. We totally agree that the U.S. has absolutely no right to carry out such an act of piracy against the DPRK. U.S. hostility to the DPRK stems from the Korean people's courageous history of choosing socialism and defending their system, despite decades of not just threats but horrendous attacks by the imperialist U.S. government and the capitalist ruling class it serves. The DPRK deserves the support of all those who cherish self-determination and the right of every country to decide its own destiny.

DPRK Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hits Out at Outrageous Act of U.S.

Pyongyang, May 14 (KCNA) — A spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea made the following statement on Tuesday:

The United States committed an unlawful and outrageous act of dispossessing our cargo ship by forcibly taking it to Samoa (U.S.), linking the ship to the "sanctions resolutions" of the United States Security Council (UNSC) and its domestic "sanctions acts," all being imposed against the DPRK.

The UNSC "sanctions resolutions" on the DPRK, which the U.S. has employed as one of the grounds for its dispossession of our cargo ship, have flagrantly infringed upon the sovereignty of our state, and therefore, we have categorically rejected and condemned the whole of them all along.

Moreover, the United States' impudent act of forcing other countries into observance of its domestic law is indeed a wanton violation of the universally accepted international laws which make clear that in no case can a sovereign state be an object of jurisdiction of other countries.

The latest U.S. act constitutes an extension of the American method of calculation for bringing the DPRK to its knees by means of "maximum pressure" and an outright denial of the underlying spirit of the June 12 DPRK-U.S. Joint Statement that has committed to establish new bilateral relations.

The U.S. should ponder over the consequences its heinous act might have on the future developments and immediately return our ship.

The time when the U.S. held sway over the world at its own free will is gone long ago, and it would be a biggest miscalculation if the U.S. thought that the DPRK is among the countries where the American-style logic of "strength" might work for.

We will carefully watch every move of the United States hereafter.

Special coverage: July 26 in the heart of Cuba

Today, July 26, the national commemoration for the 66th anniversary of the assaults on the Moncada and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Garrisons will be held in Bayamo

Author: [National news staff](#) | informacion@granma.cu - July 26, 2019 06:07:49

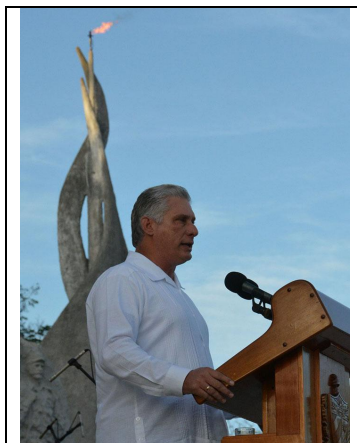


Photo: Granma

Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, member of the Party Central Committee Political Bureau, and President of the Councils of State and Ministers, delivers the event's central remarks.

"Before the historic generation that accompanies us I will deliver the central remarks at this event, in the same place where the Comandante en Jefe, on the same date in 2006, presided and closed for the last time a National Rebellion Day commemoration. "I speak on behalf of the grateful."

"It is no accident, that located in Granma is the second garrison assaulted that morning, the Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, in Bayamo, that today is a museum park bearing the honorable name of Níco López, one of the leaders of the action in this city - Raúl's great friend, in whose office the photo of a boy with big black glasses occupies a place of honor.

"Níco was killed just hours after the Granma landing, but he has not been absent a minute from the revolutionary work to which he gave himself with such passion and confidence in victory.

"They were more brothers than friends, those men and women who put the nation first, who thought of the country as a family.

"We came from them, and it is very important that our tributes, annual or daily, not be enclosed within an act, in verses or a few words about dates.

"The Revolution now needs us to unleash a great battle for our defense and economy, to break the enemy's plan to destroy us and asphyxiate us...

"It is up to us to think as a country, because no one else is going to think for us."

"It requires, at the same time, that we strengthen, among the people, spirituality, civics, decency, solidarity, social discipline, and a sense of public service.



"Despite the pain, the physical loss of those beings 'from another world' - from the song "Los elegidos" - the survivors of that epic feat, guided by Fidel, never complained, or went to a corner to mourn their fallen or murdered companions. "Five years, five months, and five days after the assaults on the garrisons in Santiago de Cuba and Bayamo, denying the alleged failure of 53, the victory of 59 would come. The setback became a victory.

"An explanation of the miracle of a group of men defeating one of the best equipped armies on the continent can only be found in the outstanding values of the Centenary Generation, their sense of justice, loyalty to a cause, commitment to their Word, confidence in victory, unwavering faith in the people, and unity as a principle.

"Our parents and teachers taught us that it is easy to break sticks separately, but impossible to break a

bundle tightly united.

