



Australia-Cuba Friendship Society

Melbourne NEWSLETTER

February 2020



Next Meeting
Monday 3rd
February
 7.30pm
 Unitarian Church
 110 Grey St,
 East Melbourne

Melbourne	Sydney	Perth	Brisbane	Canberra	Hobart	Adelaide	Central Coast	NSW/Vic Sthn Border	New Zealand
PO Box 1051 Collingwood Vic. 3066	PO Box k364 Haymarket NSW 1240	PO Box 1455 South Perth WA 6951	PO Box 5683 West End Qld 4101	PO Box 6139 Kingston ACT 2604	GPO Box 323 Hobart Tas. 7001	Box 381 N. Adelaide SA 5006	PO Box 1082 Gosford NSW 2250	PO Box 854 Albury NSW 2640	220a Adelaide Rd Newtown Wellington New Zealand

Dear Comrades

27 January, 2020

A dreadful start for the year, seeing the terrible devastation of our beautiful land and the heartbreak of those who've lost everything. Nature kicking us in the teeth for treating it with contempt. Whitefella mismanagement from the time we set foot on this soil right up to the present, when we've ignored god knows how many lessons from the past, the royal commissions and official enquiries, where reports have been looked at and shovelled away. But it might still be useful to cherry-pick some of the conclusions from these earlier ones rather than going over the same old ground. In the aftermath of the horrendous 1939 bushfire when the entire state seemed to be on fire, the government appointed Justice Stretton to head a Royal Commission. He looked at the hows and whys and his eloquent report contained a number of suggested reforms for forest and bushfire management that was much praised at the time. And then along came WW2 and his report was put aside and forgotten. Today we're faced with a rotten government led by morons who still pretend that climate change is an invention, preferring to dole out crooked money for water allocations, for inappropriate land development and for coal, with a gormless adman/prime minister.

We won't forget him or this time in a hurry. A summer of searing heat and burning suns and filthy smoke-filled air with a strange orange haze that hovered over our cities and suburbs, followed by floods and brown rain and wild winds. Houses and tiny townships whose names we'd never heard of, gone, rivers gone, old forests gone, with animals lying dead and injured, a billion at last count, and the fearful loss of our precious and unique wild life, many pushed to extinction, along with the tiny creatures that lie deep in the ground that can never be replaced, one species dependent on the other. A brutal calculus of what we have lost, with some images more haunting than others. The dead birds washed up on a Victorian beach in a tide of black ash after being blown out to sea during the firestorm, our beautiful rainbow lorikeets, black cockatoos, honeyeaters, whip-birds, king parrots and crimson rosellas. More than 8.4 million acres blackened. Our understanding of fire in our landscape is a harbinger of a new era some are calling 'The Age of Fire'. We've entered a new world order, not the Bush or Trump definition, but the definition of our natural world that has changed forever. As our brave 'fieries' know only too well as they battled conditions they'd never encountered before.

While the rest of the world looked on in horror at our burning and stupidity, they've seen an apocalyptic future for the entire planet. In Britain, for the first time, renewable energy has overtaken fossil fuels to become the largest source of electricity. Only two percent of Britain's energy comes from coal, whereas here it's about seventy-five percent, with ninety percent in Victoria and New South Wales. The World Economic Forum (WEF) held a meeting in Davos, Switzerland, its 50th anniversary, an insanely pompous gathering of 3000 obscenely wealthy gasbags arriving in their private jets, along with 5 Royals, 22 Presidents, and 23 Prime Ministers. To achieve what, I

wonder? When Donald Trump stepped off Air Force One, he was surrounded by hundreds of sharpshooters on airport rooftops especially flown in from the US in a display of power and 'moral authority'. In short supply with this president who tears up nuclear treaties with Iran, climate change agreements and military alliances, betrays the Kurds, destroys Palestinian hopes of a state and demands cash for everything his soldiers do in the Middle East, and who barred Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif from entering the US to address the UN Security Council about the assassination of Iran's top military official in Baghdad. A brutal, cold-blooded murder. Trump's claim that he ordered it in order to 'stop a war' is an insult to common sense. Murder is a Washington specialty.

We can sneer at Trump as an unhinged goose, but he's also very dangerous. The epitome of Christian fascism who's inserted other sociopaths into positions of power, Mike Pence as vice-president, Mike Pompeo as secretary of state, along with his Attorney-General. He's installed 133 district court judges, 50 appeals court judges and two Supreme Court judges, many of them unqualified. He's banned Muslim immigrants and rolled back civil rights legislation and made war on reproductive rights. He's removed the firewall between church and state which prohibits churches, from endorsing political candidates, and replaced public schools with charter schools, an action that permits the transfer of federal education funds to private 'Christian schools'. Just like here in Australia. Fascism, is unlikely to come in the guise of stiffly armed marching brownshirts and Nazi swastikas but in the mass recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance, the biblical sanctification of the state and American militarism. Trump's legacy will be the empowerment of Christian fascists. For decades, they have been organising, building structures and organisations, and placed their cadres into the heart of the American political system, while the left has seen their institutions and organisations destroyed or corrupted by corporate power. If Trump doesn't win the 2020 election, he will not go quietly. Coups are afoot and a 'civil war' is being talked about.

Many also talk about their concerns at the way we're being pushed along by Silicon Valley's technological answer to everything. A silent takeover of our lives that is far more serious than children spending too much time on screens, companies selling our data and hackers interfering in elections. We're seeing a fundamental rewiring of our brains leading to behaviour that is ripping apart our social fabric by these hi-tech companies who see the world's 2.7 billion smartphone users as a resource they can mine for profit. 'Attention capitalism' is making us nastier, stupider and much less likely to find common ground with other human beings, with a belief in truth slipping away when it's never been so desperately needed. It's not a fair fight. The technological industry knows more about us than we know about ourselves.

Joan Coxsedge, Commentator-in-Chief, ACFS Melbourne (03) 9857 9249

Don't forget the subs are due at the beginning of each year...see the back page for details.

