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Jorge Mario Sánchez.



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Wayne Smith.



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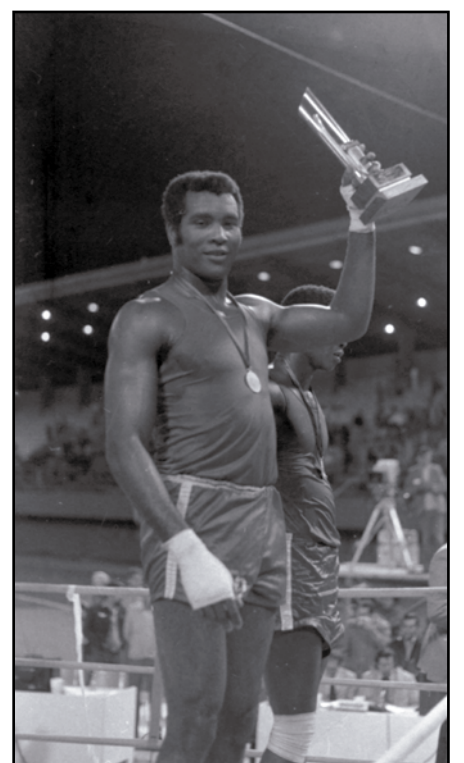
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BOCA DE GUAMÁ

Protecting the Cuban Crocodile

By Wilfredo **ALAYON**

MATANZAS._ Boca de Guamá, the most popular tourist center in the swampland of Ciénaga de Zapata in the western province of Matanzas, is home to an important crocodile breeding farm.

The Ciénaga de Zapata is the largest and best-preserved wetland in the Caribbean islands, and is a Biosphere Reserve and Ramsar site.

In this picturesque setting about 160 km southeast of Havana, experts oversee the breeding of two species in enclosures and semi-natural conditions: the *cocodylus rhombifer*, or Cuban crocodile, endemic to the island, and the *cocodylus acutus*, or American crocodile.

The farm began operating in 1960 to preserve these species, which had become endangered due to indiscriminate hunting, and to provide employment for

local residents. The Cuban crocodile is specifically endemic to Zapata and to the Ciénaga de Lanier, a swamp on Isla de la Juventud, the second-largest island in the Cuban archipelago. The American crocodile inhabits the main island's southern coast and parts of its northern coast.

At the crocodile farm, these species reproduce in captivity, and their numbers are growing every year.

All of this has made it possible to continue having pure strains of the largest of Cuba's reptiles, and enabled experts to continue learning more about them.

A LONG-LIVING SPECIES

According to scientific literature, these crocodiles live to be 80 to 100 years old. They are carnivores, feeding on insects,

mollusks, birds and fish. Their mating season begins in December and ends in April, and they spawn once a year.

Etiam Pérez, a biologist and worker at the farm, told the Prensa Latina news agency that he personally knew of a crocodile that reached its 65th birthday.


"The females lay an average of 30 eggs, and the birth rate varies between 66 and 70 percent," he said. Ten percent of newborns die during the first year, Pérez noted.

"We are trying to maintain an appropriate density of crocodiles (on the farm)—which has a capacity of about 5,000—and increase the number of enclosures and breeding areas," he said. Currently, the farm has 4,000 crocodiles, which are kept in groups according to age and size to reduce stress and improve their quality of life.

Pérez noted that the bodies of crocodiles that die on the farm are used in taxidermy. "We are immersed in research on the role of hybridization in the evolution of the species," he said.

Crocodile skins are used for commercial purposes and are in high demand internationally for making purses, shoes and other costly items. Their meat, bones, teeth and fat are also used for a variety of purposes. The farm's management plans to use the captive population in some parts of the Ciénaga de Zapata where crocodile numbers have shrunk, and it carries out public information campaigns against illegal hunting.

The farm has helped raise awareness about the environmental importance of crocodiles among locals and tourists alike, Pérez said.



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FOLLOWING UP THE UN CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

Progress in Working toward Full Equality

By Daniel URBINO

HAVANA._ Women's rights have come a long way since Clara Zetkin of Germany proposed the annual celebration of International Women's Day in 1910 in Copenhagen.

Now, in the second decade of the 21st century, experts agree that the pace of progress has subsided, and that in fact, alarming retreats have been documented in some regions.

