Cuba’s Resistance and Road to Development

Photo Feature
2019: A Turbulent Year for Latin America

Health & Science
Collaboration in the South

Sports
Cuban Baseball Put to the Olympic Test
HAVANA.- Tourism in Cuba is on the rise despite U.S. efforts to hurt its development, especially as the sector celebrates its 60th anniversary, authorities indicated.

Cuban Tourism Day on November 22 symbolizes international peace and tolerance, of great importance to the Cuban tourism industry.

November 22 was chosen as the Cuban Tourism Day because on that day, the leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, created the National Institute of the Tourist Industry (INIT).

Celebrations included a tribute to personalities of the Cuban tourist sector, who were represented by 13 renowned people.

Those honored have not only stood out in the country’s tourist industry but also in other fields, such as politics and economics. Rafael Sed Pérez, Osmany Cienfuegos and Eusebio Leal (Havana city historian and leader of restoration projects in Old Havana) are just a few.

It is worthwhile mentioning that Osmany Cienfuegos is the brother of the Cuban hero Commander Camilo Cienfuegos, whose aircraft disappeared without a trace when he was 27. Camilo was a brave guerrilla member who led the Revolution to triumph in 1959.

Author: Osmani Cienfuegos, however, stands out for being the first Minister of Tourism in Cuba following the creation of the ministry in 1994.

The Cuban tourism industry's high season—November through April—should be successful in spite of difficulties, said the former minister, Manuel Marrero, who is now the Cuban Prime Minister.

Despite the U.S. blockade against Cuba, which has intensified in recent weeks, the programs in place and the training of the sector’s staff herald a favorable high season.

Cuban authorities recognize that 2019 was clearly a tough year, especially due to increasingly restrictive commercial and economic measures imposed by Washington against Cuba.

However, more than four million foreign visitors came to Cuba in 2019, which results in a rise of over 1.6 percent in relation to the number of tourists staying in hotels and income growth.

The Cuban Ministry of Tourism (Mintur) foresees selling more incoming flights, while fostering investments, restoring hotels and building new facilities. Four thousand rooms were finished in 2019 and another 4,200 are to be added in 2020.

During a tough year characterized by trade wars sanctions, and economic cuts throughout the world, Cuba has overcome serious obstacles in order to grow.

Text & Photos Roberto F. CAMPOS

2019: Cuban Tourism Industry Wraps Up Successfully, despite U.S. blockade
HAVANA. - If it were up to the U.S. government, Cuba would have closed out 2019 with power cuts and economic standstill. However, that objective failed and the island began 2020 with greater institutionalization and strong efforts for greater development and economic efficiency.

So it was corroborated during the IV period of sessions of the 9th Legislature of the People’s Power National Assembly (ANPP) held December 20 and 21, when the temporary regulations of the new Constitution proclaimed in April of 2019 took effect, after overwhelming approval by the popular referendum.

In compliance with the Constitution, the Cuban Parliament passed a law on the organization and functions of the People’s Power National Assembly and the Council of State, which regulates their functions and enhances legislative activity.

The new law increases the authority of the ANPP and its board of directors, and controls the presentation and implementation of laws and law-decrees, as well as its relationship with other State institutions.

The legislation establishes the rights and duties of deputies and regulates the performance of the Council of State.

The Parliament also approved a law on the organization and functions of People’s Power Municipal Assemblies (AMPP) and of the People’s Councils, making their work stronger and giving them more autonomy.

It also elected the prime minister, five first deputy ministers, the secretary of the Council of Ministers and other cabinet members, with some replacements proposed by President Miguel Díaz-Canel and approved by the members of parliament, as stipulated by the Constitution.

Architect Manuel Marrero Cruz, who was serving as minister of tourism, was designated prime minister, a post that had been occupied by the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution between 1959 and 1976.

The prime minister will be the head of State’s right hand with regards to the performance and control of central and local administrations.

The term of prime minister will last five years and one of its prerogatives will be to give instructions to provincial governors. This is another institutional figure that will return to Cuba, to be elected later this month.

Marrero was congratulated by his peers in several countries including those in China, Russia and Vietnam, who expressed their willingness to work with the Cuban Head of Government.

The situation of the economy was a central topic of debate at the ANPP, held by President Díaz-Canel, Minister of Economy Alejandro Gil and other deputies.

Gil explained the priority given to 29 measures intended to strengthen the socialist enterprise and make it more efficient through prosperous and sustainable Cuban socialism.

Despite the complex international context – worsening for Cuba with the tightening of the U.S. blockade- the Cuban economy grows modestly, in line with its 2030 Development Plan.

Some progress was attained in housing construction, the tourist industry, the hydraulic infrastructure, the average salary, telecommunications, transportation and other sectors.

The year 2020 is also expected to bring tough challenges, especially after Washington openly declared its intention to cut fuel supplies to Cuba, which already coped with a fuel shortage in September and October of 2019.

Last year, practically one hostile measure per week was adopted against Cuba. “They shot to kill us, but we are alive,” said Díaz-Canel.

The prime minister will be the head of State’s right hand with regards to the performance and control of central and local administrations.

The term of prime minister will last five years and one of its prerogatives will be to give instructions to provincial governors. This is another institutional figure that will return to Cuba, to be elected later this month.

Marrero was congratulated by his peers in several countries including those in China, Russia and Vietnam, who expressed their willingness to work with the Cuban Head of Government.

