

Democracy and the multiparty political system*

TOM CRUMPACKER

ABSTRACT: The multiparty political system can destroy real democracy in the name of pluralism. Where electoral parties are not based on differing fundamental values, as in United States, they unnecessarily interfere in the direct relationship between the constituent and his supposed representative. They are conducive to class and special interest manipulation (especially with money) and therefore both cause and result from commercial oligarchy. Cubans learned this in the first part of the 20th century, and they also learned that their only hope of autonomy and nationhood is unity in their struggle for independence and self determination. They are not again going to submit voluntarily to outside commercial exploitation. Our impoverished political institutions are not what they need or desire.

If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all.
Thomas Jefferson, 1789

In May 2002 and again in October 2003, President Bush said he would consider ending the blockade of Cuba if the Cuban government would move toward democracy by conducting multiparty elections, among other political conditions he requires. Eight previous US presidents had said essentially the same thing. In May, 2004, his administration's Commission on Cuba published its "Cuba: Transition to Democracy" report, which outlines its plan to change the Cuban political system by establishing multiple electoral parties there.

They obviously mean United States type "democracy," which is our mass media code word for relatively unlimited, unregulated capitalism. This administration is presently seeking to impose US style democracies in Afghanistan, Iraq and Haiti, and is beginning a campaign aimed at countries in the Third World toward implanting multiparty systems. This campaign evidently envisions possible military intervention to achieve its goal, since it said in April 2003 that the war in Iraq should be an example to Cuba.^[1]

The US destabilization campaign in Cuba did not begin recently. During the past two years the US Agency for International Development funnelled more than fifty million dollars to so-called nongovernmental organizations to promote the "transition to democracy" in Cuba.^[2] With this and untold sums through NED, CIA, Republican and Democratic Party Institutes and other agencies and organizations, the Bush Administration has been trying to overthrow the Cuban people's government, in a manner similar to what the Nixon Administration achieved in Chile in the early 1970s, also the many other regime changes accomplished by US in Latin America and elsewhere in the Third World during the past 50

years.

Historical Idea of Democracy

Unfortunately, one of the things we lack in this mass community of 280 million people we're trying to create is a common language for our political discourse. Those who speak to us through the mass media often change meanings of words to further their goals. Each person develops his own understanding of these words based on his learning, which often differs considerably from the understandings of others. Our common language deteriorates and the essential ingredient of community -- communication -- disappears, leaving us like those who lived in the Tower of Babel.

Since the word democracy derives from the Greek word "demos" meaning "the people," it would seem that to have an intelligent connection to the past it must involve people participating somehow in the important societal decisions which affect their lives, such as "government by the people," an idea that the people can collectively manage their societies. Because in mass society each individual cannot meaningfully participate in decisions for the whole, it has come to mean decision-making by "representatives" (career politicians in the United States) who are said to decide and act on behalf of the people. US political philosopher Cliff DuRand asserts that the core of the historical idea of democracy is "the possibility of collective decision-making about collective action for a common good." He says this is the opposite of the concept found in US popular consciousness today which defines democracy as the freedom of individuals to decide on their own on actions to pursue their own purposes. (DuRand C. 1997: 1-3)

As for personal freedom, in society it's inextricably and dialectically linked to personal responsibility - two perspectives or ways of looking at the same coin. The existence of either is conditional on the existence of the other. Humanity's age old thirst for democracy derives from the truism that to the extent individuals participate through real representation in the important decisions which affect their lives, society's need for coercion diminishes. Such participation in power renders the decisions truly collective, the people accept and implement them as their own, producing both freedom and responsibility. In the US we have to keep over two million people incarcerated, more than double the number and percentage held in any other nation.