[Díaz-Canel dialogues with diplomatic corps accredited in Cuba](#)

Also participating in the exchange were other principal government authorities and representatives of national institutions



[Asela de los Santos Tamayo - 1929-2020](#)



Asela de los Santos Tamayo, a prominent Cuban revolutionary, considered a founder of Cuba's emancipatory education, died in the dawn hours yesterday, January 23, at the age of 90

[José Martí, our ideal of good](#)

That Martí is for Cubans the ideal of good is essential to Dr. Torres-Cuevas, director of the Martí Program office, who shares with readers his views on recent acts of vandalism involving busts of our national hero

[January to December: Committed to continue advancing](#)

Granma presents a summary of events that took place in 2019 and the impact of government measures adopted as part of the updating of Cuba's economic model

[Russian tourist arrivals in Cuba increase by 30% in 2019](#)

Of the more than 4.3 tourists who had arrived as of December, 178,000 were Russian, a number expected to reach 200,000 in 2020



[Virginia is back](#)

Prospects for a new plant's start-up this year, with a primary focus on exports, has put Virginia tobacco back on the map

[The new Families Code, much more marriage](#)

The most significant problems evident today, which must be addressed in the new Families Code, are related to recognition of all forms of family organization; parental and kinship relations, as well as protection of the elderly and disabled

[No one better than our workers to propose solutions](#)

No one better than our workers to propose solutions and make the most of the resources we have; they are on the production lines, said Ulises Guilarte de Nacimiento, Political Bureau member and general secretary of the Federation of Cuban Workers



[New horizons for honey](#)

Sancti Spíritus concludes its individual size packaging plant, adding value to a high-demand product

FREEDOM CARAVAN REACHES HAVANA

[Fidel arrives](#)

When Fidel and his bearded troops, steeled in battle against the dictatorship, reached the Columbia base, January 8, 1959, an exacting stage in the national liberation struggle came to an end and a hopeful, unprecedented chapter in the country's history began



[Cuba is an active promoter of regional integration](#)

The Cuban delegation to the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Summit, led by Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez, called for revitalizing collaboration between member countries to consolidate integration

[In a nuclear war, the collateral damage would be human life](#)

Granma recalls the message delivered October 15, 2010, by the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, on the danger posed by a nuclear war

Cuba among 35 countries worldwide with the lowest infant mortality rates: 5

Jan 3rd, 2020+

In this article: [Cuba](#), [doctors](#), [Infant Mortality](#), [Politics](#), [society](#)



Cuba has maintained a great commitment to children's health, even in the most difficult moments for the nation, a task that has required, and requires, much effort, sacrifice, and dedication from thousands of professionals, who work in the country's maternal-infant care services and approach all difficulties and setbacks with determination.

This is why the risk of death during the first year of life is low on the Island. This is the commitment of entire multidisciplinary teams capable of overcoming the greatest challenges, thanks to the political will and support of our government.

Preliminary data, provided by the Medical Records and Health Statistics Directorate, indicate that this past year, born in Cuba were 109,707 children, 6,626 less than the previous year, with an infant mortality rate of 5.0 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Dr. Noemí Causa Palma, director of medical care at the Ministry of Public Health (Minsap), told Granma that we continue to be among the 35 countries with the lowest infant mortality rate and among the first in the region.

The main factors contributing to infant mortality, she added, were related to complications associated with premature birth and intrauterine growth-retardation (IUGR), and despite efforts made in the care of pregnant women and newborns, and additional measures adopted, it was not possible to reduce their impact on infant mortality.

It should be noted that for the third consecutive year, the infant mortality rate due to congenital malformations was 0.8 deaths per 1,000 live births. The provinces of Cienfuegos, Sancti Spiritus and the Isle of Youth special municipality ended the year with no deaths from this cause.

This indicator is the best in our region of the Americas and is the result of the work carried out by community genetic services, the development of the national medical genetics network and the national program for the prevention of congenital defects and genetic diseases, Dr. Causa explained.

It is also significant that in 2019 there were no reported maternal deaths from postpartum hemorrhage, a persistent problem in developing countries and an achievement for Cuba, the result of multidisciplinary work carried out over the past three years.

Essential objectives in maternal-infant health care for 2020, the doctor reported, include increasing multisectoral work to reduce teenage pregnancy and risk factors faced by women of childbearing age, such as obesity, hypertension and diabetes mellitus, among others.

Efforts will also be focused on strengthening the monitoring of pregnant women at high risk during their prenatal care in order to detect retarded intrauterine growth and hypertensive disorders in a timely fashion, and prevent pre-term deliveries.

In the case of neonatal services, she added, efforts will be intensified to continue to increase newborn survival rates.

Similarly, health promotion and educational actions will continue to be expanded through the mass media, directed toward women of childbearing age, their partners and family members, in relation to the importance of taking folic acid to prevent congenital disorders, the prevention of sexually transmitted infections, health care for chronic diseases and pregnancy, the promotion of breastfeeding, and the prevention of accidents and community-acquired infections.

PRINCIPAL INDICATORS

-The preschool mortality rate – from 1 to 4 years of age – in 2019 increased from 3.0 to 3.5 per 10,000 inhabitants of that age, the main causes being accidents, acute respiratory infections and malignant tumors.

-The survival rate of children under 5 years of age to the fifth year of life is 99.3%. This indicator has exceeded 99 % for the last 20 years.

-The school age mortality rate – from 5 to 14 – remained at 2.0 per 10,000 inhabitants in this age range.

-The perinatal mortality rate was reduced from 8.3 to 8.0, primarily by reducing late fetal deaths.

-The total maternal mortality rate was reduced from 43.8 per 100,000 live births in 2018 to 37.4 in 2019, with 10 fewer deaths.

-Direct maternal mortality was reduced from 27.5 to 23.7 and indirect maternal mortality from 16.3 to 13.7.PER?

-Through the program serving infertile couples, more than 6,000 pregnancies were achieved, 2,000 more than last year. In the provincial service centers, six of ten couples assisted achieved pregnancies. In the Regional High Technology Centers, located in the provinces of Havana (two), Cienfuegos and Holguín, more than 200 pregnancies were conceived for the first time, using advanced assisted reproduction techniques.

-A merit for our country and for the National Public Health System was the ratification, by the World Health Organization last September, of our status as a country free of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis, granted to Cuba in 2015, as the first country in the world.

-In 2019, vaccination coverage of over 98% was guaranteed, protecting the child population against 13 diseases.

-Additionally, through the end of 2019, some 510 cochlear implants have been performed, since the beginning of this program.

<http://en.cubadebate.cu/news/2020/01/03/cuba-among-35-countries-worldwide-with-lowest-infant-mortality-rates-5/>

January to December: Committed to continue advancing

Granma presents a summary of events that took place in 2019 and the impact of government measures adopted as part of the updating of Cuba's economic model

Author: [Yudy Castro Morales](mailto:Yudy_Castro_Morales@granma.cu) | internet@granma.cu - January 16, 2020 10:01:12

This 2019, the 61st year of the Revolution, could be given many nicknames: The year of salary increases, for example, or the energy conjuncture, or the year of freely convertible currency stores... It could also have been the year of the Constitution, or the year of state and government structural changes, and more, since a great deal occurred over the days, weeks and months between January and December.

And it could also be the year of victories, because as President of the Republic Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez said closing the Fourth Period of Ordinary Sessions of the National Assembly of People's Power, "The Revolution triumphs every time we snatch a victory from the empire for our cause. And in 2019 we did it many times ... In the 61st year of the Revolution, we were thrown to our deaths and we are alive. Alive, celebrating and determined to continue winning.

FEBRUARY

1. Self-employment:

New measures were approved, to facilitate the performance of this mode of economic management, which continues to grow within the Cuban economic panorama.