The situation of the economy was a central topic of debate at the ANPP, held by President Díaz-Canel, Minister of Economy Alejandro Gil and other deputies.

Gil explained the priority given to 29 measures intended to strengthen the socialist enterprise and make it more efficient through prosperous and sustainable Cuban socialism.

Despite the complex international context – worsening for Cuba with the tightening of the U.S. blockade- the Cuban economy grows modestly, in line with its 2030 Development Plan.

Some progress was attained in housing construction, the tourist industry, the hydraulic infrastructure, the average salary, telecommunications, transportation and other sectors.

The year 2020 is also expected to bring tough challenges, especially after Washington openly declared its intention to cut fuel supplies to Cuba, which already coped with a fuel shortage in September and October of 2019.

Last year, practically one hostile measure per week was adopted against Cuba. “They shot to kill us, but we are alive,” said Díaz-Canel.
WASHINGTON.- In recent years, relations between the United States and Cuba have been marked by Washington's hostility towards the island. However, the aggressive actions of the Trump administration have always faced strong rejection within U.S. society.

Members of solidarity groups, legislators, businesspeople, religious leaders and many Cubans living in the United States have spoken in favor of improving bilateral relations whenever an anti-Cuba measure has been adopted.

Such was the case in April when new Cuba travel restrictions were adopted, along with when Title III of the Helms Burton Act was activated on May 2, allowing lawsuits against people and entities that invest in properties nationalized in Cuba after the revolutionary triumph on January 1, 1959.

"The new coercive measures announced by the Trump administration harm families and negatively impact Cuba's increasing private sector," the Democrat Congresswoman of Florida Kathy Castor said in a release.

Fellow Democrat Karen Bass criticized on Twitter how hard the current president is trying to undo the rapprochement process started by his predecessor Barack Obama (2009-2017).

Meanwhile, the head of the Engage Cuba organization, James Williams, said that Trump adopts those actions with one intention only: "to appease the extremists in southern Florida before the 2020 elections."

For his part, Collin Laverty, President of the specialized travel agency Cuba Educational Travel, said it is sad to see Cuban and U.S. people suffering because the republican president has left his policy in the hands of legislators from that southern territory.

After the new Cuba travel bans took effect in June, bipartisan groups brought legislative resolutions before the House of Representatives and the Senate asking that U.S. citizens be allowed to travel freely to Cuba.

Those draft bills aim at putting an end to travel restrictions and existing obstacles that make those visits so difficult.

It is inexcusable that the federal government prevents citizens and residents from traveling to "a small country 90 miles away that poses no threat to us," stated Democrat Senator Patrick Leahy.

In a release issued on November 20, that legislator reiterated his criticism of the anti-Cuba measures adopted by the Trump administration, and stressed the importance of the rapprochement between the two nations.

"Often I have talked about the importance of improving relations with Cuba. It is a matter of national interest because our policy of unilateral sanctions and isolation, implemented for over 50 years, has failed to attain its objectives," he stated.

In the meantime, Democrat James McGovern called the decision to suspend the flights of U.S. airlines to all Cuban destinations except Havana as of December 10 a "stupid political trick."

Our disagreements with the Cuban government must be handled with diplomacy and dialogue, not with obsolete and unpopular Cold War-like restrictions, he stressed.

Among its protests of anti-Cuba measures, members of the Metro D.C. Coalition in Solidarity with the Cuban Revolution gathered in front of the White House at the end of July to demand the lifting of the U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade against the island.

"YES to Cuba, NO to the blockade" was a slogan shouted many times by the protesters, including James Harris, who told The Havana Reporter they would like to educate the U.S. public about the topic.

"That siege is the result of U.S. imperialist aggression and we must oppose it. It is in each country's interest to fight that policy," he highlighted.

---

**U.S. Voices Condemn Anti-Cuba Hostility**

**By Diony SANABIA**

"The new coercive measures announced by the Trump administration harm families and negatively impact Cuba's increasing private sector," the Democrat Congresswoman of Florida Kathy Castor said in a release.

Fellow Democrat Karen Bass criticized on Twitter how hard the current president is trying to undo the rapprochement process started by his predecessor Barack Obama (2009-2017).

Meanwhile, the head of the Engage Cuba organization, James Williams, said that Trump adopts those actions with one intention only: "to appease the extremists in southern Florida before the 2020 elections."

For his part, Collin Laverty, President of the specialized travel agency Cuba Educational Travel, said it is sad to see Cuban and U.S. people suffering because the republican president has left his policy in the hands of legislators from that southern territory.

After the new Cuba travel bans took effect in June, bipartisan groups brought legislative resolutions before the House of Representatives and the Senate asking that U.S. citizens be allowed to travel freely to Cuba.

Those draft bills aim at putting an end to travel restrictions and existing obstacles that make those visits so difficult.

It is inexcusable that the federal government prevents citizens and residents from traveling to "a small country 90 miles away that poses no threat to us," stated Democrat Senator Patrick Leahy.

In a release issued on November 20, that legislator reiterated his criticism of the anti-Cuba measures adopted by the Trump administration, and stressed the importance of the rapprochement between the two nations.

"Often I have talked about the importance of improving relations with Cuba. It is a matter of national interest because our policy of unilateral sanctions and isolation, implemented for over 50 years, has failed to attain its objectives," he stated.