"To confuse public opinion and give this confrontation a legality it does not have, the Helms-Burton was fabricated, a legal invention that combines the empire's desires for dominance over our destinies and the revenge of those nostalgic for the Batista dictatorship.

"The current claimants of properties, that 60 years ago finally passed to the hands of the people, come from the immoral and antipatriotic beings who sacked the country.

"Let me warn them that the descendants of the campesinos and Mambi cavalry who took the Plaza in 1959 to greet the victorious Revolution, inherited the land and the machetes of their ancestors, and would not hesitate to wield them sharply against those who attempt to snatch the land the Revolution awarded them.

"Only a Revolution could change the country's panorama, which four years after the assaults had deteriorated so much that, in 1957, a religious organization... would call for radical, definitive change in the country.

"Cuba changed, but not the powerful neighbor's efforts to possess it, with the enthusiastic collaboration of hawks and the servile anti-patriots in South Florida.

"I am going to provide a recent figure, for the world's consideration: in this last year alone, from March 2018 through April of 2019, the blockade caused us losses valued at 4.343 billion dollars.

"After six decades of harassment of the simplest Cuba transaction, accumulated losses have reached 922,630,000,000 dollars, taking into account the depreciation of green bills as compared to gold.



Foto: Endrys Correa Vaillant

ASELINADOS DESPUÉS DE LAS ACCIONES



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Alemán Rodríguez*



*Pablo Agüero
Guedes*



*Gerardo Antonio
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*Boris Luis Santa
Coloma*



*José de Jesús Maderna
Fernández*

"The siege is being increasingly tightened around our country, around Venezuela, Nicaragua, and any other nation that refuses to accept the imperial plan for its destiny."

"Today, before the people of Cuba and the world, we denounce the U.S. administration for beginning to act more aggressively to prevent the delivery of fuel to Cuba.

"The genocidal plan is to affect, even more, the population's quality of life, its progress, and even its hopes, with the objective of hurting Cuban families in daily life, in their basic needs, and accuse the Cuban government of being ineffective. They are seeking a social explosion.

"How little they know us! When will they finally understand that the heroic Cuban family is capable of facing, and resisting with dignity, the worse siege, and continue loving each other, despite distances, because nothing, no one, can divide us?

"Ignorant of history and the Cuban Revolution's foreign policy principles, they propose to negotiate a possible reconciliation with us, in exchange for abandoning the course chosen and defended by our people. They suggest betraying friends, throwing 60 years of dignity into the trash bin. "No, imperialist gentlemen, we do not understand each other." Any proposal that departs from respect among equals does not interest us. "And as for the U.S. people, they are always invited to Cuba. Our doors are open. Come, see, and get to know the reality of the country you are not allowed to visit, in the name of freedom, an essential human right that, they say, is lacking in Cuba and abounds there.

"Going for more is not a slogan. It is a translation of the government's language in response to the enemy's policy: With those who want to steal our land, our homes, our schools, hospitals, childcare centers, beaches, ports, and airports... there can be no understanding.

"Let us all work to make every day in the almanac a 26th; every month in the year, a July; and every commitment a victorious Moncada!

"The world will see what we are capable of doing and the world will join us in our resistance. It is time to make a new and urgent call to conscience.

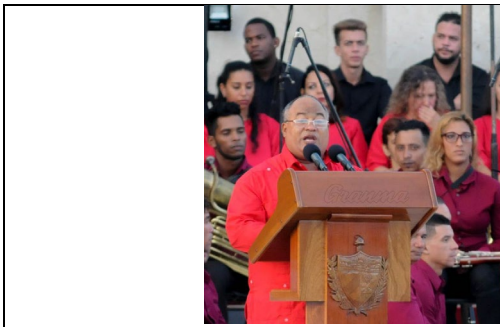
"We are going for more because we are Cuba and we are continuity.

"Homeland of Death!

"Venecermos!"

i

Photo: Twitter



Federico Hernández Hernández, member of the Party Central Committee and first secretary in the province of Granma, addresses the gathering.



With the presence of Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, the President of Cuba's Councils of State and Ministers, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez opened the political-cultural commemoration for the 66th Anniversary of the Assaults on the Moncada and Carlos Manuel de Cespedes Garrisons.

Also in attendance are José Ramón Machado Ventura, second secretary of the Party Central Committee, and members of the Political Bureau, Salvador Valdés Mesa, first vice president of the Councils of State and Ministers; Esteban Lazo Hernández, president of the National Assembly of People's Power; Susely Morfa González, first secretary of the Young Communists League National Bureau; and other Party leaders and the Granma provincial government.