Electoral parties

The new US idea of the necessity of "multiparty elections" for other nations is an oligarchic myth. It leads people to believe they have choice in political decisions and thereby maintains the political status quo. Electoral parties are not mentioned in our constitution. In the early days of our republic they were frowned on. George Washington especially discouraged the idea because he feared parties would interfere with elected officials' ability to represent the common interest. Nor are parties referred to in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or any other international standard. Many nations do not allow electoral parties. In the place in US where real democracy occurs -- the local level -- most elections are non-partisan by law.

In the distant past, political parties were not only electoral, they were movements -- of people with similar values who sought by grouping together to use the political system to

bring about social change in line with their values. Value based electoral parties occurred in parliamentary political systems with proportional representation where voters could find participation through representation by voting their values — such as the Conservative, Liberal, Labour, Christian Democrat, Social Democrat, Socialist, and Communist parties in western Europe.

US Idea of Party

Although there is no reason to believe that we fall into only two value groups, in the US we've had what we call the "two party" system. This arises from our constitution, laws and other historical factors. Single member districts, where only one party wins, are a strong incentive for only two broadly based electoral parties. The media barrier, ballot access laws, the Electoral College, gerrymandering, nomination by primaries, and many other factors specific to US mandate a situation where there can be only two parties which can have a realistic chance of electing national candidates. These "majors," which have low levels of internal unity and lack adherence to an ideology or set of goals, are concerned primarily with winning elections and controlling the patronage of government. The candidates have their own programs, raise their own money, use their own campaign workers, and develop their own issues and policies. Little time or attention is given to party platforms, and the decreasing percentage of voters who are party members have no reason to vote for party rather than candidate.

Value based electoral parties are groups of people who have essential values in common who seek by elections to change and create institutions which are based on and promote their values. They organize themselves, determine their own processes for membership, collective decision-making, platforms, candidates, and collective electoral action. In the US these matters are determined not by people or their parties but by statutes. A value based electoral party would never permit its only opposition party to participate in the nomination of its candidates, as authorized by our statutes allowing crossover primary voting and instant, changeable registration. Nor would groups or entities invest their time and money in both parties' candidates in elections which appear to be close, as do US businesses.

The birth and growth of alternative US value based parties is prohibited by winner take all elections, ballot access laws and numerous other requirements engrained in our state and federal laws over the past century, lack of funding (no business or even union or interest group will contribute to a party having no ability to elect candidates), and primarily by keeping them out of the public debate and discussion by a Catch 22. Editorial decisions in our mass media, which exists for the profit of its owners, are based on what interests the public and therefore sells the products advertised, whereas the public is not interested in or aware of alternative or value parties or their programs because they are not informed of them by the media.

Today our two statutory majors are essentially accounting firms and patronage distributors, also party leaders and chairmen under their rules get procedural advantages in Congress: for instance under present rules they get to determine when and what matters are debated and voted on. But they offer no real choice regarding basic values, approaches, theory, policy or ideology, particularly with regard to structural change in our political economy. Because our media emphasizes their differences, in order to see this clearly one

needs to adopt a broad, international-comparative perspective and look at the actual votes made rather than the rhetoric. Our national and state candidates are elected on the basis of their financial backing (which provides them media access), incumbency, celebrity, perceived personal characteristics and issues unrelated to party values. They and our mass media are funded primarily by the same increasingly centralized business enterprises. They must think and talk within the ever narrowing "mainstream" to gain media attention and become serious candidates.

US Political System

We call our present political system "interest based politics." If a person wants to help bring about change as an activist, he must work through an interest group on a specific issue predetermined by the system, such as gun control, abortion rights, health care, environment, to name a few. He can also provide his vote, money and support to broadly based communities based on business, worker, or other professional status, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, ethnicity or national origin. Our laws long ago denoted our preferred business enterprise form as the "corporation," which is a legal device to allow individuals and groups to accumulate capital without personal responsibility. Initially it was conceived of as a public institution, but it became private. Our courts then defined these devices "persons." Those who control them (officers, directors, managers) compete with real persons in seeking to influence political decisions.