In the meantime, Democrat James McGovern called the decision to suspend the flights of U.S. airlines to all Cuban destinations except Havana as of December 10 a "stupid political trick."

Our disagreements with the Cuban government must be handled with diplomacy and dialogue, not with obsolete and unpopular Cold War-like restrictions, he stressed.

Among its protests of anti-Cuba measures, members of the Metro D.C. Coalition in Solidarity with the Cuban Revolution gathered in front of the White House at the end of July to demand the lifting of the U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade against the island.

"YES to Cuba, NO to the blockade" was a slogan shouted many times by the protesters, including James Harris, who told The Havana Reporter they would like to educate the U.S. public about the topic.

"That siege is the result of U.S. imperialist aggression and we must oppose it. It is in each country's interest to fight that policy," he highlighted.

---

**Prensa Latina**

You can now get up to date news headlines from the Prensa Latina News Agency by sending an SMS with the letters PL to 8100.

Once confirmed, you will receive 4 x 250 spaced message updates per day.

A 30 day subscription costs only $1.00, deducted from your balance and which should be renewed before your expiry date.

For further details see: http://www.entmovil.com, www.prensa-latina.cu or call the Desert Customer Care Line at 7 832 3501.

For 4 News Headlines per day for just $1CUC / month, Send an SMS with the letters PL to 8100.
HAVANA.- “When we talk about education today, we do it from the perspective of humankind’s future and survival,” said Manssour Bin Mussallam, President of the Education Relief Foundation (ERF).

We also talk about justice, prosperity and sustainability, “because we have no other option in the South,” highlighted the Saudi young man in an exclusive interview with The Havana Reporter in anticipation of the III International Summit on Balanced and Inclusive Education (ForumBIE2030).

The summit, taking place in Djibouti from January 27-29, will welcome representatives of the ministries of Education, international organizations, NGOs (including the civil society and academic institutions), and universities from all over the world.

Bin Mussallam said he was very pleased with the ERF (NGO) working team, which organized the summit with the assistance of the President’s small North-African country. The second Summit was held about a year ago in Mexico, while the first took place on November 2017 at the UN headquarters in Geneva.

According to Bin Mussallam, the III edition of the ForumBIE2030 will bring important change towards balanced and inclusive education, as this is the first time a declaration will be signed in order for the participating States, civil society and academic institutions to adopt a “moral commitment” to this type of education.

As the first objective of the Universal Declaration on Balanced and Inclusive Education – a short, 15 article text –Bin Mussallam said that it will help define our terms through making a collective agreement.

The document to be approved in Djibouti ratifies ideas stated in other declarations and goes far beyond the basic terms a quality and balanced education.

Bin Mussallam also noted that many of the past declarations “were beautiful and well-intentioned” but it’s no secret that “they have not yet been accomplished.”

In his opinion, the problem is that international summits are summoned and declarations are signed, but no one takes responsibility for the shortcomings of educational systems around the world: educational systems that need technical, financial and human resources, which call for the commitment of national governance. Thus, he said, we are not building educational systems “out of nothing.”

What, then, do the declarations need to add in relation to education? “We are signing a declaration, but we are going to provide the financial, human and technical resources to jointly help nations reach their commitments.”

Bin Mussallam also highlighted that, with few exceptions, the problem is not the lack of political will but practical challenges of transforming an educational system.

“We believe that the declaration offers States and collective institutions the necessary tools to achieve these commitments,” he stressed.

In Bin Mussallam’s opinion, the world needs a platform that allows nations mutually beneficial ways to cooperate in order to achieve balanced and inclusive education.

“For that reason, ERF considers South-South cooperation as a key objective of such a goal, in favor of supporting everyone,” Bin Mussallam commented.

We are not excluding anyone, and we indeed think about the need of cooperation between the South and the North, “but that cooperation must be based on equality and self-sufficient educational systems in the South, which aren’t dependent on foreign development.”

Bin Mussallam stressed that this initiative is not against the North, but rather, in favor of the South.

He finally said that education is not apolitical; “that’s a lie, an illusion, there’s nothing more political than education.” Education is “the sculptor of the future at the same time as being an instrument to reproduce society exactly as it is, injustices and all.”

The Four Pillars of Balanced and Inclusive Education

1-Intraculturalism: An approach based on in-depth cultural introspection for a thorough understanding of the inter- indebtedness and interdependence of cultures.

2-Transdisciplinarity: An integrative, multi-faceted approach based on both academic and non-academic knowledge domains for a complex and holistic understanding of the issues and subject matter.

3-Dialecticism: An interactional and synergetic approach to problem posing dialogue and critical exchange, promoting free and critical thinking through the proactive participation of learners.

4-Contextuality: A context-based approach, integrating and adapting to varying perspectives, values, and interpretive frameworks of the learners, to develop their sense of co-ownership and co-creation.

What is the Education Relief Foundation?

The Education Relief Foundation (ERF) is an education-focused Non-Governmental Organization based in Geneva, Switzerland. The organization works for pedagogically innovative curriculum, programs and public content at the internationally systemic level.
HAVANA.- The diverse styles of leading dance companies marked the Cuban dance scene in 2019, together with tributes to Prima Ballerina Assoluta Alicia Alonso, which will continue in 2020 to honor the universal artist.

Alonso passed away on October 17 in Havana, when she was about to turn 99 years old, which is why different companies from around the world will celebrate her 100 birthday in 2020.