Provisions incorporated new activities and modifications in the scope and authorization process of others. Likewise, the contracting of products and services from the self-employed by Cuban state and foreign legal entities based in the country was approved. Related regulations were subsequently published, in November.

2. Constitutional Referendum:

With this nation-wide vote, the new Constitution of the Republic of Cuba was ratified with the favorable vote of the majority of eligible citizens.

3. Notary and registry services:

Instruction No. 1 from the Minister of Justice, published in the Extraordinary Official Gazette No. 3 of February 2019, was intended to standardize the organization of sites that provide notary and registry services in order to increase the quality of service, respect for the people and compliance with established work schedules.

Later, in September, new rules came into effect, to reduce timeframes for the resolution of cases by notaries and establish indicators, which allow for their verification.

APRIL

1. Proclamation of the Constitution of the Republic

During the Second Extraordinary Session of the National Assembly of People's Power Ninth Legislature, Army General Raul Castro Ruz, first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba Central Committee, formally proclaimed the new Constitution, which since that time has governed the country's legal system.

2. New legal norms on housing:

Ordering and legalizing the status of housing, to benefit tens of thousands of homeowners, was the essence of Agreements No. 8574 and No. 8575 issued by the Council of Ministers Executive Committee, and published in Extraordinary Official Gazette No. 33 of April 2019.

MAY

1. Agricultural cooperatives:

With the objective of promoting the development of the cooperative sector, Decree-Law No. 365 and Decree No. 354, with their regulations were published in Official Ordinary Gazette No. 37 of May 2019, which eliminated legislative dispersion associated with the operation of agricultural cooperatives, providing the legal expression of policy approved to correct deficiencies identified in this sector.

2. Regulations on the radio-electric spectrum:

The main objectives of principles established in the Ministry of Communications' Resolutions 98 and 99, concerning the radio spectrum, contribute to the computerization of society and national sovereignty, to avoid interference with the radio spectrum and prevent the harmful effects of non-ionizing radiation, while expanding channels of communication between people and citizens' access to new technologies.

JUNE

1. Measures to boost the economy and wage increases:

The Council of Ministers approved a package of measures to boost the economy, including a wage increase in the budgeted sector, and for pensions, as well, benefitting more than 2.75 million people.

The fundamental goals addressed included defending national production; diversifying and increasing exports; replacing imports with domestic products; promoting productive chains; strengthening state enterprises; advancing in food sovereignty; promoting local development; implementing Housing Policy; and putting science in the service of solving problems.

The measures adopted included the establishment of a minimum monthly wage of 400 CUP in the budgeted sector, with other increases providing an average monthly wage of 1,067 CUP.



During the Second Extraordinary Session of the National Assembly's Ninth Legislature, Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, Party first secretary, formally accepted the new Constitution of the Republic, which now governs the country's legal system. **Photo:** Estudio Revolución

Benefitting were 1,470,736 workers in Central State Administration, local People's Power bodies, organizations and associations, and has an estimated annual cost of 7.05 billion pesos.

In the case of Social Security, taking into account increases made in November of 2018, the minimum pension remains at 242 pesos. Those who at that time did not receive an increase, and receive pensions of less than 500 pesos, will now benefit from the approval of the new measures, better supporting some 1,281,523 people, with an estimated annual cost of 700 million pesos.

The application of the special contribution to Social Security will be extended to workers in the budgeted sector, reflecting the principle that all contribute to the financing of expenses to support benefits. A tax rate of 2.5% will be applied to those who earn up to 500 pesos a month and 5% to those who earn more.

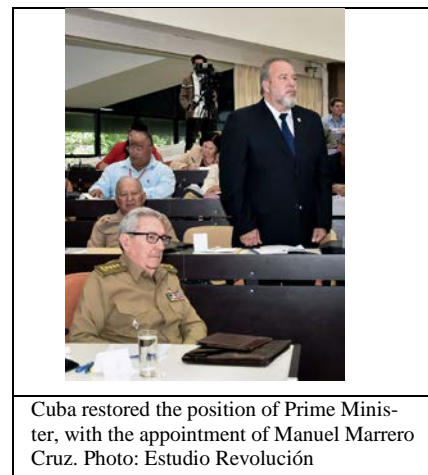
To be implemented in 2020 are improved mechanisms for payment of wages in the enterprise sector, reflecting consideration for productive results.

Enterprise directors were granted authority to approve payment systems to prioritize, whenever possible, the application of pay-for-performance regimens; and maintain as an indicator, in such plans, growth of before tax earnings, as compared to previous periods.

In order to avoid the inflationary effect of wage increases, the Ministry of Finance and Prices was charged with providing necessary mechanisms throughout the economy to mitigate possible price hikes.

Instruction No. 245 of the People's Supreme Court

This directive allows the implementation of articles 59, 94 and 98 of the Constitution, regarding citizen access to the judicial system to make claims regarding their rights.



Cuba restored the position of Prime Minister, with the appointment of Manuel Marrero Cruz. Photo: Estudio Revolución

JULY

1. Computerization of society:

For the first time, superior legal provisions were issued to regulate the process of computerization of society, through a Decree-Law, two Decrees, a Council of Ministers agreement and six resolutions, which promote the development and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) by legal persons and individuals.

The country had already taken important steps in this arena, including the 2017 approval of the Comprehensive Policy for Improvement of Computerization of Cuban Society.

2. Electoral, National Symbols, and Fishing Laws:

New bodies of law to govern these areas were approved during the Third Period of Ordinary Sessions of the National Assembly of the People's Power Ninth Legislature.

AUGUST

1. Non-Agricultural Cooperatives:

In order to update current legislation on non-agricultural cooperatives, the following regulations were approved or came into effect:

Decree Law No. 366, November 2018, On Non-Agricultural Cooperatives.

Decree No. 356, March 2019, Regulations for Non-Agricultural Cooperatives.

Resolution No. 361 of August 2019 from the Minister of Finance and Prices on prices, taxation, finance and accounting for non-agricultural cooperatives.

Resolution No. 362, of August 2019, from the Minister of Finance and Prices, regarding the payment of personal income tax by temporary workers hired by cooperatives.

All of this, in order to continue advancing step by step, consolidating what has been done and correcting errors or deviations that occur, both in the internal functioning of these cooperatives and in their relations with other economic actors and, on that basis, promote the extension of positive experiences.

SEPTEMBER

1. New legal rules on workers' education:

Professional development and training of workers is among the government's priorities. Five legal regulations were adopted on the basis of the Workers Education policy, addressing use of the work day for studies, in the state's interest, and improvement of the national system of scientific degrees and postgraduate academic training.

2. Energy crisis:

Faced with the U.S. government's aggressive escalation, intent upon preventing the arrival of fuel to Cuba, conservation measures were implemented across the country to deal with this temporary energy situation.

Thirty-seven savings measures emerged during the emergency, and these must be maintained as systematic practices.