The purpose of a political system is to permit an appropriate degree of social change within an appropriate degree of stability. One outcome of choosing special interest over value based politics is that progressive change in and within the system becomes impossible. People's values are ignored while their special interest or status becomes the focal point. Another significant outcome is the disconnection (absence of accountability) between constituents and their so-called representatives. In this situation participation in elections becomes of questionable value. Structural political development slows and eventually halts while economic development becomes more rapid, benefiting the few at the expense of the many.

We seek to justify our political system by calling it "pluralist." In this type of system, where advertising and other use of the mass media is crucial, capital accumulation produces political power, and political power produces capital formation, benefiting those who control economic production and their institutions. The people's role diminishes and eventually disappears. Issue and interest groups and status communities compete against each other for limited public funds and beneficial governmental treatment such as tax breaks or affirmative action or other "equal rights." The outcome depends to a great deal on who funds the political campaigns and the mass media. Meanwhile the continuous competition between interest-status groups emphasizes our differences and produces a politics of dissension rather than community.

Although capitalism has historically related to the common good in both progressive and regressive ways, an essential dynamic of late capitalism has become that those who have much get more and become fewer, whereas those who have little get less and become more numerous. It's normally through politics and political systems that people protect themselves from capital's regressive, ravaging aspects, by limitation and regulation. For instance in the distant past, people were able to come together politically through common

values and act collectively to form alternative power bases, such as movements, interest groups, unions, parties, nations, to protect themselves to a certain extent. This does not happen in systems where power derives from capital rather than people. In recent years in First World political systems we see the increasing dominance of capital power and a disintegration of people power. This plays out to a greater extent in the Third World, preventing even the formation of viable nations.

Our government was originally structured so that it would not interfere with our private pursuits. This turned our nation away from collective action toward a culture of individualism, where pursuit of self interest by individuals is thought to maximize the common good. Other than extending the vote to the property less, racial minorities and women, the main change which has occurred in our two centuries as a republic-empire has been the *centralization of the public funding and political power at the national level*, a product of the economies of big business and the needs of capital, especially as regards the expansion of our commercial interests abroad. Contrary to the original concept of federalism, the important societal decisions which affect our lives are now made on Wall Street and in Washington D.C., not coincidentally the places where terrorists struck on September 11, 2001.

US Congress

The US House of Representatives is supposedly our democratic legislative body with elections every two years -- originally intended to ensure that our 435 representatives would be responsive to the common interest of their constituents. Their public media-driven campaigns of self-promotion have become incredibly expensive and lengthy, if not continuous. Our dominant ideology - that society is best guided by the "invisible hand" while each individual seeks to maximize his self interest - in late capitalism becomes the standard for all professions, including our politicians. Because the primary factors involved in their decision-making are personal (obtaining and retaining their offices, which bring them power and wealth), the American people have discovered that they are in reality representing primarily the powerful private interests which fund them and that voting for major party candidates does not remedy the situation. In the last House elections (2004), over 90 per cent of the seats were uncontested or not seriously contested and overall less than one half of those eligible voted, producing another landslide for incumbents. The major parties had in the state legislatures in previous years gerrymandered the US congressional districts to make most of the seats virtual lifetime appointments, thereby promoting responsiveness to private rather than public interests.

Our national representatives have become experts in retaining their seats by avoiding discussion of fundamental issues and votes on the few controversial issues which lobbyists and interest groups present. As a result the former never enter the public mind, which is informed by our mass media, and the latter never get finally decided and we don't move on. What and when issues are brought up for decision, and how these are framed and debated, are matters determined by a very few powerful men called "party leaders," who act as agents of the president if of the same party. This encourages executive interference in the legislative process. We keep getting the same issues re-argued year after year on the margin with no final decision, like tax code change, campaign finance, abortion rights, gun control, social security, health coverage, to name a few. We often find that members have voted both ways on various aspects of these complex matters so that we can't determine

where they stand. On domestic issues our Congress has become essentially unresponsive and therefore dysfunctional, which happens to serve the needs of the interests which fund it.