At the beginning of 2019, the Cuban Ministry of Culture had appointed the first dancer of Cuba’s National Ballet Company (BNC), Viengsay Valdés, the artistic vice director of the company to support the work of Alonso, who was still the BNC director.

Under Valdés’ guidance, the BNC continued to receive excellent reviews by specialized critics and premiered pieces by choreographers Alexei Ratmansky (Russia) and Ricardo Amarante (Brazil), who came to the island to stage Concerto DSCH and Love Fear Loss, respectively.

Also in 2019, Cubans mourned the death of Ramiro Guerra, a choreographer, researcher, theoretician and pioneer of the contemporary dance in the country.

He founded the company that has been directed by Miguel Iglesias for 34 years, Cuba’s Contemporary Dance Company, which celebrated 60 years of fruitful existence with the production of Carmina Burana and a symphonic version of Súlkary.

The prestigious dancer Carlos Acosta interrupted his retirement from classical ballet to perform the famous Don Quixote grand pas de deux and honor two of his great professors: British Director and Choreographer Ben Stevenson and Cuban Director of the Fernando Alonso National School of Ballet, Ramona de Saá.

He shone once more in Havana, where his company (Acosta Danza) premiered a new piece by Cuban choreographer Marianela Boán, another by Spanish choreographer Juanjo Arqués and a third by Goyo Montero.

The year 2019 was equally successful for the dancer, director and choreographer Irene Rodríguez, who directed the 28th “La Huella de España en Cuba” (Spanish Influence in Cuba) Festival and staged two world premieres during Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival in the United States.

In the meantime, Cuba’s Malpaso Dance Company dedicated a season to one of the most paradigmatic figures of the contemporary dance, the U.S. choreographer Merce Cunningham.

To commemorate Cunningham, who passed away in 2009, eleven Malpaso dancers performed the piece “Fielding Sixes,” first at New York’s Joyce Theater and then in Havana, together with other beautiful pieces.

The 25th edition of the Ibero-American Culture Festival held in the eastern province of Holguín invited choreographer Rosario Cárdenas and her company to perform Afrodita, oh espejo!, inspired by the parallelism between the deities of Cuba and Cyprus.

The Spanish-Cuban choreographer Susana Pous premiered the piece Infinite (Infinite) in Havana, with very positive feedback from the public and critics.

Meanwhile, the Lizt Alfonso Dance Company (LADC), another prestigious Cuban Company, made successful tours in Canada and the United States, where it was invited by the “Queen of Country Music” Dolly Parton.

The LADC also shook the island of Martinique and Lima, the Peruvian capital, with its extraordinary fusion style, while in Havana, it closed the gala dedicated to the King and Queen of Spain, Felipe VI and Letizia. The BNC, Acosta Danza Company and the National Folkloric Company performed at the gala as well.
HAVANA.- Street art paints identity onto an urban landscape. Graffiti has helped shape the image of Havana, marked by humor and fantasy.

Travelers can find intriguing street art all over the city, including cultural centers like Fábrica de Arte Cubano (The Cuban Art Factory).

The word "graffiti" comes from Italian, translating directly as "scratched". As an artistic style, graffiti implies street art without granted permission.

The origin of the word dates back to critical or satirical inscriptions made on walls during the Roman Empire. "Graffiti" is used to refer to a range of expressions, from tagging to archaeological inscriptions. In Havana, graffiti offers the city decoration, happiness, youth and imagination.

By Roberto F. CAMPOS

Photos: Roberto F. Campos
UPCOMING EVENTS

29 Havana International Book Fair (Feb 6-16 2020)

Habano Festival (Feb 24-28)

Festival de La Salsa (Feb 25 - Mar 1 2020)

FOOD TRADE COMPANY

ALIMPORT is a food trade company recognized both nationally and internationally for its excellence. With more than 50 years of experience in foreign trade, we are experts in the importation of food products, raw materials and other consumer goods.

ALIMPORT is a member of GECOMEX

Contact us: Infantes No. 16 entre 23 y Humboldt
Phone: (+53) 78388983 Email: alimport@alimport.com.cu
Web: www.alimport.com.cu

A drop that improves your life
Demonstrations Fight for Colombia’s Indigenous

BOGOTA—Indigenous communities, a frequent target of violence in Colombia, view the current demonstrations as a historical expression of resistance.

“We are demonstrating for history,” said Ferley Quintero, Chief Adviser of the Cauca Regional Indigenous Council (CRIC), one of the native organizations that endorses the anti-government demonstrations going on in the country after the national mass strike held on November 21.

“We held a meeting over a year ago and since then, have conducted permanent assemblies,” Quintero told The Havana Reporter.

“The issues put forward in the protests by social and popular sectors in the country are problems that affect us all—the indigenous communities of the Cauca department and Colombia as a whole,” he stressed.

The adviser highlighted that, “we have suffered violence historically, been stigmatized, gone missing, been murdered, for defending life and territory. However, as our indigenous guard anthem says: some will die and thousand will be born.”

That motto, which is part of the guard anthem, is what keeps us alive, strong, to defend our lives and the social, cultural, political demands of our territories, he added.

Quintero also noted that as indigenous people, they cannot fight alone; they need support from other organizations, like the Afro brothers, who also suffer from similar systemic issues.

“We have witnessed that the Colombian government has a strategy, not only the current government but also those before it. They are interested in our indigenous guard because we preserve water and other natural resources, we defend products that are underground,” he affirmed.