OCTOBER

1. Election of the President, Vice President and Secretary of the National Assembly of People's Power, and the other members of the Council of State, as well as the President and Vice President of the Republic:

With this election, which took place in an extraordinary session of the National Assembly of People's Power, in addition to complying fully with the Constitution's Second Transitory Provision, Cuba reaffirmed its nature as a socialist state governed by the rule of law, which establishes its national project in the Magna Carta.

2. Network of retail stores in freely convertible currency

This is among measures adopted with a view toward capturing foreign currency in the country for the benefit of the national economy, and meeting the population's previously unsatisfied demand.

The goal is to provide order in the process of importing goods for non-commercial purposes, without prohibiting, and offer sales of quality equipment within the country at competitive prices. Of the 77 stores planned, more than 40 were in operation by the end of the year.

3. Registration of motor-scooters:

Resolution No. 35 of 2019, from the Ministry of the Interior, establishes the importance of complying with Law No. 109, the Road Safety Code, which requires the registration of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers that circulate on the country's roads, and the provision of identification plates and drivers' licenses.

The impact of scooters on highway safety, and the lack of a framework for legally protected transfers of ownership, led to the need to improve organizational and control measures.

4. New guarantees and compensation for consumer protection

Approval of Instruction No. 5 of 2019 by the Ministry of Domestic Commerce, on consumer compensation and guarantees for products and services represents another step toward improved consumer protection, although a superior legal framework is lacking.

NOVEMBER

1. Regulations governing changes and adaptations to motor vehicles:

The new Regulation, contained in Resolution No. 349 of 2019, from the Ministry of Transportation, regulates the processes of altering or adapting basic characteristics of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers, owned by legal persons and individuals, to ensure that their passive and active safety is not affected.

2. Organization, financing and sustainable management of scientific activity:

Decree No. 363 establishes legal rules governing the creation and operation of Science-Technology Parks and Science and Technology Enterprises, which will act as interfaces between universities and science, technology and innovation entities, with production and service centers.

3. Decree-Law No. 390, Experimental creation of service and processing centers:

Published in the Official Gazette No. 94, November 2019, this Decree-Law is meant to simplify and facilitate procedures individuals conduct with a large number of public institutions. Initially, 106 types of services and procedures were included, linked to eight ministries and the Institute of Physical Planning.

4. New resolution from Cuba's telephone company Etecsa on basic residential service:

New modifications implemented January 8, 2020, were intended to direct technical resources and investment toward expanding more services for the population and to take advantage of installed capacity, to provide new services.

The new resolution establishes that current customers, whose contract was signed prior to the establishment of these regulations, will continue to have the right to request continuity of service at their new legal address, as long as they do not relinquish ownership of the contract and Etecsa will install the phone, provided that technical conditions exist. The service installed in the previous address will be cancelled, and will be transferred to whoever the law recognizes as owner of the property where it is installed.

The company clarified that it will continue working to provide a technical solution to pending transfers that exist to date and to new requests that arise with address changes of current owners.

For all who acquire a new line beginning January 8, 2020, service will be linked to the home where it is installed, and transfers will not be available.

DECEMBER

1. Change to be given in CUP, experimentally

As part of monetary regulation measures being implemented, a decision was made, on an experimental basis, to give change in CUP only, at two retail stores run by Cimex Corporation and Tiendas Caribe.

2. Designation of the government of the Republic:

During the Fourth Ordinary Session of the National Assembly of People's Power Ninth Legislature, Cuba re-established the position of Prime Minister in its governmental structure, with the appointment of Manuel Marrero Cruz, previously Minister of Tourism, to this high responsibility. Deputy Prime Ministers, a Secretary and other members of the Council of Ministers were also named.

Likewise, Laws on the Organization and Functioning of the National Assembly of People's Power and the Council of State, as well as municipal assemblies and People's Councils were approved, with a view toward reinforcing institutionality.

Cuba sends message of solidarity to Australian people and government

A message expressing deep sorrow in the wake of devastating fires in Australia was sent Wednesday by Esteban Lazo Hernández, President of Cuba's National Assembly and Council of State, to Tony Smith, Speaker of the country's House of Representatives

Author: [Granma](http://granma.cu) | internet@granma.cu - january 16, 2020 10:01:06

A message expressing deep sorrow in the wake of devastating fires in Australia was sent Wednesday by Esteban Lazo Hernández, President of Cuba's National Assembly and Council of State, to Tony Smith, Speaker of the country's House of Representatives

"On behalf of the National Assembly of People's Power, our people and myself, I wish to express our most sincere condolences to the families of the deceased, to the Australian Parliament and people given the damage caused by the incident," reads the letter published on the National Assembly's website.

Lazo lamented the loss of human life, harm to the nation's ecosystem, the deaths of millions of animals and the severe economic damage caused by this major disaster.

<http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2020-01-16/cuba-sends-message-of-solidarity-to-australian-people-and-government>

"Once again we witness with concern the harmful effects of climate change on our planet, causing great droughts, enormous fires with the destruction of millions of hectares of forests, melting ice and other phenomena that seriously threaten life,"

Lazo wrote.

His message joins that of Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, who in a January 7 tweet reiterated Cuba's solidarity with Australia, where fires have destroyed some six million hectares of forest and caused the deaths of at least twenty persons, noting the disaster as a consequence of climate change.

"Cuba mourns and expresses our solidarity with Australia's population who, on the smallest continent in the world, are suffering the consequences of climate change: 6 million hectares of forests

burned and the death of 25 people and some 500 million animals," he wrote.

In another message Díaz-Canel stated: "While all living species are fleeing in horror from the hell of Australia's forests, the empire is fanning a terrible fire, putting the world on the brink of war. Fidel Castro asked, more than 40 years ago: What is the United Nations for? Today an answer is urgently needed."



Australia's forest fires have killed millions of animals and destroyed ecosystems.
Photo: EFE

Current challenges faced by Cuban culture

Excerpts from speech by Miguel Barnet, outgoing president of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC), during its recent Congress held in Havana, June 29-30

Author: [Miguel Barnet](mailto:internet@granma.cu) | internet@granma.cu - July 5, 2019 14:07:5



Photo: José Manuel Correa

Since preparatory work began for this IX Congress of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC), with discussions in the different commissions and provincial bodies of the organization, a profound collective reflection has been allowed us on the challenges currently faced by Cuban culture, closely tied to those that the Revolution faces today. Several essential questions have been consistently raised: How can writers and artists in UNEAC help our country more in the present conjuncture? How can we contribute more actively to the improvement of our cultural policy? How can we more effectively combat attempts to divide us, and the impact of the global colonizing wave on Cuban society? What proposals can we make that bring us closer to the conquest of new spaces to advance the spiritual life of the nation?

First of all, we must consider the international context in which this discussion takes place.

