

A Reporter's Notebook on Hurricane Irma



Radio Havana Cuba's Alberto D. Perez gives us a play-by-play of how Hurricane Irma affected his weekend.

FROM THE NOTEBOOK OF ALBERTO D. PEREZ...

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

I GOT UP VERY EARLY THIS MORNING, WENT OUT INTO MY TENTH FLOOR BALCONY, AND I COULD SEE, FOUR BLOCKS TO THE NORTH, A GIANT WALL OF SEA WATER RUSHING INTO THE CITY, ADVANCING ON PASEO AVENUE, A TREE LINED FOUR LANE AVENUE WITH A BEAUTIFUL CENTRAL WALKAWAY DOTTED WITH BENCHES PROTECTED FROM THE TROPICAL SUN BY HUGE TREES THAT PROVIDE SHADE TO THE VISITORS AND SHELTER TP PÀRROTS, PIDGEON AND SPARROW THAT CALL THOSE TREES HOME.

THE RUSHING SEA WATER ADVANCED SIX BLOCKS UP, UP TO LINEA AVENUE, A SIX LANE THROUGHFARE THAT RUNS FROM EAST TO WEST.

PASEO, THE AVENUE WHERE I LIVE, WAS FULLY FLOODED, INCLUDING THE HUGE BASEMENT OF MY APARTMENT BUILDING. I HAD NO ELECTRICITY, NO PHONES AND NO RUNNING WATER. I FED MY THREE CATS AND DECIDED TO WALK DOWN TO RADIO HAVANA. I HAD TO WALK TWO AND A HALF MILES AVOIDING FALLEN TREES, POWER LINES AND FLOTSAM OF THE MOST DIVERSE KIND.

I FINALLY ARRIVED IN RADIO HAVANA. FORTUNATELY, THE EMERGENCY POWER UNIT WAS WORKING AND THE ELEVATOR PROMPTLY TOOK MY TO THE SIXTH FLOOR. I WENT TO THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S OFFICE, TO TELL HER OF MY ARRIVAL, AND SHE GREETED ME WITH A CUP OF FRESHLY BREWED STEAMING COFFEE. I WILL NEVER THANK HER ENOUGH FOR THAT RECEPTION, WORTHY OF A CROWN PRINCE.

RIGHT NOW, IT IS NOT RAINING. BUT THE SITUATION ON THE MALECON, HAVANA'S BEAUTIFUL SEA SHORE BOULEVARD, IS STILL COMPLICATED BECAUSE THE WAVES ARE STILL BREAKING OVER THE SEA WALL AND FLOODING THE SEA SHORE BOULEVARD AND ADJOINING INHABITED AREAS.

THOUSANDS HAVE BEEN EVACUATED. FORTUNATELY, THE HURRICANE HAS MADE ITS EXPECTED TURN NORTHWARDS. BUT ITS TAIL IS STILL TRYING TO WAG CUBA.

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