

# *This week in Cuba December 15 to 21, 2019*

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By Charles McKelvey

## (1) Cuban National Assembly meets in Commissions

On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday of this week (December 17-19), the deputies of the National Assembly of Popular Power met in commissions (or legislative committees). The commissions of the National Assembly include: Economic Affairs; Health and Sport; Education, Culture, Science, Technology, and Environment; Food Agriculture; Youth, Childhood, and the Equal Rights of Women; Services (Tourism, Communications, Domestic Commerce, and Transportation); and Industry, Constructions, and Energy. In the meetings of the Commissions, reports are presented by relevant government ministries and representatives of mass organizations and other organizations of civil society, and deputies expressed their opinions. Selections of the discussions are broadcast on Cuban television. The discussions are characterized by maturity and sincere efforts to explain and to understand.

The National Assembly of People's Power is the highest authority in Cuba. It is the legislative branch of the Cuban state, and it has the authority to designate the executive and legislative branches of the government.

The deputies of the National Assembly of People's Power are elected by the delegates of the 169 municipal assemblies of the nation, who cast yes or no votes to candidates presented by mass organizations of workers, farmers, students, women, and neighborhoods. The delegates of the municipal assembly, in turn, are elected by the people in more than twelve thousand voting districts across the nation, in elections in which the voters choose one of two or three candidates who have been nominated in a series of neighborhood nomination assemblies. The process does not have electoral parties, electoral campaigns, or campaign financing. In the small voting districts of 1000 to 1500 voters, one-page biographies of each of the candidates are posted side-by-side in public places.

The National Assembly ordinarily meets two to four times a year for a period of a few days. Most of the deputies are not professional politicians, and they maintain their regular employment while they serve as deputies. The professional politicians among the deputies are those that have extensive duties and responsibilities within the legislative process. These professional politicians take a leave of absence from their regular employment, receiving an equivalent salary.

The Cuban Constitution of 2019, approved in referendum on February 24 following an extensive popular consultation, mandates the enactment of complementary laws within a period of one or two years. Several complementary laws are being developed, which were debated in the commissions. Among them is the law for the Organization and Functioning of the National Assembly of Popular Power and the Council of State, which among other changes, reorganizes the commission and expands their number from seven to eleven.

On Saturday, December 21, the National Assembly of People's Power designated Manuel Marrero Cruz as Prime Minister of Cuba, in accordance with the proposal of President Miguel Díaz-Canel. Marrero is 56 years old and is the current Minister of Tourism, a position in which he has served for 15 years. The designation of the Prime Minister by the National Assembly follows the provisions of the recently approved Constitution, which reestablished the position of Prime Minister with the intention of improving the effectiveness of the state in responding to the needs of the people.

## (2) XI Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party

Raúl Castro, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, chaired the XI Plenary Session of the Central Committee, held on Thursday, December 19. President Miguel Díaz-Canel attended the meeting in his capacity as member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Party. During the meeting, the holding of the VIII Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba from April 16 to April 19, 2021 was announced. The members of the committee also heard a report on the progress during the past year in implementing of the Guidelines of the Social and Economic Policy of the Party and the Revolution. The Guidelines, developed by the Party on the basis of an extensive popular consultation, were presented to the National Assembly of People's Power and were approved by the National Assembly in 2012.

The Communist Party of Cuba is a vanguard political party. As such, it does not have governmental authority. The constitutions of 1976 and 2019 establish the National Assembly of Peoples' Power has the highest authority in the nation, responsible for enacting legislation and electing and designating the members of the executive and judicial branches of government. At the same time, the constitutions establish the Communist Party of Cuba as the leading and orienting force of the society. Although the Party educates and guides, it does not decide; the delegates and deputies of the assemblies, elected directly and indirectly by the people, decide. Illustrating this, the Party submitted the Guidelines to the National Assembly of People's Power. The members of the Party are selected by the Party itself,

following an evaluation that includes interviews with co-workers and co-members of mass organizations. The Party tries to select the most dedicated and committed revolutionaries.

### (3) Cuba and Ghana celebrate 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations

On Wednesday of this past week, Cuba and Ghana celebrated the 60 years of diplomatic relations, which were established on December 23, 1959. A ceremony commemorating the occasion was held at the Latin American School of Medicine, a Cuban educational institution dedicated to the formation of health professionals from other countries, especially the countries of the Third World. This year, 200 young people from Ghana are studying medicine in Cuba. Since the triumph of the Revolution, 1,351 Ghanaians have received degrees in Cuba.

Ghana was the first Sub-Saharan African nation to establish diplomatic relations. At that time, its chief of state was Kwame Nkrumah, who, along with Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, was a leading force in the African nationalism of the era. Nkrumah was a leading advocate of African unity, and he was one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1961, along with Tito, Nasser, and Nehru. An historic meeting between Fidel and Nkrumah took place in the famous Theresa Hotel in the black community of Harlem in New York City on September 27, 1960.

Nkrumah was an intellectual as well as an internationally known leader. One of his books, *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (published by International Publishers, New York, in 1966) describes the structures through which the ex-colonial powers held the newly independent nations in an "economic stranglehold," thus facilitating not independence but a new stage of colonialism. The book was instrumental in disseminating the concept of neocolonialism throughout the world in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

### (4) Cuba commemorates five years since the return of the remaining Cuban five

Cuba commemorated this past Tuesday the fifth anniversary of the return to Cuba of Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, and Gerardo Hernandez, the three remaining members of the "Cuban Five." René González and Fernando González had previously been released and had returned to Cuba. Arrested in 1998, the five had been Cuban agents who infiltrated terrorist groups in Miami for the purpose of obtaining information concerning their activities, so that they would be able to inform the Cuban government concerning plans for terrorist attacks against the island. When the Cuban government informed U.S. authorities of the activities of these terrorist groups in U.S. territory, the U.S. government, instead of arresting the terrorists, arrested the Cuban agents. The trial of the Cuban Five in Miami, conducted in an atmosphere of media hysteria, violated the most fundamental principles of the U.S. system of justice. When the Five conducted themselves with uncommon courage and dignity in the context of a very difficult situation, Fidel declared them to be national heroes, and their release subsequently became an international cause célèbre.

The U.S. sponsoring of terrorism, understood as the indiscriminate killing of civilians for the purpose of furthering a political cause, occurred in two waves with respect to Cuba. The first wave in the 1960s was carried out in the mountainous regions of Cuba, with the intention of undermining support for the agrarian reform and literacy programs of the Revolution. The second wave was in the 1990s, directed against tourist facilities, with the intention of disrupting an industry that was central to the Cuban plans of economic recovery from the Special Period. The people of the United States have very limited awareness of the state-sponsored terrorism emanating from the United States directed toward Cuba.



**Radio Habana Cuba**