

This week in Cuba (September 29- October 6, 2019)



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By Charles McKelvey

(1) Cuba begins to return to normal

With the more fuel now available, the government has reestablished inter-city bus routes that were canceled as a temporary emergency measure. However, the situation has not yet returned to normal, and the people continue to support one another in displays of solidarity with respect to urban transportation.

On Thursday, October 3, the daily newspaper Granma published a message to the people from President Miguel Díaz-Canel, who thanked the people for its impressive response to his invitation “to think as country.” He also thanked the people for the numerous text messages that he has received expressing enthusiasm, citizen responsibility, and commitment. His message concluding by quoting Fidel Castro, who said, “When the country is confronted by the empire in an action without precedent or parallel, when it has

been converted into the first line of defense of America, when the country is what Martí wanted to make it; it is a true privilege to be Cuban.”

Some of the temporary energy-saving measures will be made permanent, in order to prepare the country for possible shortages in the future, as the United States continues its efforts to block the delivery of fuel to the island. These include: Working at home by some workers, making greater use of Internet; the greater use of animals for the transportation of goods and persons in some provinces; greater use of local products in the food industry; and a greater rational organization of the urban bus routes, so that there is greater attention to the daily periods of high and low demand.

(2) Cuba holds political-cultural act in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Republic

On October 1, Cuba held in Havana a political-cultural act in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. The event was retransmitted on television in its entirety in the evening.

During the event, an address was delivered by Salvador Valdés Mesa, member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Cuba, and First Vice President of the Councils of State and Ministers. Valdés Mesa recalled the heroic struggle of the Communist Party of China, founded in 1921, which culminated in a date of special significance in the history of humanity, October 1, 1949, when the founding of a new socialist state, the Chinese People's Republic, was declared by Mao Zedong, whose achievements and contributions to the revolutionary struggle always will be remembered. Since that date, China, with a primarily peasant population at that time, has attained its sovereignty and independence, which has permitted it to construct socialism. As a result, Valdés Mesa affirmed, the China of today is no longer the poor and backward country that it was in 1949. It has today a solid economic base, built on nearly 41 years of reform and opening, with solid policies, a preserved historic memory, and accumulated experiences in the construction of socialism. China today, under the strong leadership of Xi Jinping, enters a decisive stage, in which it intends to duplicate its Gross National Product and its per capita income by the year 2020, becoming by 2049, the one hundredth anniversary of its founding, a modern socialist country. Valdés Mesa declared that “Cuba salutes and highly appreciates the ascent of a China socialist and prosperous.”

The Cuban Vice-President also spoke of the similarities between the Cuban and the Chinese revolutions. “In both China and Cuba, autonomous revolutions arose, born of the arduous struggles for independence and national liberation, confronting superior forces supported by the United States. In both processes, important military exploits irrefutably demonstrated the limits of the power of the empire and its lackeys.” In addition, Valdés Mesa observed that both revolutions “have had to confront blockades, aggressions of all forms, efforts at isolation, subversion, and a pathological media defamation.”

Valdés Mesa underscored that “through sixty years of uninterrupted diplomatic relations, the ties between our two countries have become an example of South-South cooperation and of the relations between a large and small country on a base of equality and mutual respect.”

Chinese ambassador Chen Xi also delivered an address at the political-cultural ceremony. He read messages from Chinese President Xi Jin Ping to Raúl and Díaz-Canel, expressing the deep friendship between the two nations and the Chinese commitment to continue to develop and deepen pragmatic relations between the two nations. The ambassador recalled that diplomatic relations between Cuba and China were established at the mass assembly of September 2, 1960, which emitted the Declaration of Havana, when a million Cubans proclaimed unanimous approval of establishing diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. He also expressed his view that Cuba will continue to advance in its construction of socialism under the guidance of the Communist Party of Cuba.