In international matters, most of our national representatives apparently believe that appealing to our baser instincts, such as fear, hatred and an irrational "us vs. them" attitude, keeps them in office. In the 42 years since President Eisenhower warned that the greatest danger we face is our own military-industrial complex, they have funded with our tax dollars the greatest military-industrial-intelligence-weaponry-war-coercion apparatus ever known to man, which is used to help our businesses make profits in foreign countries even where it involves exploiting people and their resources, empowering oppressors, changing regimes and destroying international efforts at peacekeeping and development. Their narrow "our nation only" perspective benefits their sponsors and ignores the obvious facts that it's not in our interest to have our family members stationed, injured and killed in faraway places, or to be attacked by suicidal terrorists at home, or to give up our privacy and liberties for security, and that we have a common interest as members of our world community which they are destroying.

Like our military, our large businesses are run hierarchically for the sake of efficiency. The only legal responsibility of those who control them is to increase shareholder value, which they do by investing in property, equipment, materials, labor, advertising and other businesses which increase profit. Although not yet incorporated, our national politicians have themselves become commercial businesses. Large companies, especially those operating transnationally, cannot successfully compete without investing heavily in state and national politicians. The profit from their political investing comes in the form of favorable legislation (such as the recent law prohibiting Americans from buying medicines from Canadian pharmacies at cheaper prices), more often in decreasing corporate tax and other "burdens" and in preventing people from protecting themselves by education, infrastructure, safety, health and environmental regulation. Most importantly, big business profits by preserving our present political institutions which it dominates. People based non-profit groups and unions, no matter how large, can no longer create alternative power bases because they are not in the business of making money – their income derives from dues and donations from real people, which is miniscule compared to corporate capital.

The present reality is that our Congress has ceded its legislative responsibilities to the executive, whose primary constitutional function was to enforce the laws rather than enact them. With no alternative people based parties posing the threat of change, the executive veto has not been used in recent years because it has become superfluous. Nothing outside the mainstream is debated in Congress and nothing significant becomes law unless proposed or desired by the executive. The important national decisions like the Iraq war are made in private by our power elite (business-corporate, military and political), who then use the media and the politicians - selected rather than elected - to obtain public acquiescence in the decisions.

The liberal multiparty system, which poses as democracy but in fact is the system of oligarchy and empire, is sometimes referred to as the "end of history" for political development. This is clearly true for the US national version, where structural political progress has become impossible. The culture of individualism has separated us from each other, binding us together not by our values but by enmeshing us in a net of commercial relations. Our mass consumer society has become an overpowering depoliticizing force.

Idea of the Vanguard Party

Political systems develop differently in different nations, depending on factors such as history, size, population, culture, geography, natural resources, wealth, class, power, foreign domination, liberation and popular choice. There's no reason to suppose that a system developed in a huge, expanding, commercial empire is appropriate for a small, adjacent island nation seeking to enter the world market while retaining its autonomy. Nor is there reason to believe that definitions of rights in one nation are valid for another.

For Cubans, the last century was a long struggle for independence and national dignity. They experienced the multiparty system under US tutelage during the first part of the century, when Cuba was a virtual US plantation -- by the 1950s over 75% of the economic production property was owned or otherwise controlled by US and other foreign businesses and the majority of Cubans were very poor, illiterate, and had no access to education, healthcare or other benefits of civilization. They have learned from bitter experience that their autonomy and welfare depend entirely on their national unity, whereas political division makes them vulnerable to manipulation and economic domination by US businesses and their former rulers who now live in US as part of its Cuban-American community. They have therefore forged a political system that preserves their sovereignty and autonomy, with institutions that seek real democracy by participatory consensus rather than class domination.