In his opinion, current governments have adopted a political and economic strategy to try to finish with indigenous people one way or another.

Quintana stressed that for that reason, the Constitution has been suspended just like the previous reform and the Peace Agreements have not been met, because those in power always want to start a war.

In that war, indigenous rural and afro-descendant people are the ones that suffer the consequences. To us, life and existence is our territory. They want to finish with us under that strategy, Quintanacommenced.

SOCIAL UNREST IN THE STREETS
Since November 21, thousands of people have been demonstrating in the streets of Colombia against governmental policies, in rejection of violence.

In that context, the National Strike Committee has acknowledged the peaceful spirit of the protests, even though riots and acts of repression have led by the police during some of the protests.

In the document submitted to the President of the Republic, the Committee demanded that the government not move any process of privatization or alienation of the State's assets up, regardless of its stock participation.

It also demanded the purge of the National Police and the dissolution of the Riot Moving Squad, which has been inundated with fierce attacks because of the excessive use of force during demonstrations.

The Committee requested that the government start implementing and fulfilling the signed agreements with the respective organizations, to arrange with the Agricultural Dignity entity the topics including the needs of agricultural producers and the revision of the Free Trade Agreements.

It also demanded the analysis of the ‘Defend Peace’ citizen movement and the fulfillment and implementation process of the Peace Agreements.

The Committee also emphasized the need to define environmental and high plateau-protection policies with the representatives of the selected environmental organizations.

Peace Prevails After Dominica Controls OAS Boycott

HAVANA—Dominica, a small Caribbean island of only 751 square kilometers and just over 73,000 inhabitants, ended a boycott encouraged by the opposition and the Organization of American States (OAS) to hinder the country’s electoral process.

Since the beginning of the year, the OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro, in particular has been inciting sectors opposing the current government of Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit, reelected on December 6, to disrupt the election process.

“Today I met with former UN Representative of the Commonwealth of Dominica, Crispin Gregoire, who addressed his concern that the upcoming elections in Dominica are not free and fair. I also asked the OAS for aid to help ensure a level of impartiality in the country,” Almagro wrote on his Twitter account on February 7.

On February 20, the then Chairman of the Caribbean Community (Caricom), Timothy Harris, said the regional bloc was extremely concerned about Almagro’s overstepping actions and remarks.

The Dominican Minister of Foreign Affairs and Caricom Issues, Francine Baron, wrote a two-page letter to Almagro urging him to remove the tweet immediately and apologize, which he never did.

The OAS supported opposition member Lennox Linton, tried to instill fear and agitation, pushing a false claim of current fraud and even wanted to implement electoral reform in the country a few weeks before the general elections.

The general elections in Dominica were held on December 6, as Skerrit was reelected for his fifth consecutive term in office.

When the elections were over, he asked the opposition leaders to think about the actions carried out over the previous days. Referring to the agenda of his next 100 days in office, Skerrit said he plans to hold meetings to allow all sectors to address their ideas and settle differences to find solutions to existing issues.

“There are people trying to hinder these results in order to generate violence, but this was already solved at the polls (...), after this defeat, political parties must revise their leaderships and practices,” he said, while stressing his call for peace.
HAVANA.- Casa de las Américas, a Cuban institution that promotes the arts and social research on the continent, enhances its vast legacy in 2020 with the new leadership of Cuban intellectual Abel Prieto.

Taking on the leadership role, the renowned essayist will honor and continue the work of the recently deceased poet Roberto Fernández Retamar, who had headed the center, working in favor of literature and artistic creation.

Retamar proved the worth of Casa de las Américas, an institution born amidst the U.S. government's hostile political scenario against Cuba; a center that became a bastion against the isolation of Cuba and the Latin American region.

Founded in 1959, heroine of the Cuban Revolution Haydee Santamaría was the driving force behind the creation of this cultural institution.

Santamaría met the principles of the Cuban Revolution by strengthening cultural ties between the island and the rest of the continent.

Conceived as a community center for dialogue among different approaches, the respected institution has left an imprint on the region's cultural processes and maintains a unifying, pro-Latin American vision.

For over 60 years, Casa de las Américas has received the support and commitment of prestigious scholars from the region, such as Víctor Jara, Rodolfo Walsh, Julio Cortázar, Aquiles Nazoa, Francisco Manrique Cabrera and Juan Aburto.

The work of Cuban intellectuals such as Juan Marinello, Alejo Carpentier, José Lezama Lima, Mirta Aguirre, Onelio Jorge Cardoso, Fayad Jamís and Luis Rogelio Nogueras was linked to the institution, which has hosted cultural debates since the 1960s, throughout the reactionary counteroffensive in the 1970s.

According to Argentinean writer Julio Cortázar, ‘Casa de las Américas’ publications and activities have had a permanent role in global culture, even influencing ideologies far from that of Cuba, with high-quality intellectual and artistic production.”

From its venue on the emblematic corner of the streets 3ra and G, Casa de las Américas strengthens ties between the region’s intellectuals through the promotion, research and publication of the work of writers, visual artists, musicians, actors and scholars from Latin America.

Its long tradition has included granting many important awards - such as the Literary and Musicology awards named after the institution – and a contemporary portrait of arts and culture through the pages of the 50-year-old magazine Conjunto, founded by Manuel Galich in 1964.