Our region made progress over the past decade in the areas of integration, health, education, culture, social inclusion, and sovereignty, based on the impulse the ideals of Bolívar and Martí were given by Fidel and Chávez. They were joined by Lula and Dilma, Evo, Correa, Daniel, Nestor and Cristina Kirchner, and went on to create CELAC – ethical, solidary opposite of the discredited OAS - which proclaimed our region a "Zone of Peace."

Today, as we know, the situation has changed dramatically. Our America and the Caribbean are suffering attacks by the empire and a neo-fascist ultra-right that acts without shame.

They systematically use lies, so-called fake news, and resort to the most sophisticated manipulation of public opinion through the media and social networks. They rely on rigged parliamentary and judicial processes to discredit leftist leaders; and violate the most elementary norms of international coexistence, while legitimizing interference, the law of the strongest, and aggressions of all kinds, including the threat of direct military intervention.

The United States government has resuscitated the Monroe Doctrine and the philosophy of McCarthyism, to launch an open offensive directed, in particular, toward Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua.

Defeating the Cuban Revolution is one of their principal obsessions. The blockade has been ruthlessly and brutally intensified with the activation of the Helms-Burton Act in all its scope; an openly extra-territorial plan of plunder and re-colonization that disrupts Cuba's financial transactions without respite, and does the impossible to discourage foreign

investment and obstruct all of the country's efforts to advance.

Given the campaign of lies and distortions we have faced since 1959, Cuban writers and artists have always defended the cause of the Revolution on all stages, nationally and internationally

The language of art and of our intellectuals has many times reached places where the country's diplomatic and official representatives could not. Now circumstances demand more from us. We have innumerable creators and institutions to which we can turn in this decisive hour. We must be the bearers of Cuba's truth wherever it can be heard.

The leadership of the Revolution knows that today, as in all conjunctures, can count on us. We are committed to the vocation of resistance and revolutionary transformation of our society. The legacy of the historical generation that led us here is being strengthened and redoubled. Raúl, leading the Party, is the repository of the emancipatory tradition that constantly convokes us.

President Diaz-Canel and the new generation of leaders - who have the support of the vast majority of the people and, as part of the people, intellectuals and artists - are today the expression of continuity, inspired by the work and example of those who founded the Cuba that was born in 1959. Our government has shown a work style of tireless effort, transparent, in direct contact with the population, always aware of the neediest, in a daily battle against bureaucracy, corruption, routine, and insensibility.

After the approval - by a large majority - of the new Constitution of the Republic, our institutions are immersed in a process of important changes that will be reflected, in one way or another, in culture.

By reaffirming the will to continue advancing in the construction of a socialist society - characterized by sustainable economic and social development, participatory democracy, solidarity, inclusion, justice, and strategies to promote equity - writers and artists have a duty to help achieve the Cuban people's aspirations, with our creativity and thought.

We are motivated by our interest in being more useful and in establishing a systematic, fruitful, and proactive dialogue between the political vanguard, other government arenas, and civil society. We want to contribute with greater intelligence and responsibility to the continuous improvement and implementation of our cultural policy, and to those areas that are inseparably connected to culture, such as education, social sciences, and the media. We must continue to participate in critical, revolutionary debate, which is more necessary

than ever. The experience and analytical skills of UNEAC members can make useful contributions at this historical moment.

Attempts by Cuba's enemies to create an intellectual fifth column to attack the Revolution have failed during all these years, and are destined to continue failing. The few they have been able to recruit do not mean anything within the powerful Cuban cultural movement, which also includes many, very valuable creators resident outside the island, committed to the destiny of the nation.

In Fidel's "Words to the Intellectuals," a platform that guides the Revolution's cultural policy and our own organization, he insisted: "The Revolution cannot contemplate asphyxiating art or culture, when one of the goals and one of the fundamental purposes of the Revolution is to develop art and culture, precisely so that (...) it becomes true patrimony of the people. And just as we want a better life for the people on the material order, we want a better life for the people on the spiritual order as well (...), on the cultural order. And just as the Revolution is concerned with the development of conditions and forces that allow the people to satisfy all their material needs, we also want to develop the conditions that allow the people to satisfy all their cultural needs."

The Union of Cuban Writers and Artists defends opportunities for freedom of artistic and literary creation. We work, day by day, for the unity of intellectuals and artists, and direct our active, critical, and committed participation toward the construction of our socialism.

We prioritize frank and open dialogue with cultural institutions and recognize as essential the presence of an institutional system allied with talent, in its essence anathema to sectarianism and bureaucracy.

UNEAC accepts the role of the national and international market as a legitimate way of distributing art; but it refuses to allow commercial logic to establish artistic standards or our entire cultural policy, which cannot be privatized. With adequate institutional regulation, we consider that promotional alternatives under non-state forms of management should be studied

Art, by its nature, cannot be reduced to formulas. If we aspire to authentic, living art, that addresses conflicts and contradictions, that challenges and enriches us, UNEAC will need to do much more to protect and stimulate talent, combat passivity, accommodation and mediocrity, promote genuine artistic proposals, to encourage originality to resolve shortcomings and weaknesses in the exercise

of criticism and put the values of culture above all else.

We must recover and encourage in a systematic way, analysis and debate of artistic and literary production in the heart of our associations and branches, with greater rigor and consistent evaluation of its reception by the public. Quality must be our permanent currency in everything that our organization proposes.

The cultural policy of the Revolution - which has advocated, since its inception, the democratization of access to culture, the defense of national identity and heritage - has always taken into account the participation of intellectuals and artists.

To intervene in the development of this policy, according to Martí and Fidel's definition, requires us to listen and be heard, to be coherent and responsible in the dialogue, and warn in a timely fashion of any obstacle that stands in the way of achieving our principal objectives.

Thinking as a nation - one forged in constant battle against colonialism and neocolonialism, against interventions and interference - is another of our great, pressing challenges. It is imperative that we recognize where we stand, how we got here, and what challenges await us in the future.

The work of those who have preceded us has been long and fruitful. José Martí revealed one of the mysteries of the fundamental core of our condition when he said, "I don't know what tender mystery the sweet word 'Cuban' holds."

Fernando Ortiz left us a relevant concept: "Cubanía is a condition of the soul, a combination of sentiments, ideas, and attitudes." Speaking during the UNEAC's founding Congress, our first president, Nicolás Guillén, called on members to work for a "culture that gives us our own character and spirit... that frees and uplifts us, that provides bread and roses, without shame or fear."

If we agree that human beings are both the protagonist actors in our society, and its principal beneficiaries, who we understand to be the bearers of Cuban identity and culture, everything that we do in creation and thought must contribute to full human dignity, equality, and freedom.

If we aspire that all citizens incorporate ethics, solidarity, humanism, justice, and equity within their daily conduct, and reject and combat vulgar materialism, marginal behavior, self-interest, discrimination, and intolerance, we must be conscious that culture is fertile ground for the development of such values.

Ours socialism must be directed toward raising the populations' quality of life, with the full satisfaction of its spiritual needs and rational solutions for its material needs.

