

This week in Cuba / November 17 to 23, 2019



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By Charles McKelvey

(1) Cuban medical brigades return from Bolivia and Ecuador

During the course of the week, more than 700 Cuban professionals returned to Cuba following the cancelation of health cooperation agreements by Ecuador and an agreement of termination with the de facto government of Bolivia, arising from the unsafe environment resulting from the violent coup d'état against the democratically elected president, Evo Morales.

In no sense do they return with heads bowed. With full awareness that Cuba has been targeted for its dignified defense of its sovereignty and its exemplary internationalism, and with the satisfaction that they have fulfilled their duty in missions abroad, the members of the medical brigades return home in a celebratory mood, enthusiastically waving Cuban flags, and warmly welcomed by representatives of the government. "They return victorious," declared Granma, the daily newspaper published by the Communist Party.

In the restoration project of the Right unfolding in Latin American during the last five years, the Right has been making evident its unsustainability. It has recaptured power through illegitimate, illegal, and unethical means, and once in power, it has returned to sad patterns of the Latin American past: anti-popular neoliberal economic measures and violence. Such comportment likely will expand and deepen the popular rejection of the Right. The extreme measure of expelling Cuban internationalists, undertaken in support of the U.S. ideological campaign against the exemplary nation, conforms with the tendency toward politically unintelligent anti-popular subservience to imperialism, and it can only provoke rejection by the people. Anyone with even indirect contact with the Cuban missions appreciates and values the services provided and finds the accusations made against the missions by the U.S. government and the Latin American Right to be lacking in credibility.

(2) Cuba responds to U.S. allegation concerning arrest of “human rights advocate”

In the debate at the annual vote earlier this month on the Cuban resolution at the UN General Assembly on “the need to end the economic, commercial, and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba,” the US ambassador to the United Nations, Kelly Craft, declared, “Just this past October, human rights defender José Ferrer and other advocates were arrested on fabricated charges. Mr. Ferrer has not been seen since.”

In the November 20 issue of Cuban daily Granma, an article provides facts relevant to the case of José Daniel Ferrer. The article explains that the U.S. Embassy in Cuba, under the direction of the chief of that diplomatic mission and its chargé d'affaires, has been involved in recent months in recruiting and paying Cuban citizens to promote confusion, division, and violence among the Cuban people. One of these salaried agents was José Daniel Ferrer. Ferrer was detained on October 1 in response to a denunciation made by a Cuban citizen, who accused Ferrer and three other individuals of kidnapping him, detaining him an entire night, and giving him a severe beating, leaving him in conditions that required his hospitalization. Ferrer is being detained pending his trial. He has received visits from his wife and children, in accordance with Cuban norms. Any suggestion of his death, torture, or insufficient nutrition are pure lies, deliberately conceived by the Government of the United States and its Embassy in Havana. He has had medical attention, he engages in regular physical exercises, and in response to his request, he has been attended by a cleric.

Before his involvement in activities in the service of the U.S. government, Ferrer had a prior record of criminal and violent behavior, including physical violence against persons, including women, which did not in any way involve political motives. His violent comportment has increased in recent years.

The article concludes that it is not unusual for the government of the United States to use such persons with criminal antecedents for its subversive political activities against Cuba. It also notes that the recruitment and employment of Cuban citizens for the purpose of the disruption of public order constitutes interference in the internal affairs of Cuba, and as such, it violates established international norms with respect to diplomatic missions.

(3) Bolivian military trained in U.S. infamous School of the Americas

An article by the Cuban journalist Elson Concepción Pérez in the November 21 issue of Granma discusses the role of the Bolivian military in the coup d'état against Evo Morales in Bolivia. The article notes that it would be logical to think that the president of any country would have at his or her disposal intelligence information with respect to the military command, and that if there were evidence of cracks in the military's obligation of service of the constitutional order of the country, the president would have the constitutional authority to make necessary changes.

However, in the case of Bolivia, it is evident that this was not the situation. The military took no action to intervene to protect the constitutional order as the coup unfolded, neither in the first stage of attacks by violent fascist gangs mobilized by the civilian orchestrators of the coup; nor in the second stage when the police joined in the violent attacks against the MAS leadership and indigenous persons. In the decisive moment, rather than coming to the defense of the democratically elected president, the military asked the president to resign. Following the consummation of the coup, the military joined with the police in the violent repression of the mass demonstrations in protest of the coup d'état. As the military repression took place, the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of Bolivia characterized as “vandals” those who were protesting the removal of the democratically elected president from office.

Concepción writes that it does seem that both the police and the military were in on the coup from the beginning. And he notes that a significant fact has been revealed recently in the Bolivian newspaper La Razon, namely, that at least 4,289 Bolivian military personnel received training in the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia prior to 2007, when the government of Evo Morales eliminated the sending of Bolivians to the School, which has educated the high command of the armed forces of various Latin American countries. The School of the Americas is recognized for having educated notorious military dictators, including Banzer of Bolivia, Pinochet of Chile, Stroessner of Paraguay, among others. Williams Kaliman, the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of Bolivia, is among the illustrious graduates of the School of the Americas.

The critical involvement of the military in the coup d'état in Bolivia points to the need for any revolutionary process to in some way manage with political intelligence the question of the military. In the cases of China, Vietnam, Cuba, and Nicaragua, the revolution took political power through an armed struggle, and with the triumph of the revolution, the armed forces of the previous regime were in disarray, while the revolution had behind it a revolutionary army that had been formed during the course of revolutionary struggle. In the case of Venezuela, although Hugo Chávez had arrived to power through electoral means, he had been a former military officer who had worked for twenty years in developing a progressive wing of the armed forces, which he was able to tap when he came to power. When a revolution comes to power on the base of social movements, it has to continually work on developing mutually beneficial relations between the revolution and the armed forces. A revolution cannot stand in the long run without the support of the military for the new constitutional order developed by the revolution in defense of the nation and the people.

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