

This week in Cuba January 5 to January 12, 2020



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By Charles McKelvey

In today's "This week in Cuba," we review, first, the Cuban perspective on the possible USA-Iran war; secondly, the CELAC Meeting in Mexico; and thirdly, the arrival of the Freedom Caravan in Havana.

(1) Cuban take on the possible USA-Iran war

Everyday this past week the Cuban daily newspaper Granma had reports and editorial commentaries concerning the possibility of a war between the United States and Iran.

On Monday, January 6, the lead story in Granma was an article by Elson Concepción Pérez, reporting that Cuban Minister of Foreign Relations Bruno Rodríguez had strongly condemned the U.S. attack in the area of Bagdad airport on January 3, which was described as a "selective assassination." It also noted

that the foreign ministers of Russia and China also had criticized the attack, and it described the buildup of tensions in the days preceding the attack.

On Tuesday, January 7, another article by Concepción quoted Ismail Ghaani, the new commander of the Quds Force of Iran, who stated, "We promise to continue the road of the martyr Soleimani with the same force; . . . the only compensation for us would be to expel the United States from the region."

Concepción also quoted Zainab Soleimani, the daughter of the assassinated general, who declared that the "millions in Iraq and Iran that participated in the funerals of the martyrs constituted a clear message to the United States." She also stated that Trump's "evil attempts to divide and create differences between the Irani and Iraqi people have failed. The shedding of the blood of the great fighters has provoked a greater strengthening of the bonds and historic relations between two countries, which the hatred of the policy of the United States has caused to grow even more."

The article by Concepción also cites the online publication The Hill and the U.S. news website Axios, which say that the Trump administration tried to persuade high Iraqi officials to not hold the vote in the Iraqi parliament that decided for the expulsion of U.S. military forces from the country. In addition, the article cites the New York Times, which criticized Trump for withdrawing from the Irani nuclear agreement. At the same time, another article in the January 7 Granma quotes House majority leader Nancy Pelosi, who declared that "the disproportionate and provocative military air attack against high-level Irani military officials puts in danger the members of the U.S. diplomatic services." And it cites the criticism of Democratic presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren, who maintained that Trump's decision to assassinate a high-level Irani military official places the people of the United States and much of the world at risk.

A Granma article on January 8 by Enrique Moreno begins with a quotation by the well-known Latin American intellectual Eduardo Galeano, who expressed some years ago that "wars lie. No war has the honesty to confess, 'I kill in order to rob.' Wars always invoke noble motives: they kill in the name of peace, in the name of God, in the name of civilization, in the name of progress, in the name of democracy. And if there are doubts, if some lie does not attain its objective, the great media of communication are disposed to invent imaginary enemies in order to justify the conversion of the world into a great madhouse and an immense slaughterhouse." Moreno observes that the pretext on this occasion for aggressive and unjustified action was, according to a tweet by Trump, the protection of the personnel of the United States in the region. This pretext, writes Moreno, is like others used in the past to justify war: the explosion of the Maine (the war against Spain and the intervention in Cuba in 1898); the Gulf of Tonkin incident (Vietnam); the struggle against terrorism (Afghanistan); arms of mass destruction (Iraq); the so-called democratization (Libya); and a supposed chemical arms attack (Syria).

Moreno maintains that the source of the hostile U.S. policy toward Iran, and its lies to justify hostile action, is that the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 placed constraints on the political, economic, and military ambitions of the United States in the region. Iran has become a key actor in the Middle East, and it has strong relations with Russia. Recent favorable relations between Iran and Iraq compounded U.S. difficulties. Moreno views the assassination of Qassem Soleimani as a desperate attempt to recuperate lost terrain. At stake in the region are the enormous reserves of petroleum and gas as well as control of geographical points that have great importance for world commerce. Iran is an important center of communication among the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia. And it is an important player in the Chinese project of the New Silk Road.

Moreno also suggests that Trump ordered the assassination to distract attention away from the Senate impeachment trial and toward issues of national security. He cites Eduardo Martínez, a specialist in geopolitics quoted by Russia Today, who maintains that Trump wanted to assure his reelection through the assassination.

An article in Granma on January 9 refers to a report on the Venezuelan television media Telesur,

which noted that the Irani President Hassan Rouhani declared through his twitter account that, if it were not for the war against terrorism conducted by General Qassem Soleimani, the European capitalists would be in grave danger, threatened by the Islamic State.

(2) CELAC Meeting held in Mexico

The Meeting of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) was held in Mexico City on Wednesday, January 8, presided by Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador. It is an event of great importance to Cuba, and Cuban Minister of Foreign Relations Bruno Rodríguez headed the Cuban delegation. The purpose of the CELAC meeting is to restore Latin American and Caribbean unity, which has been fractured as a result of changes in Ecuador, Brazil, and Bolivia, where new governments do not share the principles of CELAC. Mexico, as president pro tempore for one year, formulated a fourteen-point proposal, which was presented by the Secretary of Foreign Relations, Marcelo Ebrard.

The goal is to strengthen agreements among the countries of the region, in spite of their differences. The plan identifies points of cooperation: aerospace, with the intention of launching a satellite in 2020; control of disease; sustainable management of oceanic resources; shared tourist activities; the forming of regional teams related to disasters; the eradication of corruption; and reflections on the governance of CELAC.

CELAC was formed in 2010 by the 33 governments of Latin America and the Caribbean, an expression of the process of Latin American unity and integration, a vision that was proclaimed by Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in 2001. Its culminating moment was the Second Summit held in Havana in 2014, in which the Declaration of Havana affirmed the will of the 33 governments of the region to increase intraregional commerce on a foundation of complementary commercial relations, solidarity, and cooperation.

Twenty-nine of the 33 governments of the region were present at the CELAC Meeting in Mexico. The far-right government of Brazil and the de facto regime of Bolivia did not send delegations, and two countries were not able to participate because of climatic difficulties.

(3) The “Caravan of Freedom” arrives in Havana

The “Caravan of Freedom” continued its commemorative reenactment of celebratory journey of the triumphant Rebel Army, led by Fidel, from January 2 to January 8, 1959. The 2020 commemoration included youths from the Union of Young Communists and veterans of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. They followed the same route as the triumphant Rebel Army of 1959, passing through the provinces of the nation and arriving on January 8 in Havana to the final stop, the educational complex of Liberty City, which in 1959 was a military camp.

They commemorated that remarkable, celebratory day of January 8, 1959, in which Fidel began his speech with a warning that the task ahead will be difficult. He declared, “I believe that this is a decisive moment in our history. The dictatorship has been overthrown. The happiness is immense. However, much remains to be done. We are not deceiving ourselves believing that what lies ahead will be easy. Perhaps what is ahead will be more difficult. To say the truth is the first duty of all revolutionaries. To mislead the people, to awaken false hopes, always brings the worst consequences.”

And he finished his address with a prediction. He declared that this huge popular gathering of that day, a mass of people of kilometers, will never be seen again, except on one occasion, on the day that he dies, because, he promised, “We never will defraud our people.” It was prediction that was fulfilled in the enormous popular tribute from November 26 to December 4, following his death on November 25, 2016. Many carried signs, “Promise delivered.”

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