We defend the right of the people to play a leading role in cultural processes, and fully enjoy the best artistic and literary creation, Cuban and universal. To achieve this, the development of a conscious, critical citizen, with the tools to discern and interpret the real and virtual world in which we live, is imperative.

Part of this challenge involves distinguishing between consumption and acceptance. The first presupposes passivity, while the second requires active participation. The battle of our times is eminently cultural, a battle between hegemonic imposition and emancipatory paradigms, between inanity and freedom.

When Fidel, during the 1993 UNEAC Congress, called on us to save culture, he was not speaking in a narrow sense of protecting works, programs, or institutions; but rather the spiritual life of Cubans, represented in cultural expressions and values. In fact, culture is the first thing that must be saved, because culture is the imagination and memory of the nation, the core of our resistance and future.

<http://en.granma.cu/cultura/2019-07-05/current-challenges-faced-by-cuban-culture>

Despite limitations, Cuba's state budget maintains its eminently social focus

Plans for 2020 guarantee basic services in education, health, culture and sports, as well as the implementation of social policies, national defense and internal order

Author: [Yudy Castro Morales](mailto:YudyCastroMorales@granma.cu) | internet@granma.cu - January 21, 2020 10:01:53

The planned budget for 2020 is based on principles of conservation and rationality in expenditures, and maximizing income, mobilizing all untapped potential that exists in the economy, stated Vladimir Regueiro Ale, first deputy minister of Finances and Prices, during a press conference yesterday.

U.S. harassment, financial persecution, and intensification of the blockade continue, he noted, requiring a detailed analysis of the use of funds and purpose of allocations, to avoid unnecessary expenditures.

During the year, he reiterated, "Budgetary modifications to increase expenses will only be made based on adjustments in the economic plan, approved levels of activity and central government decisions.

Likewise, salary expenses and workforce taxes are defined as guiding indicators with specific destinations in the budgeted sector."

Regueiro insisted on item by item evaluation of the budget, based on financial records, to allow for timely decision making, in addition to the need for more discipline and rigor in collecting information and accounting.

Despite limitations, he emphasized, "Cuba's state budget maintains its eminently social focus, guaranteeing basic services in education, health, culture and sports, as well as the implementation of social policies, national defense and internal order."

Also ensured is continuity of partial salary increases in the budgeted sector and of Social Security pensions.

Income is projected to reach 66.291 billion pesos, representing 11.5% growth.

Planning has taken into consideration the substantial increase projected in retail trade circulation, along with increased efficiency, especially in the state enterprise sector, which provides 85% of total income. Tax revenues also play a key role, accounting for 74% of collections.

Achieving these results will require:

- Discipline in monthly contributions by economic actors, allowing for consistent liquidity.
- Strengthening control and systematic supervision of municipal and provincial tax administrations.
- Continuing to promote a tax culture, with emphasis on the importance of contributing and, in turn, increasing the rigor of measures taken for non-compliance.

INCOME

Tax revenues should reach 49.348 billion pesos, representing 12% growth.

Taxes on sales of goods and services, which account for 37% of total gross revenue, are projected to grow by 14% and 25%, respectively.

Contributions based on earnings provide 19% of gross income and are expected to increase 4%, exceeding 12 billion pesos.

Taxes on the use of labor and Social Security contributions should increase as a result of salary and pension raises.

Funds generated by territorial contributions for local development are projected to reach 1.144 billion pesos, similar to 2019.



Photo: Endrys Correa Vaillant

The contributions of non-state forms of management represent 13% of total income, with estimated growth on the order of 12%. Of this total, 50% is contributed by self-employed workers, 17% by non-agricultural cooperatives, and 33% by other forms of non-state management.

Tax measures projected for 2020:

- Personal income tax for athletes with contracts abroad.
- Simplification of personal income tax rates and the payment process for individual agricultural producers. In this case, the progressive scale is replaced by a tax rate of 5%.
- Updating of activities taxed under the simplified regime.

Addressing untapped potential for revenue in 2020, Regueiro emphasized eliminating delays in the filing of affidavits, as well as non-payment of taxes on earnings and personal income, plus accumulated tax debts and evasion by under-declaration associated with sales of homes and vehicles by individuals.

Similarly, he stressed the importance of involving workers in analysis of tax compliance at the level of every entity, basic enterprise unit, and site of non-state economic activity.

EXPENSES

Deputy Minister of Finance and Prices Maritza Cruz emphasized that the budget's execution must be based on several key premises, including avoiding superfluous and non-priority expenses; maintaining rigorous control of public spending; making efficient use of material and financial resources allocated; as well as strengthening steps taken to save energy and rationalize expenditures for basic services such as telephone, water, and gas, among others.

Total expenditures of 73.186 billion pesos are planned for 2020, implying an increase close to 10.5%. The most significant areas contributing to this increase are running expenses, which support basic social services; subsidies for housing construction and repair; as well as salary increases in the budgeted sector.

An important amount is allocated for investments, with priority given to the housing program; infrastructure, including works to expand use of renewable energy sources; tourism; works to mitigate the impact of drought; and projects in the social sectors of Education and Health.

The Social Security budget is fully funded to support some 1,680,000 beneficiaries, 96% devoted to pensions based on age, disability or death of a head of household.

<http://en.granma.cu/cuba/2020-01-21/despite-limitations-cubas-state-budget-maintains-its-eminently-social-focus>

Greta's Speech – Our house is on fire

One year ago I came to Davos and told you that our house is on fire. I said I wanted you to panic. I've been warned that telling people to panic about the climate crisis is a very dangerous thing to do. But don't worry. It's fine. Trust me, I've done this before and I assure you it doesn't lead to anything.

And for the record, when we children tell you to panic, we're not telling you to go on like before.

We're not telling you to rely on technologies that don't even exist today at scale and that science says perhaps never will. We are not telling you to keep talking about reaching "net-zero emissions" or "carbon neutrality" by cheating and fiddling around with numbers.

We are not telling you to "offset your emissions" by just paying someone else to plant trees in places like Africa while at the same time forests like the Amazon are being slaughtered at an infinitely higher rate.

Planting trees is good, of course, but it's nowhere near enough of what needs to be done, and it cannot replace real mitigation or rewilding nature.

Let's be clear. We don't need a "low-carbon economy." We don't need to "lower emissions." Our emissions have to stop to stay if we are to have a chance to stay below the 1.5 degrees target. And until we have the technologies that at scale can put our emissions to minus then we must forget about net zero — we need real zero.

Because distant net zero emission targets will mean absolutely nothing if we just continue to ignore the carbon dioxide budget — which applies for today, not distant future dates. If high emissions continue like now even for a few years, that remaining budget will soon be completely used up.

The fact that the U.S.A. is leaving the Paris accord seems to outrage and worry everyone, and it should.

But the fact that we're all about to fail the commitments you signed up for in the Paris Agreement doesn't seem to bother the people in power even the least.