Jose Marti, father of Cuba's independence movement, lived in New York City for several years in the late 19th century, where he learned about the US version of democracy. Seeing and understanding the inherent tendency of the system toward empire and oligarchy, he argued that Cuba's hope for self-determination required one unified party to withstand economic domination from the "giant in seven league boots."^[3] The political institutions Cubans have developed over the last 45 years derive from Marti's thought and what has worked for them in pursuing their long delayed nation-building project.

Social movements originally arise from people with similar values who group together for power. They grow and acquire political power when they build alliances with other groups by linking their members' interests to broader, more universal values. Following the 1956 insurrection, the 26th of July movement first allied with peasants in the Sierra Maestra, then with small farmers and other groups in eastern and central Cuba, then with the unions, then the working class, then urban leagues, students and teachers' federations, professional and other groups. In the 1960s through 1980s there was a diminishment of the previous class structure of Cuban society and growing of equality among people. While most of the ownership class stayed to participate in the revolution as equals, many left to live in capitalist countries. As the revolution became institutionalized it was under universal values of equality, social justice, socialist democracy and national autonomy, which were becoming the goals of the new nation. Cubans call this process *cubania* ("Cuban-ness"), which started in the late 19th century.

The Cuban idea of party (which still uses the old name PCC, Communist Party of Cuba, adopted in the 1965 formal alliance with unions) has lost its shallow US meaning as an electorally competing vehicle for classes and special interests. It has acquired instead a deeper meaning in which the values are moral as well as material, are realized collectively

as well as individually, and progressive development (human as well as economic) is seen as depending on the extent of individual commitment to the societal goals established democratically. (Guevara, E. 1968: 1-20)

Electoral parties are not involved in Cuban politics. PCC, whose decisions are debated and made openly and democratically by delegates chosen democratically, does not participate directly in the election of public officials. It's not similar or analogous to our idea of party, which is electoral. Rather, it's an inclusive, value based, institutionalized social movement, which periodically conducts national discussions and debates about goals, directions and changes in political and economic institutions. The Cuban revolution led by PCC derives its authority from the Cuban Constitution, which was and is established by the Cuban people democratically. PCC is an organization of activists (about 14% of Cuban adults are members) which has the constitutional mandate to organize and orient the revolution, promote social consciousness, and bring about in practice the long-term socialist and democratic goals of the whole nation as established in the constitution. (Constitucion: Art. 5-7) This constitution was developed locally in the early 1970s, approved in 1976 by more than 97 per cent of eligible voters, amended significantly in 1992 by more than two-thirds of an elected National Assembly as required, and made irrevocable by a vote of more than eight million (more than 93 per cent of the adult population) in June 2002.

Although collective action by representation implies otherwise, increasing work specialization world-wide has resulted in a situation where only a small percentage of the people in each nation spend a substantial amount of their time and effort on political matters. Most people, say around 90 per cent, are willing to let the "experts" (the political class) make the societal decisions for them. Most of the involved ten per cent or so are also doing it for career or compensation reasons. In US such activists work through special interest or status groups and associate electorally with the two-pronged "Republocrat" Party. Cubans do not believe that progress toward true democracy can be made in such manner. In the 1992 revision of the Cuban Constitution, the PCC became the movement-vanguard party of the whole nation rather than a working class party. Cuban activists work through the PCC.

As capitalist society has developed, in most areas of human endeavour the division of labor has become more pronounced because it makes sense to turn over decision-making to experts who by talent, effort, training and experience are better fitted to deal with the complexities involved and distinguish progress from regress. We therefore rely on professionals and specialists such as scientists, physicians, lawyers, engineers, for decision-making in their fields. Few have the time or ability to become experts in several fields, much less many. Cubans agree completely with this and practice it; however they regard politics as an exception to the rule. In their view politics is that particular area of human endeavour which involves creating and changing societal rules in all areas (including the political), limited only by the concept of the common good. Therefore one who claims to be an expert in politics is a fraud, because no one can have expertise in all areas. Such a person is simply advancing his limited individual or group perspective, whereas the nation needs to consider all honest perspectives in order to reach the broadest possible consensus. It follows that in order for the system to work, there can be no "political class," rather everyone who is able needs to participate, not only by true representation in government, but eventually by activism (becoming a true revolutionary).