Cuban essayist Abel Prieto has been acknowledged for constantly defending Cuba’s cultural policy. In fact, he acted as minister of Culture, president of the José Martí Cultural Society and director of the José Martí Office.

Throughout his career, he has also acted as president of the National Association of Cuban Writers and Artists and advisor of the then president of the Council of States and Ministers, Army General Raúl Castro Ruz.

Casa de las Américas keeps evolving without losing the spirit of its origin and remains loyal to the urgent task of cultural integration in Latin America and the Caribbean.
HAVANA - Big steps forward and even bigger steps backward marked the course of 2019 in Latin America. Although the triumph of Frente de Todos (Everybody’s Front) coalition in Argentina brought hope for the progressive forces, the coup d’état in Bolivia returned the country to the years of dictatorships.

Those two events characterized the regional situation of a convulsive year that also witnessed mass demonstrations against neoliberal policies in countries like Chile, Ecuador, Colombia, Haiti and Honduras.

ARGENTINA VOTED FOR CHANGE
During the October 27 presidential elections in Argentina, the Alberto-Cristina Fernández ticket succeeded with 48.24 percent of the votes, defeating President Mauricio Macri of the Juntos por el Cambio (Together for Change) coalition, who obtained 40.28 percent.

Analysts consider that the electoral results were due to discontentment with governmental policies that shut down social programs, benefited privatization, and compromised the economy under the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) supervision.

During his inauguration speech on December 10, the newly-elected President regretted the fragile, stagnant situation of the country, where one in every two children is poor, inflation records are at their highest in 30 years, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) shows the lowest figure since 2009 and foreign debt is higher than ever.

Alberto Fernández said he would help Argentina stand tall again, and noted the importance of boosting the economy with programs that benefit the development of industry as well as small businesses, involving less-developed sectors.

COUP D’ÉTATS RETURN TO THE REGION
Although the progressive sectors regarded Fernández’s win as a breath of fresh air, the coup against the Evo Morales government in Bolivia meant a huge step backward for democracy, after 13 years of positive change that took over two million people out of poverty and had the country exhibit the highest GDP growth in the region.

Morales resigned from his post on November 10, after the army urged him to do so, under the influence of the rightwing that declared alleged fraud in the October 20 elections. That day, the candidate for the Movement toward Socialism (MAS) won with 47.8 percent of the votes, while the opposition candidate of Comunidad Ciudadana (Community Citizen) alliance, Carlos Mesa, obtained 36.51 percent.

However, when more than one million votes were yet to be counted in the rural area, where MAS has historically won with a wide margin, the Comunidad Ciudadana candidate began claiming alleged fraud and the OAS “suggested” to hold a second round.

After the constitutional order was disrupted, joint forces of the police and the army unleashed a brutal repression against popular demonstrations, leaving over 30 people dead, 800 injured and more than 1,500 arrested.

Political analysts denounced the participation of the OAS and the United States in the recent events in Bolivia and warned that behind the coup d’état lies interest in gaining a hold of the country’s natural resources, mainly lithium and gas.

THE NEOLIBERAL MODEL IS FADING AWAY
In 2019 Latin America was shaken by popular protests that were violently repressed by police in countries like Ecuador, Chile, Colombia, Honduras and Haiti. Even though the case in each country was unique, they all proved that the neoliberal model encouraged by rightwing governments is losing support.

In Ecuador, the detonator was a package of economic measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), while in Chile it started with the rejection of a rise in fare prices and resulted in a call for increased wages and pensions, improvements in healthcare and education, a replacement of the neoliberal model and a reform of the constitution inherited from the country’s period of dictatorship.

Colombia also witnessed demonstrations against a pension and tax reform bill encouraged by the government, while in Haiti, protestors called to eliminate the fuel subsidies requested by the IMF. In Honduras, citizens protested against the governmental plans to privatize healthcare and education.

Although demands were different in every country, experts agree that the social outbreak responds to the unsuccessful policies implemented in the region, which resulted in layoffs, privatization and cuts in public spending.

According to U.S. political scientist Noam Chomsky, the neoliberal impositions failed in Latin America in spite of reiterated floods of capital in the form of multimillion credits, which, instead of progress or development, brought about huge debt and exacerbated poverty.

The statistics speak for themselves. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the region has shown a widespread economic slowdown over the past six years, with the GDP expected to grow only 0.1 percent in 2019.
HAVANA.- Former Bolivian President Evo Morales, overthrown last November by a coup d’etat, leads the electoral campaign of the Movement to Socialism (MAS) party, convinced of a new victory.

Even though the Andean-Amazonian country faces a scenario characterized by military and police repression, political persecution, censorship of the press, and the disarticulation of the Plurinational State and economy. Social sectors and MAS head the fight for electoral victory against the pro-coup factions.

From exile in Argentina, Evo Morales is supporting the MAS campaign and assures that this will “peacefully” recover power in his country.

THE COUP

On November 10, high-ranking military and police officers forced Evo Morales to resign from his post, accusing him of electoral fraud, police mutiny and civic demonstrations.

Long before the elections held on October 20, in which Morales emerged victorious with a 10-point advantage over Carlos Mesa (his closest opponent), the right wing’s radical sectors warned that they would not acknowledge his victory and talked about a potential take-over.

The Morales government invited the Organization of American States (OAS) to revise the electoral process, but the so-called U.S. Ministry of Colonies issued an unreliable report that stated irregularities that sparked the coup.

