

This week in Cuba December 8 to December 14, 2019



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By Charles McKelvey

(1) In Argentina, Cuban President affirms need to seed ideas and values

On December 9, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel arrived in Argentina for the inauguration of Alberto Fernández as President and former president Cristina Fernández as Vice-President. The Fernández-Fernández ticket defeated Mauricio Macri, who implemented neoliberal measures as president from December 2015 to 2019, without announcing his attention to do so during the presidential electoral campaign of 2015. It was an example of a phenomenon in Latin America that was described by Díaz-Canel with the following words: “The reduction of salaries, the weakening of labor rights, the privatization and cancelation of public services are not present in the electoral speeches. They are applied afterward, in a betrayal of the peoples.” But with the election of Fernández & Fernández, hope returns. Díaz-Canel declared, “On arriving here we felt even in the air the spirit of happiness for the hope rescued from the bottom of the neoliberal well.”

In a ceremony of Argentinian solidarity with Cuba, the Cuban President asserted that “the neoliberal oligarchies, supported by the government of the United States, are hanging on, trying to not lose control of that which they have taken possession in recent years through dishonest and perverse methods.

Supported by corrupt judges and by monopolistic control of the media of communication in an era of social networks, they create and apply modern techniques of manipulation as well as politically motivated judicial processes, nearly always focused on persecuting, imprisoning, and destroying the image of progressive political and social leaders of the Left.” In the same vein, in a dialogue with forty intellectuals, friends of Cuba, he reviewed the complex times in which we live, mentioning coups d’état, political assassinations, the imposition of corrupt and repressive neoliberal dictatorships, while the great media of communication monopolize and manipulate information. Before these challenges, he maintained, it is “necessary to produce ideas that break new ground, that return spirituality and noble ideas to the human being. We all ought to think, to seed ideas and values, showing the path to the peoples toward justice, truth, unity, and honesty.”

In the meeting with intellectuals, the Cuban President raised an interesting question with respect to a Latin American environment today characterized by mass protests against neoliberal and repressive governments. He asked, how do we read the most recent demonstrations? Who are they, and where are their leaders? Why do they generate such elevated expectations, and once the noise of the pot banging stops, the status quo returns? Analysis is needed, as well as commitment by intellectuals with just causes.

Díaz-Canel also met with some 500 Cubans resident in Argentina, to whom he expressed warm and fraternal words. “I invite all to join with renewed energy in the present stage of the defense of Cuba. We wait for you [for the conference on emigration] in Havana, remembering that we are all of the nation, and that we are calling all to think of Cuba, to think as the country, and also to feel, with us, that “we are Cuba, we are continuity.”

(2) Cuba celebrates Day of Human Rights

The international community commemorates December 10 as the Day of Human Rights. The lead article in the Cuban daily newspaper Granma, written by Enrique Moreno, was dedicated to the theme.

The article observes that the world today confronts great challenges with respect to human rights, such as increasing inequality and poverty; the proliferation of hate, xenophobia, and intolerance toward minorities; and the politization, selectivity, and manipulation in the treatment of human rights. It notes that the 2019 Cuban Constitution recognizes and guarantees human rights as universal, inalienable, essential, and interdependent.

Moreno explains the participation of Cuba in the Universal Periodic Exam of the Council of Human Rights, through which Cuba has been ratified as having complied with 44 of the 61 indicators of human rights, placing the island nation in the group of UN member states with the greatest number of human rights ratifications.

In a panel on human rights broadcasted by Radio Havana Cuba on December 10, Alejandro González of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations observed that most rights are understood as exercised by individuals, such as the right of speech; but you cannot truly practice the right to speech if you do not have education. This is why Cuba maintains that rights are interrelated, and that all human rights should be promoted equally.

Moreover, González noted, Cuba maintains that human rights should not be used for political purposes. Previously, the United Nations used human rights politically, in that it was used against developing countries to justify taking action against selected states, but there was no evaluation of the human rights conduct of the developed countries. Since the formation of the UN Council of Human

Rights, the evaluation of human rights has been much more objective. Its Universal Periodic Exam provides states with an opportunity to demonstrate their practices of respect for human rights and to progress in areas where they need to improve.

The United States, however, is not a member of the UN Council of Human Rights. It continually manipulates the issue of human rights in order to justify sanctions and other measures against states that insist upon their sovereignty and refuse to be subservient to U.S. imperialist objectives.

(3) The need for multidimensional “strategic communication”

On December 11, the Cuban evening news program, La Mesa Redonda, was dedicated to the theme of Communication, Information, Policy, and Society.

Dr. Sandra Massoni, Professor at the National University of Rosario, Argentina, maintains that communication is more than the dissemination of information; communication is multi-dimensional, and one of the dimensions is the emotional. When the people take to protest in the streets, for example, which is occurring at the current time in many Latin American countries, in Chile, for example, it is because the citizens feel ill-at-ease. In such moments, communication in the digital networks shatters traditional communication, which is unidimensional communication conceived only in terms of the message. This opens up other forms of communication in which we have to begin to work. We have to develop another form of communication, “strategic communication,” in relation to public policies.

It is a question of convoking the people to an authentic citizenship in multiple dimensions, including the emotional. Effective communication proceeds from the analysis, connecting the analysis to sentiments. We intellectuals know much, but we often do not know how to connect our analysis to social actors who are acting with respect to any one of a number of themes related to public policy, such as health. It is a question of a multidimensional “strategic communication.”

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