As soon as the day dawns, Bayamo's Plaza de la Patria will welcome thousands of Granma residents for the national commemoration for the 66th anniversary of the assaults on the Moncada in Santiago de Cuba and the Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Garrison, in this historic city. Granma offers special coverage of the events.

Elections in Greece: What happened and what's next

Posted in [Europe](#), [Greece](#), [World](#) - By G. Dunkel - July 18, 2019

New Democracy, which the big business press calls a center-right party, won the July 7 election in Greece with 39.8 percent of the vote. It has 158 seats in parliament — a comfortable majority that let it form a majority government. The leader of ND, Kyríakos Mitsotakis, took over as prime minister on July 8.

Syriza, a social democratic party that describes itself as the Coalition of the Radical Left, came in second with 31.5 percent. It had been running the government since January 2015 when it was elected on an anti-austerity platform.

There are reasons for Syriza's decline. Its prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, held a referendum July 5, 2015, in which 61 percent of the voters rejected the draconian conditions that the Troika — the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission — had imposed on Greece for it to qualify for a third bailout loan. Just 10 days later, the Tsipras government reached an agreement with the Troika for a three-year bailout, with even harsher austerity conditions than the ones rejected by the voters.

For the election this July 7, Syriza had to run on its record. The center-right ND, however, could rely on promises to make life better, even though Greeks know that ND was involved in the first two bailouts; and that Kyriakos Mitsotakis is the son of a reactionary, anti-working-class prime minister and the brother of a former right-wing

mayor of Athens. Mitsotakis wants to "improve" the job market by making the work week seven days long, privatizing hospitals and health care, and cutting social security.

While disgruntlement with Syriza might have been the reason for a sharp increase in abstentions, which reached 42 percent, Syriza appears to have benefited from workers and progressives choosing it as the "lesser of two evils." However, it has lost a great deal of credibility by at first running as an opponent of austerity and then, when it was in power, adopting very harsh policies.

The ND was also able to win because it picked up votes from some right-wing parties, like ANEL and POTAMI, which had lost so much support they didn't even run in the election. The ND votes were concentrated in the petty bourgeois and bourgeois areas around Athens. But there does not appear to have been a major shift to the right among Greek workers.

The victory of Syriza in the 2015 election had been hailed both in Europe and North America as a victory of the left, as a big step forward for social democracy. Besides numerous articles in newspapers and magazines and numerous symposia, there was even a book, "The Syriza Wave" by Irish leftist Helena Sheehan, that described "the surging and crashing" of the Greek left.

Serious economic challenges

The ND government is going to face serious economic challenges. Between 400,000 and 600,000 of Greece's educated and skilled workers, unable to find decent jobs, have left in the past 10 years. The economy has shrunk by a quarter during that time. Unemployment is at 18 percent and poverty — already at 35 percent — is increasing. Greece's bailout creditors have rejected a call to ease strict budget targets.

ND's economic "solution" is obviously going to increase misery for Greek workers. That means it will have to confront the Greek Communist Party (KKE) — which for over 100 years has consistently opposed Greek capitalism — as well as the powerful and militant Greek trade unions.

The KKE came in fourth in the elections, with 300,000 votes (5.3 percent) and 15 seats in parliament. That is very close to what it has received in the past few elections. The KKE is closely tied to PAME, the All Workers Militant Front, a union with 800,000 members, and has participated in many of the general strikes and other labor actions over the past five years.

A KKE July 8 statement on the election contains this pledge: "The votes of the KKE will be utilized from tomorrow morning in every workplace, neighborhood, in the schools, in the universities to organize struggles in order to block new measures, in order to bring relief to all who suffer."

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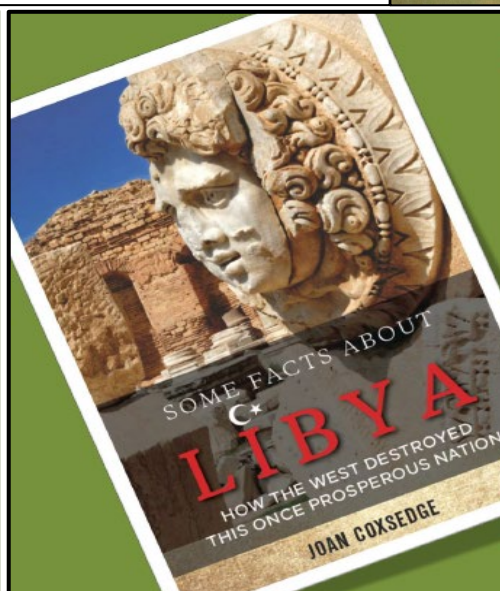
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