

This week in Cuba (September 22-28, 2019)



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September 22 to September 28, 2019

By Charles McKelvey

(1) The Cuban people continue its resistance

During this past week, the Cuban people continued to support the measures announced by the government on September 11. The measures are adjustments to the fuel shortage, resulting from U.S. efforts to stop the delivery of fuel to the island. The Cuban Government reported that for the second consecutive week, there have been significant reductions of energy consumption in places of work and homes. And there continues to be a spirit of solidarity among the people, as those with vehicles help in transportation, alleviating somewhat the lines at the bus stops, resulting from the reduction of city bus routes. Some owners of vehicles displayed an individualistic attitude, not helping others or charging for transportation, an anti-social form of conduct criticized by the majority and reported and denounced in the press.

As in the previous week, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and other members of the Cuban government visited various provinces in order to evaluate the situation. The government believes that many of the energy-saving measures that have been adopted should be made permanent, to prepare for the possibility of further shortages in the future, inasmuch as the United States will continue its aggressions. The government anticipates that the situation will soon return to normal, as oil tankers are scheduled to arrive, but this return to normality will include preservation of some of the energy-saving measures.

(2) Bruno Rodríguez addresses the Non-Aligned Movement

Cuban Minister for Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodríguez addressed a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, which was held in conjunction with the meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. The minister expressed solidarity with Venezuela, rejecting the non-conventional war, the attempted coups d'état, and commercial aggression by the United States against the South American nation. The Minister also rejected U.S. sanctions and efforts to destabilize Nicaragua. He expressed solidarity with Evo Morales and the Plurinational Republic of Bolivia and the Puerto Rican independence movement. He rejected sanctions imposed on the People's Republic of Korea. He called for a just solution for the people of Palestine, supporting the establishment of a Palestinian state with pre-1967 borders and with its capital in East Jerusalem. He rejected the U.S. withdrawal from the international nuclear agreement with Iran, and he denounced sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic of Iran. He expressed Cuba's total condemnation of the U.S. aggressions against Cuba, including the activation of Title III of the Helms-Burton Law.

The Non-Aligned Movement is an organization of governments, founded in 1961 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. The giants of the era were among its founders: Tito, Nehru, Nasser, Sukarno, and Nkrumah. It grew out of a meeting in Bandung, Indonesia, where leaders from twenty-nine newly independent nations of Africa and Asia met to discuss common concerns, generating what came to be known as the "Spirit of Bandung." From 1961 to 1979, the Non-Aligned Movement called for a transformation of the global economic structures that were established by European colonial domination, reducing the colonized to suppliers of cheap raw materials and importers of manufactured products. The culminating moment of the Non-Aligned Movement was in 1974, when the General Assembly of the United Nations passed its declaration for a New International Economic Order. In 1982, the leadership of the Movement was hijacked by accommodationists to the neoliberal project imposed by the imperialist powers, but from 2000 to the present, the Movement has retaken the proposals of its classic period. It presently has 120 member nations, whose governments represent three-fourths of humanity.

(3) Evo Morales addresses UN General Assembly

On September 24, The President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Evo Morales, addressed the 74th Session of General Assembly of the United Nations. He maintained that "the consequences of climate change will condemn millions of persons to poverty, hunger, the lack of water, the loss of their homes, and forced displacement. In defending the rights of "Mother Earth," he declared that "the root of the problem is the model of production and consumerism . . . of capitalism." He pointed out the gains that Bolivia has had in recent years, as a result of a communitarian social economic model that recognizes the basic services of water, electricity, and telecommunications as human rights. This has occurred, he said, "thanks to the consciousness of the people, of the social movements, of the indigenous people, peasants, workers, professionals, of men and women of the countryside and the cities."

An indigenous farmer from a poor town in the high plains of Bolivia, Evo Morales emerged to political prominence in the 1990s, as the principal leader of the Movement toward Socialism, a federation of social movement organizations and labor unions; and at a time in which there were mass mobilizations against the negative consequences for the people of the neoliberal project. He was elected President of Bolivia in 2005, and in accordance with a campaign promise, he convoked a Constitutional Assembly, which led to

a new Constitution, approved by popular referendum with 61% of the vote on January 25, 2009. He has been elected and re-elected President of Bolivia under the new constitution. Along with Hugo Chávez of Venezuela and Rafael Correa of Ecuador, he was one of the principal leaders in the forging of a new political reality in Latin American and Caribbean in the period 1998 to 2016.

