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History is still absolving Fidel Castro

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April 17, 1961 - Fidel Castro, lower right, is seated inside a tank at Playa Girón during the Bay of Pigs invasion, in which Washington-backed forces attempted to topple the revolutionary government.

Fidel Castro was born on Aug. 13, 1926. If he were alive today, he'd be turning 100 next year. In Cuba, preparations are already underway to celebrate his centennial. But even without the anniversary, current events - the dangerous world situation right now - warrant a reappraisal of Fidel's life and the Cuban revolution. They have a lot to teach us.

Right now, the U.S. government is intensifying its attacks on Venezuela and other

countries of Latin America. This imperialist government, run for the billionaires, has already been illegally assassinating people in the Caribbean who are just trying to make a living, offering zero proof that they are smuggling drugs.

War is a real danger. This would not only be a disaster for Latin America, but also for working-class and oppressed people here in the U.S. itself. (We always seem to get poorer as the war profiteers get richer.)

But Washington's attempts to subjugate Latin America to Wall Street are nothing new. Fidel Castro spent his life fighting against the murder machine that is U.S. imperialism. And with his leadership, the Cuban revolution first threw off the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship and then spent decades fighting off U.S. attempts to resubjugate Cuba. Sixty-six years later and they haven't beaten the Cuban revolution.

Fidel understood that there really was no making peace with imperialism. The leaders of the global capitalist system might soften their tone from time to time, pretend that they will start playing fair. Trump exemplifies this pattern. But the unrelenting profit motive that drives the whole system can never allow peace, and the imperialists can never accept it when people of formerly colonized countries of the Global South, like Cuba, start to run their own affairs.

The problem, from the oligarchs' point of view, is that if Global South countries are independent, the working-class and oppressed majority there could get hold of the reins of power and actually help the people. When that happens, it threatens corporate profits (the same corporations keeping us down here).

That's why the U.S. and Britain backed a coup in Iran in 1953, inaugurating decades of bloody dictatorship. The Iranian government had nationalized the oil industry and wanted to use the country's resources to raise living standards. That meant stopping U.S. and British capitalists from stealing everything.

Venezuela's crime

There are similarities between Iran and Venezuela, which happens to have the largest proven oil reserves in the world. Venezuela nationalized its oil in 1976, and when Hugo Chávez was elected in 1998, bringing the Bolivarian revolution to power in 1999, the government used the country's wealth to undertake massive efforts to uplift the people, expanding access to housing, education, health care, etc. Washington has been trying to destroy Venezuela's Bolivarian government, essentially from day one, long before the bogus narco-state accusations.

Venezuela's crime is threatening foreign capitalist profits. That was the crime of Iran, and it's the crime of Cuba. The imperialists can't accept anything that looks like self-determination. That's why the Palestinian people's resolve makes them crazy. That's why Trump vilifies the Black majority government of South Africa.

There are many things we can learn from Fidel Castro's life as we contemplate his centennial. But one is that the imperialist system will never accommodate itself to us – to oppressed people, to workers. So, we should not accommodate ourselves to it. Instead, we have to fight it.

