

# *This Week in Cuba (November 10-16, 2019)*

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November 10 to November 16, 2019

By Charles McKelvey

(1) Two governments in Bolivia: A legitimate government and a de facto government

Cuba was moved by the coup d'état in Bolivia, which was culminated on Sunday, November 10. During the week, many local organizations organized acts for the denunciation of the U.S. backed violent, fascist coup, and to express support for President Evo Morales and solidarity with the Movement toward Socialism and the people of Bolivia.

On November 15, the Cuban media began to refer to Evo Morales as the legitimate president and the parliament of the majority deputies and senators as the legitimate parliament, distinguishing them from the de facto government and the self-proclaimed interim president. This distinction emerged as a result of the unfolding events of the ongoing coup.

As the coup unfolded on Sunday and Monday, opposition actors in the coup declared that the event was not a coup d'état, that the president and vice-president of Bolivia had resigned, as had the presidents of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies. The coup orchestrators maintained that a government of transition would be formed within the constitutional order defined by the Constitution of 2009. We should note that the four high government officials who had resigned were all members of the Movement toward Socialism (MAS), a coalition of indigenous and labor organizations led by Evo Morales. A joint session of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies assembly was called for Monday by the Vice-President of the Senate, Senator Jeanine Añez, a member of an opposition party. However, the legislators of MAS were unable to attend the session, because many had been victimized by violence and abuse and had been continually threatened, such that they were not able to travel to the capitol building with physical security. Inasmuch as MAS has a two-thirds majority of both houses, the opposition legislators at the parliamentary session did not have sufficient numbers to constitute a quorum. In accordance with constitutional requirements, the legislators closed the session for the lack of a quorum.

However, Senator Jeanine Añez, the opposition vice-president of the Senate, proceeded to read the relevant articles of the constitution, to the effect that if the President and Vice President of the nation and the presidents of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies have resigned, the next in line for the presidency is the Vice-President of the Senate. On this foundation, she declared that she was assuming the position of interim president of the nation. She subsequently declared that new elections would be held, thus facilitating a transition to a new government in accordance with the requirements of the constitution.

At the same time, the elected President of the Senate, Adriana Salvatierra, affiliated with MAS, reported that she had not resigned. She stated that she had arrived at the capitol building to call the session of the National Assembly to order, but she was not permitted to enter, and she was physically attacked, sustaining minor injuries. She declared to the press that a session of the parliament had not been held. She subsequently called a session, and sufficient MAS senators and deputies were able to arrive and to have a quorum for both legislative sessions, in spite of the presence of only one opposition deputy. The Senate elected Senator Monica Eva Copa of MAS to the position of President of the Senate; the Chamber of Deputies elected Sergio Choque of MAS as its president. The departing President of the Senate was praised for her courage in calling the sessions. The MAS majority national assembly declares itself to be the constitutional legislative assembly, and not the assembly of the minority opposition parties, which cancelled its session for a lack of a quorum. The legitimate national assembly claims that its session electing its officer with a quorum returns the legislative branch to normalcy. From exile in Mexico City, Evo Morales congratulated the national assembly in taking this important step. The presidents of the two chambers have declared that the two chambers do not recognize the self-proclaimed interim president, because she declared herself president without the constitutional authority to do so.

The legitimate national assembly thus far has taken no action with respect to the resignations of President Evo Morales and Vice-President Alvaro García. Public and private declarations to the press by Senators and Deputies imply two alternative scenarios. One scenario involves a situation in which no action is taken with respect to the resignations of the President and Vice-President, which implies that, after a determined period of time, the resignations are null and void, meaning that they continue to hold the positions of president and vice-president. The second scenario involves the organization of new elections, with full transparency and with full participation, with no person or party excluded, and with Evo returning from exile to participate in the discussion of the parameters of the elections. This latter scenario would be consistent with Evo's acceptance of the OAS politically motivated recommendation to hold new elections shortly before his resignation; and it would be consistent with the resignation itself. Both scenarios would mean the return to Bolivia from exile in Mexico of the legitimate and democratically elected president and vice-president, and their full and free participation in the political process.

At the same time, MAS leaders suspect that the de facto government intends to criminalize political participation by MAS leaders and to organize elections that exclude the key members of MAS at the local, departmental, and national levels. This option could only be sustained through repression of the people by the military coupled with active diplomatic, economic, and military support of the United States.

Non-violent mass mobilizations have been occurring in support of Evo Morales and in opposition to the coup d'état and the self-declared interim president. In Cochabamba, there was violent repression of peaceful demonstrators, and five persons were killed during the day. Since the coup began, eighteen people have been killed by fascist gangs and the police, according to Telesur on Saturday morning, November 16, but there are conflicting reports concerning the number of people killed. In addition, journalists and MAS leaders and officials are being detained by the police, often treated in a humiliating form.

Jeanine Añez, de facto interim president, declared in a press conference that the government is coordinating its activities with the police and the armed forces, in light of the present situation in the country. She also implied that foreign elements in the country are instigating the protests.

The Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs protested the fact that Cuban medical collaborators, including the head of the Cuban medical mission, have been detained. All have now been released. The Cuban ministry also protested the irresponsible anti-Cuban defamations, which are instigations to violence. Under the circumstances, it has been decided that all Cuban collaborators in Bolivia will return to Cuba.

## (2) Cuban journalists explain actors in the coup d'état in Bolivia

On the November 11 evening news television program La Mesa Redonda, three Cuban journalists (Bárbara Bétancourt, Lázaro Barredo, and Jorge Legañoa) explained the key actors in the coup d'état in Bolivia. They identified two external actors, the United States and the Organization of American States. And four internal actors: Carlos Mesa, ex-president, opposition candidate, and believer in neoliberalism; Luis Fernando Camacho, representative of an oligarchical family in the separatist region of Santa Cruz; the police; and the armed forces. The three journalists are analysts of Latin American affairs, and they are regular guests on the program, which is broadcast every weekday evening at 7:00 pm and 11:00 pm, with a repeat broadcast the following morning at 11:00.

On Wednesday, November 13, a "fourth paw" in the coup was identified in an article by Elson Concepción Pérez in Granma, which is the principal daily newspaper in Cuba, published by the Cuban Communist Party. In addition to the United States, the Organization of American States, and the violent opposition, the fourth paw is the great media of communication, "which seed matrices of opinion framed by the distortion and the lies." The spin of the media is that Evo resigned due to popular pressure as a result of OAS denunciations of electoral fraud. The article quotes CNN, which broadcast declarations by right-wing Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro, who takes such a point of view.

The distortion is through omission. It likely is true that Bolsonaro said more or less what CNN said he said. But CNN listeners and Website readers have not been informed of the historic role of the OAS as an instrument of U.S. imperialist policy; or the recent aggressive actions of the OAS against progressive governments in Latin America, which does not lend credence to any claim that the OAS conclusion were based on objective review; or the denunciations of the OAS conclusions as not supported by the information in the OAS report itself; or the violence by police and fascist gangs against indigenous persons and Morales supporters, documented with video evidence by Telesur; or the explanation of Evo at the time of his resignation, broadcast in full by Telesur, that he could not stop the police and fascist violence against the people except by resigning. As with so many issues with respect to Latin America and the Third World, the people of the United States have to form opinions on important issues without being informed of fundamental facts, with the result that the people of the United States are confused and divided in the face of so many events which it does not have a sufficiently informed perspective to enable

understanding.

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