In the face of this institutional mayhem, Morales first summoned new elections, but due to the threats of the extremist sectors, he was forced to resign to try to avoid the bloodshed that later occurred.

On November 12, opposition Senator Jeanine Añez Chávez declared herself Bolivia’s acting president in an extraordinary session that didn’t have the quorum needed by the Upper House – due to the absence of the MAS legislators.

Since, 30 people have been killed, dozens wounded, international relations worsened, journalists threatened, and Morales supporters and officials persecuted; many Bolivians have described this period as a nightmare.

On Sunday, November 22, Añez promulgated the Exceptional Regime and Transitory Law for General Elections, not acknowledging the elections held on October 20.

Now, the political sectors are redefining their candidates and drafting their strategies for the forthcoming elections.

In Washington, OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro considered one of the people who pulled the strings of the coup d’état in Bolivia -welcomed Luis Fernando Camacho, former top representative of the Pro Santa Cruz Committee, leader of the coup and candidate for presidency. Meanwhile, in Bolivia, other sectors and representatives of the right wing show their thirst for power.

In that context, Evo Morales, who has gained more strength and is willing to continue fighting, affirmed in a press conference in Argentina – where he arrived on December 12 – that as long as he is alive, he will continue participating in politics to stand for the humble.

‘I might not be a candidate but I have the right to participate in politics,’ said the former president after asking for an electoral commission to be set up prior to the elections, which are expected to take place in the first quarter of 2020.

Regarding the MAS candidate, Morales highlighted that there are several candidates, some very young. ‘We have several leaders, we are going to look for a unitary candidate and we will accompany him or her,’ he added.

Morales stated his confidence that his party will win the elections and for that, they are trying to guarantee the votes of the indigenous, middle class and working class that greatly benefited from the 13 years that his government was in power.
HAVANA.- At the beginning of 2019, when the White House announced the prohibition of travels to Cuba—except those related to family issues—the U.S. government claimed that the Cuban government would not receive any type of support from the United States. Under former National Security advisor John Bolton, Washington declared an escalation in the aggressive policy on Cuba, which materialized through the activation of Title III of the infamous Helms-Burton Act, the prohibition on cruise ships, yachts and private planes’ travels to Cuba, and limitations on remittances, among other harsh measures.

It was evident then that the administration of president Donald Trump hoped for the island to abandon the principles that Cubans have defended for over 60 years.

As a result of his crusade, not a single Cuban citizen has benefited; on the contrary, many have felt the repercussions of the sharp decline in tourism. In Cuba, 605,908 people were reported self-employed at the end of May, 2019.

The highest number of self-employment activities—such as food production and sale, transportation of freight and passengers, and house and room rentals—are sectors that depend greatly on tourist activity.

Self-employment in Cuba has grown in the past years, to the extent that in 2010, there were about 157,000 workers where as in 2018, they represented over 13 percent of the country’s population of 11 million.

In the middle of this year, before the more recent measures of the U.S. government, Martha Honey, Executive Director of the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST)—an entity located in the U.S. capital—recognized that the regulations against the Cuban tourist industry affected the private sector.

According to the expert, the arrival of U.S. people on board cruise ships experienced the most notable increase in the last years, as 427,000 Americans visited the island in 2017 through this modality, and in 2018 the figure rose to about 626,000.

According to a CREST survey, over 95 percent of the self-employed Cubans interviewed said that the changes by the White House in the travel regulations were negative, and in 2018 the 97 percent said that their incomes are greatly impacted by U.S. visitors.

The aggressiveness of the Trump administration against Cuba marks a tendency that affects the performance of Cuban workers whose means rely on profiting from foreign visits. All those actions, as well as the whole blockade, harm the Cuban people.
CARACAS.- With more than 4,800 commercial establishments using the Petro as a medium of exchange, the Venezuelan cryptocurrency is gaining ground in the national economy, creating a path as a financial alternative to the dollar.

Only one month after President Nicolás Maduro announced that state workers and pensioners can use the Petro at various commercial establishments, skepticism fell away as more people realized the benefits of the new alternative.

Since December 19, thousands of people have brought products and services in Petro, which is equivalent to some 1.38 million Bolivares (nearly $30 according to the exchange rate at the time).

When announcing the measure, the President said, “this new and unique experience can be used as an example for the emerging world. The Petro is born in the framework of the new multipolar world and in economic terms, it opens new opportunities of development.”

Venezuela created the Petro in 2018 based on a proposal made by Commander Hugo Chávez in 2009, backed by 30,000 million barrels of oil of the Ayacucho I Block, equivalent to over $1.5 billion.

One year later, facing a severe blockade by the United States, whose coercive and unilateral measures negatively affected the local economy, the Venezuelan State certified 180,000 tons of briquetted iron at the National Superintendence of Crypto assets and Related Activities (Sunacrip) to support those operations.

It thus adopted the first measures for the currency’s mass use, opening a new option for the protection of people’s income. That financial policy emerged as part of the Economic Recovery, Growth and Prosperity program, and placed the South American country among the first nations to use cryptocurrency in such a manner.

In June 2019 Maduro decreed the creation of digital wallets at the Digital Youth and Students Bank. Through the bank’s establishment, 924 million Bolivares were approved to begin the exchange of digital currencies, opening one million wallets that allow transactions using crypto assets.