Any plan or policy of yours that doesn't include radical emission cuts at the source starting today is completely insufficient for meeting the 1.5-degree or well-below-2-degrees commitments of the Paris Agreement.

And again — this is not about right or left. We couldn't care less about your party politics.

From a sustainability perspective, the right, the left, as well as the center, have all failed. No political ideology or economic structure has been able to tackle the climate and environmental emergency and create a cohesive and sustainable world. Because that world, in case you haven't noticed, is currently on fire.

You say children shouldn't worry. You say: "Just leave this to us. We will fix this, we promise we won't let you down. Don't be so pessimistic."

And then — nothing. Silence. Or something worse than silence. Empty words and promises which give the impression that sufficient action is being taken.

All the solutions are obviously not available within today's societies. Nor do we have the time to wait for new technological solutions to become available to start drastically reducing our emissions.

So, of course, the transition isn't going to be easy. It will be hard. And unless we start facing this now together, with all cards on the table, we won't be able to solve this in time.

In the days running up to the 50th anniversary of the World Economic Forum, I joined a group of climate activists who are demanding that you, the world's most powerful and influential business and political leaders, begin to take the action needed.

We demand that at this year's World Economic Forum participants from all companies, banks, institutions and governments:

Immediately halt all investments in fossil fuel exploration and extraction.

Immediately end all fossil fuel subsidies.

And immediately and completely divest from fossil fuels.

We don't want these things done by 2050, 2030 or even 2021, we want this done now.

It may seem like we're asking for a lot. And you will of course say that we are naïve. But this is just the very minimum amount of effort that is needed to start the rapid sustainable transition.

So either you do this or you're going to have to explain to your children why you are giving up on the 1.5-degree target.

Giving up without even trying.

Well I'm here to tell you that unlike you, my generation will not give up without a fight.

The facts are clear, but they're still too uncomfortable for you to address.

You just leave it because you think it's too depressing and people will give up. But people will not give up. You're the ones who are giving up.

Last week I met with coal miners in Poland who lost their jobs because their mine was closed. And even they had not given up. On the contrary, they seem to understand the fact that we need to change more than you do.

I wonder, what will you tell your children was the reason to fail and leave them facing the climate chaos you knowingly brought upon them? The 1.5-degree target? That it seemed so bad for the economy that we decided to resign the idea of securing future living conditions without even trying?

Our house is still on fire. Your inaction is fuelling the flames by the hour. We are telling you to act as if you loved your children above all else.

THE LIES ABOUT ASSANGE MUST STOP NOW

24 November 2019

Newspapers and other media in the United States, Britain and Australia have recently declared a passion for freedom of speech, especially their right to publish freely. They are worried by the "Assange effect". It is as if the struggle of truth-tellers like Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning is now a warning to them: that the thugs who dragged Assange out of the Ecuadorean embassy in April may one day come for them. A common refrain was echoed by the Guardian last week. The extradition of Assange, said the paper, "is not a question of how wise Mr. Assange is, still less how likable. It's not about his character, nor his judgement. It's a matter of press freedom and the public's right to know." What the Guardian is trying to do is separate Assange from his landmark achievements, which have both profited the Guardian and exposed its own vulnerability, along with its propensity to suck up to rapacious power and smear those who reveal its double standards. The poison that has fueled the persecution of Julian Assange is not as obvious in this editorial as it usually is; there is no fiction about Assange smearing faeces on embassy walls or being awful to his cat. Instead, the weasel references to "character" and "judgement" and "likeability" perpetuate an epic smear which is now almost a decade old. Nils Melzer, the United Nations Rapporteur on Torture, used a more apt description. "There has been," he wrote, "a relentless and unrestrained campaign of public mobbing." He explains mobbing as "an endless stream of humiliating, debasing and threatening statements in the press". This "collection ridicule" amounts to torture and could lead to Assange's death. Having witnessed much of what Melzer describes, I can vouch for the truth of his words. If Julian Assange were to succumb to the cruelties heaped upon him, week after week, month after month, year upon year, as doctors warn, newspapers like the Guardian will share the responsibility. A few days ago, the Sydney Morning Herald's man in London, Nick Miller, wrote a lazy, specious piece headlined, "Assange has not been vindicated, he has merely outwaited justice." He was referring to Sweden's abandonment of the so-called Assange investigation. Miller's report is not untypical for its omissions and distortions while masquerading as a tribune of women's rights. There is no original work, no real inquiry: just smear. There is nothing on the documented behaviour of a clutch of Swedish zealots who hijacked the "allegations" of sexual misconduct against Assange and made a mockery of Swedish law and that society's vaunted decency. He makes no mention that in 2013, the Swedish prosecutor tried to abandon the case and emailed the Crown Prosecution Service in London to say it would no longer pursue a European Arrest Warrant, to which she received the

reply: "Don't you dare!!!" (Thanks to Stefania Maurizi of La Repubblica) Other emails show the CPS discouraging the Swedes from coming to London to interview Assange - which was common practice - thus blocking progress that might have set him free in 2011. There was never an indictment. There were never charges. There was never a serious attempt to put "allegations" to Assange and question him - behaviour that the Swedish Court of Appeal ruled to be negligent and the General Secretary of the Swedish Bar Association has since condemned. Both the women involved said there was no rape. Critical written evidence of their text messages was wilfully withheld from Assange's lawyers, clearly because it undermined the "allegations". One of the women was so shocked that Assange was arrested, she accused the police of railroading her and changing her witness statement. The chief prosecutor, Eva Finne, dismissed the "suspicion of any crime." The Sydney Morning Herald man omits how an ambitious and compromised politician, Claes Borgstrom, emerged from behind the liberal facade of Swedish politics and effectively seized and revived the case. Borgstrom enlisted a former political collaborator, Marianne Ny, as the new prosecutor. Ny refused to guarantee that Assange would not be sent on to the United States if he was extradited to Sweden, even though, as The Independent reported, "informal discussions have already taken place between the US and Swedish officials over the possibility of the WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange being delivered into American custody, according to diplomatic sources." This was an open secret in Stockholm. That libertarian Sweden had a dark, documented past of rendering people into the hands of the CIA was not news. The silence was broken in 2016 when the United Nations Working Party on Arbitrary Detention, a body that decides whether governments are meeting their human rights obligations, ruled that Julian Assange was unlawfully detained by Britain and called on the British government to set him free. Both the governments of Britain and Sweden had taken part in the UN's investigation, and agreed to abide by its ruling, which carried the weight of international law. The British foreign secretary, Philip Hammond, stood up in Parliament and abused the UN panel. The Swedish case was a fraud from the moment the police secretly and illegally contacted a Stockholm tabloid and ignited the hysteria that was to consume Assange. WikiLeaks' revelations of America's war crimes had shamed the hand-maidens of power and its vested interests, who called themselves journalists; and for this, the unclubbable Assange would never be forgiven.