The Cuban Constitution conceives of the vanguard party as made up of those political

activists who have sufficient commitment - Cubans call it *conciencia* - to the goals of their revolution to devote substantial time and effort to the task of constructing true socialism and democracy. These two concepts are thought of as being essentially the same, in the sense that one cannot exist without the other. Socialism as the collective ownership-control of large scale production can be looked at as a condition of true democracy, and democracy as the process where people have real participation can be looked at as a condition of true socialism. This type of the two sided political-economy coin, viewable from two perspectives, is called socialist democracy. Their hope and vision for their future is that most adults will eventually become party members, having or acquiring the *conciencia* to devote themselves to the cause and make the personal sacrifices required. At that time the nation will be approaching its constitutionally envisioned goal of a socialist democracy.

People Power

The authority of the Cuban revolution, government, is looked on as the place where problems are solved, not something to be feared or limited. The public interest is conceived broadly, and the "private-public" distinction is blurred compared to nations which promote private interests rather than the common good. Those who don't want to participate in the revolution don't have to, are not penalized in any way, and are free to leave. But under present circumstances, the Cuban revolution, in order to continue, must be defended from outside interference in the form of isolation, blockade, economic war, terrorist attacks and possible military invasion. Hence their concept "Within the revolution, everything; outside the revolution, nothing." Party members at party meetings express themselves freely, so long as their ideas are within or promote the revolutionary goals. (Roman, P. 1999: 74-99) All Cubans can and do express themselves with complete freedom within or without the goals of the revolution. But using foreign money or other foreign help to destroy the revolution is proscribed. When most citizens are making personal sacrifice to try to articulate the expressed collective will, they sometimes do not look kindly on the few who seek to undo their work, which unfortunately is often mistaken by foreigners as governmental intrusion on personal rights.

Since the "rectification" period of the 1980s, the Cuban political system has been developing towards decentralization of power, encouraging more participation - called "people power." The jurisdiction of local OPP's (Organs of People's Power) is much broader than our local councils. They deal with issues such as planning, budgets, construction, housing, health, education, environment, elections, social services, economic enterprise, and almost all matters of public concern except national defence. Because of their broad authority they have substantial participation, not only by local PCC's and other organizations but also individual advocacy. At all levels, the "nongovernmental" organizations, many of which are encouraged by the government, are significant participants in decision-making (Roman P. 1999: 155-258), especially the neighborhood associations (in which most adults are active. All local and provincial elections are contested, usually there are several candidates.

The Cuban National Assembly deals with legislative and constitutional matters, has 609 members who serve for five years. Up to 50 per cent are chosen from previously elected provincial and municipal delegates (elected locally for 2½ year terms) and the rest are chosen by national candidate commissions (from which PCC is excluded) in a process which takes many months and involves consultations with and decisions by the major

organizations representing millions of people, such as the trade unions, the women's federation, the small farmers unions, the student and teacher federations, and professional, health care and other associations. The idea is to obtain a slate of national representatives who are a "mirror of the nation." To be elected, a candidate must receive at least 50 per cent of the vote. (August, A. 2000:102-114)

There is no campaigning in Cuba, the candidates do not promote themselves and money is not a factor in their election or decision making. Their biographies, including photos, education, work experience and other matters are posted conspicuously throughout their permanent, unchanging residential districts for months before the elections and details are supplied on request by the election commissions. Most of them have previously been elected by constituents who know them personally or by reputation as to truly represent the common interest. They must have frequent meetings with constituents (called "accountability sessions") and they are subject to recall at all times. (Roman P. 1999: 105-154) Where expert information is necessary, it is supplied by special commission or workers' parliaments rather than lobbyists, and proposed legislation (such as the recent imposition of an income tax on some) is voted on, up or down, in order of presentation. In the elections held January 2003 over 93 per cent of eligible Cubans voted valid ballots, electing a National Assembly which truly represents their common interest, without the intervention of electoral parties.