(4) Cuba commemorates 140th anniversary of the death of José Antonio Saco

On September 26, Cuba commemorated the 140th anniversary of the death of José Antonio Saco, Cuban thinker, sociologist, and journalist who was born in the eastern city of Bayamo in 1797. An opponent of slavery as well as the annexation of Cuba by the United States, he was one of a number of outstanding intellectuals who contributed to the formation of Cuban national consciousness during the nineteenth century, which was a precursor to the War of Independence launch on October 10, 1868.

The Cuban remembrance of Saco today reflects the Cuban view that the Cuban Revolution is a continuous process, passing through different stages, from 1868 to the present. The continuity of the revolution was a teaching of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, since 1959.

(5) Cuba commemorates 59th anniversary of the founding of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution

On September 28, 1960, the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) was founded by Fidel Castro. At a mass assembly, in which the people welcomed Fidel back to Cuba following his historic address to the General Assembly of the United Nations, and in the context of a campaign of terrorist violence directed by the United States, Fidel announced that “We are going to form a system of collective revolutionary vigilance;” each block and neighborhood, in which the people, who knows who lives in every block, will conduct neighborhood watches. As it evolved over the years, CDR attained high levels of popular participation, carrying out various community service activities. At the present time, the organization’s principal activities are support for the blood donation and fumigation programs of the Ministry of Public Health, and participating in the organization of elections.

In commemoration of the anniversary, the evening hour-long news program, The Round Table, presented a panel with four representatives of CDR. They announced that the upcoming year will be dedicated to the strengthening of the local CDRs, culminating in a commemoration of the sixteenth anniversary of September 28, 2020. The yearlong activities will include a political-ideological program, explaining to the people the U.S. aggressions against Cuba; and it will emphasize the participation of youth.

Like the mass organizations of workers, farmers, students, and women, CDR has internal democratic structures, with direct elections at the base, and indirect elections to higher levels of authority. The mass organizations play a central role in the election of delegates to the municipal and national assemblies, and in the legislative committees formed within the National Assembly of Popular Power.

(6) Ignacio Ramonet visits Cuba

The well-known Spanish intellectual Ignacio Ramonet appeared on the Cuban nightly news program The Roundtable on Tuesday, September 24, where he was interviewed for an hour by the program’s director, Randy Alonso.

Ramonet recently visited Lula da Silva in prison. He reported that Lula’s mind is sharp, in spite of limited contact with other persons. Lula is convinced that he will be exonerated, because he knows that he is innocent, and that his imprisonment is politically motivated. Ramonet declared that the liberation of Lula is a cause that all of humanity ought to embrace.

Ramonet also recently visited Venezuela and its President Nicolas Maduro. He reports that the U.S.-backed self-proclaimed president Juan Guaidó is completely discredited, as a result of various factors,

including recent revelations of his contacts with known criminal elements. He observed that the recent agreements of the Venezuelan government with responsible elements of the opposition has divided them from the extremist factions. He declared Maduro to be an exceptional leader, who continues to enjoy the loyalty of the major actors of the Bolivarian revolutionary process, in spite of the effects on Venezuelan economic conditions caused by the economic aggressions of the United States.

With respect to Latin America, Ramonet observed that he never considered, as have some intellectuals, that the resurgence of the Latin American Right during the last four years has meant the end of a “progressive cycle.” He noted that Mauricio Macri of Argentina has been the best hope of the Right, inasmuch as he came to power through legitimate elections, with a discourse of change. But Macri has demonstrated that the Right is not able to formulate a post-post-neoliberal project that could attain popular support. Macri simply returned to the discredited neoliberal policies of the past, a turn that he did not announce in his electoral campaign. Economic problems and popular rejection have been the result, as the first round of the presidential elections have shown. Ramonet maintained that in general, where the progressive forces have lost ground, they have favorable possibilities to recover.

With respect to Europe, Ramonet observed that the European Union is an elite project, which never enjoyed high levels of popular identification. From the beginning, it was characterized by regulations that favored the stronger economies, such as that of Germany. As the global economy entered into increasing crisis, popular rejection of the EU’s neoliberal mandates emerged. At the same time, the escalation of immigration to Europe, stimulated by the war in Syria, among other factors, increased the insecurities of the people, giving rise to the emergence of parties of the Right, and creating a complicated political situation. However, the victory of the socialist/communist alliance in Portugal, and its capacity to develop a viable social project with popular support, demonstrates that political gains are possible, even in the context of the complicated situation in Europe.

Ramonet concluded with the observation that climate change is the most important challenge confronting humanity at the present time.

Ramonet is well-known in Cuba for his extensive interview with Fidel Castro, which has been published in book form as an autobiography. During his visit to Cuba, Ramonet also met with President Miguel Díaz-Canel.

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