It was now open season. Assange's media tormenters cut and pasted each other's lies and vituperative abuse. "He really is the most massive turd," wrote the Guardian columnist Suzanne Moore. The received wisdom was that he had been charged, which was never true. In my career, reporting from places of extreme upheaval and suffering and criminality, I have never known anything like it. In Assange's homeland, Australia, this "mobbing" reached an apogee. So eager was the Australian government to deliver its citizen to the United States that the prime minister in 2013, Julia Gillard, wanted to take away his passport and charge him with a crime - until it was pointed out to her that Assange had committed no crime and she had no right to take away his citizenship. Julia Gillard, according to the website Honest History, holds the record for the most sycophantic speech ever made to the US Congress. Australia, said she to applause, was America's "great mate". The great mate colluded with America in its hunt for an Australian whose crime was journalism. His right to protection and proper assistance was denied. When Assange's lawyer, Gareth Peirce, and I met two Australian consular officials in London, we were shocked that all they knew about the case "is what we read in the papers". This abandonment by Australia was a principal reason for the granting of political asylum by Ecuador. As an Australian, I found this especially shaming. When asked about Assange recently, the current Australian prime minister, Scott Morrison, said, "He should face the music". This kind of thuggery, bereft of any respect for truth and rights and the principles and law, is why the mostly Murdoch controlled press in Australia is now worried about its own future, as the Guardian is worried, and The New York Times is worried. Their concern has a name: "the Assange precedent." They know that what happens to Assange can happen to them. The basic rights and justice denied him can be denied to them. They have been warned. All of us have been warned. Whenever I see Julian in the grim, surreal world of Belmarsh prison, I am reminded of the responsibility of those of us who defend him. There are universal principles at stake in this case. He himself is fond of saying: "It's not me. It's far wider." But at the heart of this remarkable struggle - and it is, above all, a struggle - is one human being whose character, I repeat character, has demonstrated the most astonishing courage. I salute him. *This is an edited version of an address John Pilger gave at the launch in London of In Defense of Julian Assange, an anthology published by Or Books, New York.* See also: www.dontextraditeassange.com

Internet and the dirty U.S. war on Cuba

Funds allocated by the U.S. government to promote regime change in Cuba are euphemistically camouflaged as "pro-democracy programs" to finance mercenary groups, scholarships to train young Cubans as fake leaders, and a dirty Internet war

Author: Raúl Antonio Capote | informacion@granmai.cu - January 7, 2020 10:01:17



Photo: Granma

One of the most widespread falsehoods disseminated about Cuba is to present the Cuban Revolution as an enemy of the Internet. This lie is based on distortions of our condemnation of U.S. strategies using telecommunications in its anti-Cuban efforts, while the fact is hidden that Wall Street does everything it can to limit our people's access to those technologies.

Our e-mails, tweets, online presentations and Facebook posts contribute to the massive volume of data generated every day on the Internet. Today, analysts can construct models capable of predicting political preferences, sexual orientation, etc, all from the information that users themselves provide on social networks.

It has been documented that the Political Action Group (GAP) which is part of the Central Intelligence Agency's Special Activities Center, carries out projects that include the creation of communications and Internet access structures in countries or regions targeted for aggression.

In Bolivia, more than 68,000 fake Twitter accounts were created in the days leading up to the coup of November, 2019. Meanwhile, Iran suffered a wave of violence, during which the same tactic used in Bolivia was repeated: armed groups, perfectly coordinated, used the technique of "swarming" to communicate, organizing actions with text messages establishing meeting points for attacks. The aggression came to a halt when the government shut down the Internet and wireless networks, as occurred during the 2009 elections, in what became known as the Green Wave.

In February of 2018, the so-called Cuba Internet Task Force was created, following instructions outlined in a Presidential memorandum on national security, released June 16, 2017. The website Razones de Cuba has documented that the CIA's Political Action Group and institutions on the task force have highly qualified specialists who, based on models previously developed through Big Data, sent sector-specific messages to Cubans.

In June of 2019, a Twitter storm supposedly organized by Cuban users, called on our telecommunications company Etecsa to lower Internet prices. The same source reveals that an attempt was made to present this as an initiative by students, computer engineers, etc, but the alleged activists actually lived in Florida, Texas, Tennessee and Georgia. Another attempt at manipulation occurred in connection with the Constitutional Referendum, using the hashtag #YoVotoNo on Twitter.

Linked with counterrevolutionary sites and networks, thousands of false accounts flooded the island with their message, prefabricated commentators conducted "analyses" of the "Cuban situation," using well studied resources, seeking to emotionally mobilize previously identified audiences, via humor, indignation, and surprise.

The recent campaigns to discredit revolutionary artists, and the cowardly defacing of monuments to José Martí, are part of this war, with its digital correlate, that seeks to create the conditions for a "Green Wave" on the island.

The controversial Helms-Burton Act of 1996 established the obligation to fund these destabilization programs. The figure has varied under different U.S. administration since then, but the average allocation is close to 20 million dollars annually.

These funds to promote regime change in Cuba, are euphemistically camouflaged as "pro-democracy programs," which finance mercenary groups, scholarships to train young Cubans as fake leaders, and the dirty Internet war

Specifically, the Task Force, activated two years ago, given the importance of digital platforms, seems to be a defensive action by a government that has run out of ammunition in its rhetoric about how Cuban authorities deny the population access to technology, and is using this form of aggression, as illegal and interventionist as Radio and TV Martí. These are the risks for our insertion into the cyber world, but the Revolution will continue to prepare its citizens to detect these maneuvers, while expanding access to this new scenario for its social base.

Recommended

<u>War as a common denominator</u>	<u>FBI finds no evidence of "sonic attacks" in Cuba</u>	<u>The United States' new strategy and the approach toward Our America</u>	<u>The world looks to the East</u>
			

<http://en.granma.cu/mundo/2020-01-07/internet-and-the-dirty-us-war-on-cuba>

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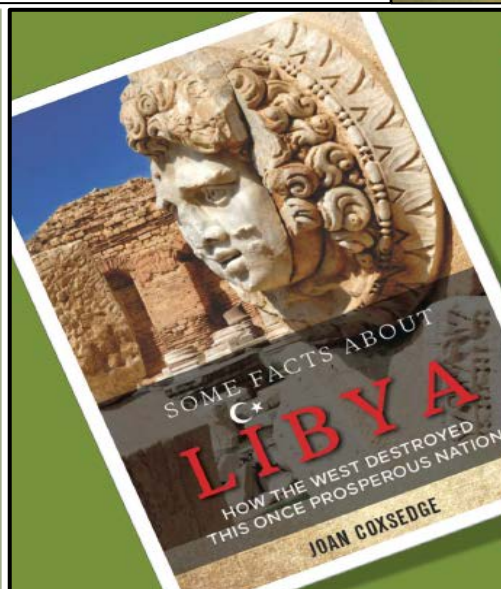
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