In the meantime, SUNACRIP, the Central Bank of Venezuela (BCV) and the Vice President of Economy fixed the convertibility mechanism of the Petro for three million, which can be exchanged with Bolivares or other cryptocurrencies.

Financial institutions, especially the Public Bank, gradually joined the process with the activation of the BDV’s Biopago and PuntosYa mechanisms, while also opening windows at bank branches for the mass use of cryptocurrency.

Consequently, the new virtual currency was extended to the working class in the form of benefits, extra month’s salary paid at Christmas and bonds of the Basic and Strategic Enterprises of Guayana.

The platform also includes other mechanisms such as Patria Remesa, Petro Pago and PetroApp, which strengthen the Petro. Additionally, Sunacrip is expected to develop new instruments this year to make the sovereign crypto asset available to all. Similarly, a special credit card is likely to be implemented for transactions.

One million Petros every two months is assigned to the government and protectors and in order to improve public services and for cities’ maintenance, which will also strengthen social policies and the exercise of the people’s power.

Experts affirm that given these strategies, the new cryptocurrency will be gaining ground and even replace the dollar gradually, allowing Venezuela to attain its economic and financial independence.

**Venezuelan Cryptocurrency: Strong Financial Alternative**

By Yadira CRUZ

PHOTOS: Telesur
Cuban Baseball Put to the Olympic Test

By Jhonah Díaz

HAVANA- Cuban baseball is showing few signs of success for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games qualification process. Recent results suggest that the national sport is on a downward slope and the near future doesn’t seem to be very promising, in spite of attempts to overcome this unfortunate reality.

National teams averaged three strikeouts in 2019, with lackluster performances at the Caribbean Series, the Pan-American Games and the Premier-12 Tournament. Swing after swing, results failed to improve. Defeat was the only outcome for Cuban team and fans lost all hope.

In this doomsday scenario, the Cuban team, covered by a mantle of illusions, will try to realize its dream of participating in the ephemeral return of baseball to the Olympic Games.

The Japanese capital will welcome the sport with its death certificate in both hands, as it will be left out at Paris 2024.

Regardless, Cuban baseball’s next test will take place at the Americas Pre-Olympic Qualifying Tournament — taking place in the U.S. city of Arizona from March 22-26, 2020. Eight countries will fight the only available quota, although the second and third places will be granted an extra life for another qualifying tournament.

The World Baseball-Softball Confederation (WBSC) drew the competitors and Cuba is included in Group B, with Canada, Venezuela and Colombia, while Group A is composed of Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and the United States.

The competition will be conducted on the basis of a single, round-robin system in which the two first teams of each group will advance to the Super Round final. The WBSC explained that the teams would not compete for gold, silver and bronze medals.

With the exception of Nicaragua, the rest of the candidates had a failed attempt at the Premier-12 (last November), when Mexico won third place and became the best team of the Americas – thus qualifying for the Olympics for the first time in the sport.

After five matches, the new representative of the Americas will join teams that have already qualified for the Games: Japan, the host country; Israel, winner of the European and African Pre-Olympic Tournament; and South Korea, winner of the Premier-12.

But there is still hope, as the Chinese city of Taichung will host a world qualification tournament from April 1-5. The silver and bronze medalists in Arizona will compete against China, the Netherlands and the winner of the Oceania tournament to select the last team that will compete in the Olympics.

Cuba, a country with a long tradition in Olympic baseball— three gold medals (Barcelona 1992, Atlanta 1996 and Athens 2004) and two silver medals (Sydney 2000 and Beijing 2008) – will have a difficult journey. The country was present in the five Olympic competitions leading up to the withdrawal of baseball from the Olympic Games in London 2012 and Rio de Janeiro 2016.

Officials, fans and specialists agree that this new challenge will be extremely difficult. However, some say that, “dreaming costs nothing,” and according to some arguments, there is a real possibility to make this dream come true. Let us then be hopeful about the two last chances Cuba has to qualify for Tokyo.
CENTER SPECIALIZED IN MEDICAL TOURISM

- Tailored clinical and surgical medical programs.
- 24-hour E.R.
- Outpatient Consultation for all specialties
- Variety in medical check-ups.
- High-tech diagnostic and therapeutic means.
- Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation.
- Dental services.
- House calls.
- Medical evacuation and medical escort abroad.

'Clínica Central Cira García' Central Clinic
4101 20th St. and 41st Ave. Playa, Havana, Cuba
Telephone: (53) 7 204 2811
Telefax: (53) 7 2041633 Email: tarjutu@aimag.cu
www.cnag.cu/clinicacentralclagarcia

---

I CHOOSE CUBA to walk

Cuban Program for the treatment of diabetic foot with Heberprot-P®

The Diabetic Mellitus is a non-communicable chronic disease that has a high incidence in the world population. It can bring about important complications to the person who suffers from it.

Among them is the diabetic feet ulcer, that is responsible of physical-motor disabilities. This is why an integral and multidisciplinary attention is carried out on these patients, emphasizing in the prevention, control and treatment of the disease.

One of the most important elements of this program is the usage of a revolutionary, and unique drug created in Cuba: The Heberprot-P®, prescribed for the therapy of the diabetic foot ulcer (of intra-hospital surgery). It has become quite a worldwide event for the possibilities it offers to face this suffering, its application allows to reduce the risks of amputation due to these lesions in the 78% of the cases.