(3) Prime Minister of the Russian Federation visits Cuba

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev made an official visit to Cuba this week. The Prime Minister was received by Miguel Díaz-Canel, President of the Councils of State and Ministers. The strong relations and historic ties of friendship between Cuba and Russia were discussed. Accompanying the Prime Minister was the Yori Boríssov, Vice-President of the Russian Federation and President of the Russian Part of the Intergovernmental Russian-Cuban Commission for Economic-Commercial and Scientific-Technical Cooperation. Other members of the Russian delegation included the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the Russian ambassador to Cuba, and other high members of the Russian Government. The Cuban delegation included Ricardo Cabrisas, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers; Rodrigo Malmierca, Minister of Foreign Commerce and Investment; Alejandro Gil, Minister of Economy and Planning; as well as the Cuban ambassador to Russia and other high members of the Cuban government. The Prime Minister, accompanied by the Russian delegation, also had a fraternal meeting with Raúl Castro, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, in which the Cuban participation included José Ramón Machado, Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party; and Bruno Rodríguez, Minister of Foreign Relations and member of the Political Bureau of the Party.

During the visit of the Russian Prime Minister, eight important agreements were signed in the areas of transportation (especially auto motors and railroad), infrastructure, industry, biotechnology, agriculture, energy, and digital technology, among others.

From the 1960s through the 1980s, the former Soviet Union and Cuba had strong ties of economic, cultural, and diplomatic cooperation. Although there were some aspects of the relation that were problematic, it in many respects demonstrated the possibilities for North-South cooperation, in which mutually beneficial relations are developed, including the transfer of technology to the less economically developed partner. With the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Russian Federation in the early 1990s was disoriented toward the Western European and U.S. project of neoliberalism. However, in the late 1990s, Russia began to retake its historic alternative road under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, developing relations with China, playing a strong leadership role among the nations of BRICS, and promoting relations with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the progressive and socialist governments of the region. The Russian Federation today is an important part of a global process that seeks to develop alternative principles to guide the world-system, principles that have been proclaimed by international organizations such as the United Nations, but are not followed in practice by the North American and Western European neocolonial powers, which seek to preserve global structures that function to their short-term economic advantage.

(4) Rebellion in Ecuador

A general strike and a mass rebellion has erupted in Ecuador, in response to measures announced by President Lenin Moreno. The neoliberal measures, required by new loans emitted by the International Monetary Fund, include the elimination of subsidies for diesel and gasoline, provoking a price rise of twenty percent; and the reduction of vacation time for state employees.

Moreno was elected president of Ecuador on April 2, 2017, the candidate of the Nation Alliance Party led by Rafael Correa. The presidential administrations of Correa, from 2007 to 2017, brought to an end the previous period of social unrest and political chaos. Correa led the nation in developing a new Constitution; the renegotiation of the nation's external debt, based on the principal that it would only pay debts that were legitimately contracted; the development of social programs that were effective in reducing poverty; the nationalization of some properties; and the stimulation of investments in industries strategic for the nation's economy. The government of Correa also did not renew the agreement for a U.S. military base in Ecuador. In leading the nation in what he called the "Citizen Revolution," Correa proclaimed that Ecuador was constructing "socialism for the twenty-first century," with some characteristics different from the European socialism of the twentieth century. Along with Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales, Rafael Correa was an important voice in the forging of a new political reality in Latin

America during the period 1998 to 2014.

In assuming the candidacy of the Nation Alliance party, Lenin Moreno did not announce his neoliberal intentions, which have defined his presidency from the beginning. For this reason, some Cuban scholars have referred to his taking of power as involving a Trojan Horse strategy. The loss of clear direction of the Citizen Revolution following the presidency of Correa is evidence of the limitations of the concept of term limits. Although widely believe to be a structure that defends democracy, presidential term limits function as a mechanism to undermine the power of the people, by taking from its hands an important weapon as its disposal, the leadership of a person capable of leading the nation and the people in the necessary.

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