

This week in Cuba (October 20-26, 2019)



(1) Cuban President seeks to develop mutual beneficial relations

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel is traveling to four countries with which Cuba seeks to deepen mutually beneficial economic, scientific, and cultural relations: Ireland, Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Russia.

The Cuban head of state arrived in Ireland on Sunday, October 20. Ireland has an economic and political history similar to that of Cuba. Ireland was conquered by England during the sixteenth century, and a dominant class of English and Scotch landholders was installed. As England proceeded to conquer other lands, Ireland, or more precisely, Irish peasants on English- and Scottish-owned plantations, were assigned the role of providing cheap potatoes for Britain's far-flung empire. Ireland was converted into a monocultural agricultural export economy, with limited industrial development.

The Irish nationalist struggle culminated in the establishment of the Irish Free State on December 6, 1921. However, the independence agreement included the partition of the island, separating "Northern Ireland," which included the principal industrial city of Belfast. Thus, independence for Ireland could not mean true sovereignty, because without its principal industrial and commercial center, independent Ireland was placed in a position of complete economic dependency on Britain.

Ireland and Cuba, therefore, have similar stories. Both were colonized by European powers in the sixteenth century, and both were converted into the suppliers of agricultural products, on a foundation of cheap labor, for the expanding world-economy. Both forged nationalist movements that attained independence, but not true sovereignty, as a result of maneuvers by the colonial and imperialist powers.

Cuba and Ireland have had ties for twenty years. At present, their economic ties are limited. But as a result of their similar histories and situations, and their current condition of being threatened by global conditions of imperialist aggressions, political instabilities in the powerful nations, and global conflicts, both nations have a common interest in expanding mutually beneficial economic relations.

On his first day in Ireland, Díaz-Canel visited sites of historic and cultural significance, including the Trinity College Library, which has one of the few remaining originals of the Proclamation of Independence of Ireland. The Cuban President wrote in the visitor's book of Saint Patrick's Cathedral that "our people's are distinguished by their patriotism and their yearning for independence."

On Monday, following his meeting with Irish President Michael Higgins and Prime Minister Leo Varadkar, the Cuban President noted that at present the economic exchanges between the two countries are limited, but there is now discussion of amplifying them to include agriculture, sources of renewable energy, biotechnology, education, culture, and sport.

On Tuesday, Díaz-Canel and the Cuban delegation arrived in Belarus, often referred to as White Russia. It is one of the European nations closest to Cuba with respect to political and ideological themes. It had been under the dominion of the Russian Empire, and after the fall of the Empire in the 1917 Russian Revolution, it declared itself the Belarusian People's Republic. It was a founding constituent republic of the Soviet Union, when it changed its name to the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic declared independence on July 27, 1990, and on August 25, 1991 the name of the country was changed to the Republic of Belarus. Alexander Lukashenko was elected president in 1994 has been reelected in 2001, 2006, 2010, and 2015. Belarus has strong relations with Russian, China, and Syria.

Belarus is a politically stable country with favorable social indicators, including an infant mortality rate of 2.5% and an average life expectancy for 74.3 years.

Upon arrival, the Cuban President visited Great Rock Industrial Park, which has been developed through the cooperation of China and Belarus. Established in 2015, it has fifteen companies that are fully operating, with announced investments from 55 countries, including China, Belarus, Germany, and Switzerland. Up to now, investments are in the fabrication of Minsk truck motors, condensers for the electric buses of Belarus, and large construction cranes. The Chinese and Belarusian managers of the Park welcomed Cuban enterprises, in order that they would be able to establish themselves in the Park, above all those enterprises with ties to biotechnology. Díaz-Canel asserted that the visit to the Industrial Park was useful, in order to evaluate which high-technology Cuban companies would be able to establish themselves in the Park. At the same time, the Cuban President indicated that Chinese and Belarusian companies would be able to establish themselves in the Mariel Special Zone for Development in Cuba.