In the Cuban view, freedom is the participation in power by the people rather than people trying to carve out limits on the exercise of power by oligarchs. This may seem strange to those of us who live in a large, segregated, class-structured, commercial empire operating by competition and conflict. But it makes sense in a small nation which can function by cooperation and consensus because of relative integration and equality among people and a strong sense of community based on good education of all and public control of mass media. Rather than the end of history, such approach might point political thinking in a new direction, toward the idea of selective decentralization of economic and political units into smaller, more cohesive communities where real representative democracy could function. This, after all, is what was intended by those who originally designed our government as a federal system.

Dependent development

Democracy as the possibility of the people making collective decisions for their common good is something that cannot be taught or imposed from the outside. The enormous popularity of the Cuban revolution in the face of outside interference and economic isolation suggests that the vanguard movement with a non-partisan people power electoral system may be the best way to ensure that economic development in the Third World will benefit all the people more or less equally, rather than exacerbating class, power and other social differences. It promotes social justice, national cohesion and local cooperation rather than class stratification and dissension.

Small island nations do not exist in a vacuum, rather they depend economically on what happens elsewhere. Where poverty, health, housing, illiteracy, class and outside interference are the major problems, pursuit of only self interest minimizes rather than maximizes the common good, especially where foreign owned enterprises acquire not only the major benefit of economic production but also control over the domestic politics. In

such situation, collectivism over individualism can sometimes be the intelligent choice for the people, so long as it involves true participation or representation. In a society such as Cuba's where the large scale economic production property is part of the common wealth (not just state-owned but more and more in medium and small cooperatives) the people naturally become more involved and concerned with their common interest because it, rather than individual accumulation, is what serves their self interest.

Overall, the dependent, neo-liberal capitalist road to development has not been a resounding success for most people in the Third World (also for many in the so-called developed nations). In the 43 years since the Alliance for Progress, many Latin Americans have been wondering when the progress will come. In Cuba the people are making their own progress, and will continue to if allowed to without outside interference.

The multiparty political system can destroy real democracy in the name of pluralism. Where electoral parties are not based on differing fundamental values, they unnecessarily interfere in the direct relationship between the constituent and his supposed representative. They are conducive to class and special interest manipulation (especially with money) and therefore both cause and result from commercial oligarchy. Cubans learned this in the first part of the 20th century. They are not again going to submit voluntarily to outside commercial exploitation. Our impoverished political institutions are not what they need or desire.

References:

- August, A. 2000. *Democracy in Cuba and the 1997-98 Elections*. Habana: Editorial Jose Marti.
- *Constitucion de la Republica de Cuba*. 2001. Editorial de las Ciencias Sociales, Habana.
- DuRand, C. 1997. "The Idea of Democracy." University of Havana, October 21, Conference, *Socialism Toward the 21st Century*.
- Guevara, E. 1968. *Socialism and Man in Cuba*. Stage One Publications.
- Roman, P. 1999. *People's Power: Cuba's Experience with Representative Government*. Boulder Representative Press.

* Many of these ideas were inspired by discussions with my political philosopher friends, Cliff DuRand of Morgan State University and Miguel Limia, Talia Fung, Jesus Garcia, Carmen Gomez and Elsie Plain of the University of Havana

[1] Hans Hartell, US Ambassador to Dominican Republic, as reported in AP dispatch, April 10, 2003.

[2] See USAID/CUBA PROGRAM, March 2002 update, "International Development on Program to Promote Cuban Transition to Democracy." Some of this money went through the US Interest Section in Havana resulting in the April 2003 convictions of the Cubans who took it.

[3] John M. Kirk, *Jose Marti, Mentor of the Cuban Nation* (U. of Florida Press, 1980), p. 38.