You can't build a revolution on Instagram: Cuba and Venezuela explain why

written by Lev Koufax
November 19, 2025

President Díaz-Canel addresses delegates in Havana about the growing role of artificial intelligence in imperialist information warfare.

An international conference in Havana on Oct. 15 — the third annual International Meeting of Theoretical Publications of Left-wing Parties and Movements (Encuentro Internacional de Publicaciones Teóricas de Partidos y Movimientos de Izquierda) — brought together communist and progressive forces from across the world. Delegations included the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of Greece, the Belgian Workers' Party, the Hungarian Workers' Party, Ireland's largest trade union, and dozens of other organizations. Organized by the Communist Party of Cuba, with President Miguel Díaz-Canel participating in multiple sessions, the gathering focused on a critical question: How can the working class win the

information war?

One country dominated the discussions: Venezuela. Latin American participants emphasized that Venezuela sits on the front lines of U.S. imperialist aggression, making it a testing ground for both Trump's neo-fascist ideology and new forms of information warfare. The insights shared by Cuban and Venezuelan speakers — particularly President Díaz-Canel, Ignacio Ramonet (Fidel Castro's biographer), and Miguel Pérez Pirela, the Venezuelan philosopher who leads the Network in Defense of Humanity — demand serious attention from the U.S. left.

Their central argument was clear: Social media platforms are tools of class warfare, and the left in the United States has fundamentally misunderstood how to use them.

Google's AI: Manufacturing consent at scale

Artificial intelligence has become imperialism's latest propaganda weapon. Díaz-Canel described how Google's AI summaries routinely present Cuba through a distorted, hostile lens. When ordinary people search for information about Cuba — including Cubans themselves — Google's AI generates a short "overview" that frames the island as a dictatorship without basic rights or freedoms. These summaries appear at the top of search results with an authoritative sheen.

The system does not invent new information; it synthesizes the dominant narratives already produced by Western media and official U.S. sources. Research on search-engine behavior shows that most users never look beyond the first short block of information they see, giving these AI-generated snapshots enormous influence.

Cuba has responded by assembling programming teams to develop alternative AI-assisted search tools that elevate progressive sources. At the same time, presenters explained that Cuban researchers are attempting to flood Google's AI systems with corrective information to counter the most extreme distortions. As Díaz-Canel and

Vasuki Umantha of the Communist Party of India both emphasized: Technology serves the class that controls it. The question is not whether AI is "objective," but whether it advances working-class interests or ruling-class power.

Why the One Piece flag spreads while Che's image fades

Ignacio Ramonet posed a provocative question about political imagery in the digital age. Why do certain symbols — like the One Piece pirate flag, which has become a youth-culture emblem of rebellion and adventure — spread virally across color revolutions in multiple countries, while progressive symbols such as Che Guevara's face, the hammer and sickle, or the Black Power fist circulate far less widely today?

Ramonet said that the answer lies in how social media algorithms operate. These systems accelerate and amplify content that aligns with ruling-class interests. Generic "anti-corruption" imagery — often stripped of any class analysis and weaponized by right-wing movements — spreads far more easily than symbols rooted in socialist struggle. The platforms promote what destabilizes governments targeted by the U.S. and suppress what strengthens working-class movements.

This is not mere coincidence. It reflects the class character embedded in the design of the platforms themselves.

The fundamental mistake: adapting content to hostile platforms

Miguel Pérez Pirela — whose flight to Havana was delayed by U.S. military aircraft operating near Caracas airport — delivered the conference's most comprehensive analysis of social media. Even though he has more than a million followers on X (formerly Twitter) and uses the platform effectively, he argues that corporate social media is fundamentally hostile to anti-imperialist politics.

Venezuela and other left movements made a critical strategic mistake: trying to adapt robust left-wing content — newspaper articles, theoretical works, deep

political analysis — into short social-media formats, assuming this would reach the masses. This approach treats the platforms as neutral tools that simply need the "right" content. It fails.

Meta, X, and similar platforms cannot build revolutionary movements or even real community. They create the illusion of connection while isolating people in algorithm-controlled silos. Their systems bury left-wing material and prioritize propaganda from the U.S. government, corporate media, and far-right actors.

These are not public squares. They are privately owned, billionaire-controlled propaganda machines.

The war for attention

Pérez Pirela framed the information struggle as fundamentally "a war for attention." The battle between imperialism and the global working class is not only about ideas — it is about getting people to look in the first place.

Right-wing forces dominate this terrain. Trump says something outrageous and the platforms instantly magnify it. A dramatic crisis unfolds — a boat explosion in the Caribbean, an inflammatory speech, a staged provocation — and it floods every feed. Even when media coverage is negative, the attention still flows toward ruling-class narratives.

By the time the left offers a substantive response, the algorithmic firehose has already shaped public perception.

Social media only becomes "useful" when the movement being promoted serves ruling-class interests: color revolutions, right-wing street uprisings, neo-fascist organizing. The Jan. 6 coup attempt spread effortlessly through Facebook and similar platforms.

The 2019 U.S. attempt to install Juan Guaidó as a puppet leader demonstrated this clearly. Venezuelan opposition organizers exploited Facebook's design — a system built to prioritize right-wing extremism — to spread false claims and confusion. The crisis forced Venezuelan revolutionaries to fundamentally reassess how they approached digital information warfare.

A strategic reorientation

Cuban and Venezuelan revolutionaries have learned through hard experience that mainstream social media serves the class enemy. The task is not to abandon these platforms entirely, but to understand their strictly limited purpose.

The emerging strategy uses social media sparingly: sharp visuals and concise slogans that redirect people *away* from these platforms and toward anti-imperialist sources — demonstrations, left-wing books, revolutionary websites, political study, organizing work, petitioning, canvassing, writing for socialist publications.

Venezuela's Network in Defense of Humanity has developed practical innovations. Books include QR codes linking to videos of the text being read, creating an audio-visual entry point that pulls readers out of what Pérez Pirela calls the "cesspit of social media" — not simply a metaphor but a description of platforms engineered to trap users in endless, isolating consumption.

The goal is to move people from passive scrolling toward collective political education and struggle. TikTok and Instagram may serve as initial points of contact, but serious political work must take place elsewhere.

Silicon Valley's mantle

For decades, the primary tools of U.S. imperialist information warfare were corporate media and Hollywood. Today, that mantle has been seized by Silicon Valley. The major tech corporations function as the new ideological arm of the ruling

class, shaping global narratives at unprecedented speed and scale.

The U.S. progressive movement must stop adapting substantial political materials to platforms built to suppress them. We should expect Silicon Valley to wield its power aggressively — because these tools were created by capitalists to defend capitalist rule.

Revolutionary politics must be built in the streets, in study circles, in workplaces, and through direct organization. Mainstream social media was built by imperialists to function on behalf of imperialism. Cuba and Venezuela are developing new methods of political education precisely because they recognize this.

We can learn

The U.S. left faces a choice. We can keep treating social media as if it were a neutral tool that simply needs better content — and watch our message disappear into the circus controlled by Musk and Zuckerberg. Or we can learn from comrades on the front lines of information warfare.

This means thinking critically about technology and class power. It means using social media strategically and minimally. It means prioritizing face-to-face organizing, physical media, political education, and collective struggle over viral posts and follower counts.

The Cuban and Venezuelan people are offering hard-won lessons. It is our responsibility to study them — and to act.

Adapted from remarks delivered at a Struggle for Socialism Party membership meeting.