On Wednesday, the Cuban and Belarusian delegations signed agreements in education, in scientific-technological cooperation and innovation, and between Cuban and Belarusian news agencies. And both presidents emitted a joint declaration synthesizing the results of the encounter and committing to the further development of political, commercial, economic, industrial, agricultural, educational, and scientific-technical ties.

On Thursday, Díaz-Canel and the Cuban delegation arrived in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan, in order to participate in the Eighteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic declared in its independence in May, 1918, thus becoming the first modern parliamentary republic in the

Muslim world. The Republic was the first nation in the Muslim world to extend suffrage to women. On April 28, 1920, the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic was incorporated in the Unions of Soviet Socialist Republics, or the Soviet Union.

Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Heydar Aliyev, considered the father of the nation, was President of the Azerbaijan Republic from 1993 to 2001. Aliyev previously had been a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Vice-President of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. He was succeeded as president of the Republic by his son, Ilham Aliyev, who received Díaz-Canel upon his arrival in Baku.

(2) Cuban president attends Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement

Díaz-Canel arrived in Baku in order to participate in the Eighteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. The Non-Aligned Movement is based on principles that were declared Bandung, Indonesia, where representatives of twenty-nine newly independent Asian and African nations met in 1955. The Bandung conference declared the importance of Third World unity in opposition to European colonialism and Western imperialism. It advocated economic cooperation rather than exploitation as the base of international relations. It sought to break the economic relation imposed during colonialism, in which the Third World nations export raw materials and import manufactured goods, and accordingly, it called for the diversification of the economies of the formerly colonized nations and the development of their national industries.

The Non-Aligned Movement was established as an organization of governments in 1961 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. Representatives of twenty-three governments of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe established the Non-Aligned Movement. The organization affirmed its commitment to the principles of Bandung.

In 1974, the Non-Aligned Movement formulated a document on a New International Economic Order, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The document affirmed the principles of the right of self-determination of nations and the sovereignty of nations over their natural resources. It advocated a number of strategies for the promotion of the economic development of the Third World.

The fundamental historic principles of the Non-Aligned Movement were affirmed by Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel in his address to the Eighteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Baku, Azerbaijan. He declared that “the present challenges require us to retake the road of the Non-Aligned Movement, which brings together the majority of humanity. Once again, as in 1961, it is crucial that we work together, committed to the foundational principles of Bandung, for peace and for the development of the peoples.” He further asserted, “The nations that, with their blood, sweat, and suffering have paid the highest price for progress, which emerged from exploitation and colonial plundering, who paid with centuries of economic and social backwardness, have the right to ask: Why are military costs increased in an irrational manner, while investments for development and cooperation are reduced?” The Cuban President further stated that we reiterate “our solidarity with all the peoples that struggle, because they recognize their right to self-determination.”

Díaz-Canel observed, “The Third World War is not the next war. It is the war without a starting date nor an estimated date for its end, that beginning years ago bloodied noble and peaceful nations, with the arms of imperial armies, mercenary soldiers, and terrorists, disguised as liberators combating terrorism or defending democracy, freedom, or human rights.” Never before have such lies been perpetuated with “a terrible cost for the immense majority of humanity, to promote the interests of a minority. In the twenty-first century, threats and aggressions of diverse kinds rain on sovereign governments that deny to serve the hegemonic power.”

The Cuban President reiterated that we of the Non-Aligned Movement represent the majority of the nations and of the world’s population. Together we have defeated colonialism and apartheid, and we have

confronted aggressions, interference, and economic blockades. He quoted Fidel, who declared at the Sixth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana in 1979: "The force of our countries united is very powerful. Those meeting here represent the immense majority of the peoples of the world. Let us unite and bring together the growing force of our movement to demand before the United Nations and international fora, to demand economic justice for our people, to demand that the domination over our resources and the robbery of our labor cease! Let us unite to demand our right to development!"

Diaz-Canel concluded, let us unite to say no to interference, yes to sovereignty; no to the control of the world by the powerful, yes to true freedom and the democratization of the United Nations and international relations.

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