According to UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, it is women who are most affected by modern conflicts, occupational segregation, violence and discrimination. Moreover, women do not participate enough in decisions that affect them and they lag behind men in access to land, credit and decent employment.

This reality contrasts with what has been achieved in Cuba, where substantial progress has been made in working toward full equality, according to authorities and civil society representatives.

Cuba, which has a population of just over 11 million according to the 2012 census, is perfecting its policies in working toward full gender equality, and this was confirmed by participants at a meeting in



Teresa Amarelle, general secretary of the Federation of Cuban Women.

Havana to assess the status of the National Action Plan to Follow Up the 4th UN Conference on Women.

While problems in attaining access to jobs are endangering the social equilibrium in many nations, Cuba has achieved an increase in rates of women's participation in the economy.

According to Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Security Odalys González, women hold 48 percent of state jobs and have been identified, along with young people, as a prioritized group. In the past

decade, Cuba also has expanded access to management jobs, González said during a session of the assessment meeting.

Some 46 percent of managers in the state sector are women. And in public office, women hold 48 percent of national Parliament seats and the majority of seats in the provincial assemblies of People's Power.

In the non-state sector, where women account for one-third of the workforce, the goal is to increase their participation, said Teresa Amarelle, general secretary of

the Federation of Cuban Women, in an interview with *The Havana Reporter*.

"We are working on training and continuing education for women, so that they can assume the social changes that are emerging from the updating of the Cuban economic model," she said.

The country's institutions and agencies should facilitate greater social insertion through concrete actions aimed at increasing the number of women involved in self-employment, or non-state management forms, Amarelle said.

One essential tool is the development of services for easing the burden of domestic responsibilities that women carry, keeping them from having full access to cultural improvement and, therefore, to better jobs and income, she said.

In referring to the follow-up meeting on the UN women's conference, Amarelle praised its overall positive conclusions, saying it was an opportunity for "identifying gaps and proposing courses to follow. The discussions have been very intense and rich, with many contributions."

The assessment meeting, the third organized by Cuba, examined this country's achievements in gender equality and in women's inclusion in society.

Cuba Steps up Prevention Measures for Hurricane Season

By Lianet ARIAS

HAVANA._ Cubans have been staying more alert to all news related to the weather since June 1, when the hurricane season began for the Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean.

Hurricanes, accompanied by a large area of clouds, rain, wind and thunderstorms, are defined by experts as low-pressure systems that form over the ocean, generally in tropical regions. Therefore, these events, which vary in strength and are classified into five categories according to the Saffir-Simpson scale, put both Cuba and other nations in the region on alert until Nov. 30, when the season ends.

However, in the specific case of Cuba, authorities have promoted a system of vigilance, protection and prevention for disasters of this type that has received global recognition.

As part of that strategy, in May the government held an annual drill called *Meteoro* (Spanish for meteor), which is aimed at reinforcing the country's ability to deal with powerful hurricanes and other extreme disasters.

The drill involved two days of verifications and practice runs of mass mobilizations, evacuations and clean-up work. According to National Civil Defense authorities, the drill's goal was better effectiveness and preparedness for protecting human lives and resources.



Since 1986, *Meteoro* has included the participation of the general population and government entities such as the Central State Administration, the executive bodies of the country's state enterprise groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces, and the Interior Ministry. In addition, Cuba's cities have their own programs, such as timely tree-trimming, to minimize the effects of a hurricane.

Ramón Pardo Guerra, chief of the Civil Defense General Staff, said the essence of this work lies in safeguarding citizens, their personal belongings and the country's economic resources through a permanently activated system.

This year, some 13 to 20 potential hurricanes have been predicted for the season. Seven to 10 of these

systems are expected to turn into hurricanes, and some could be powerful category 3, 4, or 5 cyclones on the Saffir-Simpson scale. Factors taken into consideration for these forecasts include higher sea temperatures, the absence of the El Niño phenomenon, and a more powerful monsoon season in Western Africa.

In a traditional practice of the World Meteorological Organization, this year's tropical storm and hurricane names will include Andrea, Barry, Dorian, Erin, Fernand, Gabrielle, Nestor, Pablo, Sebastian, Van and Wendy,.

However, the names of past hurricanes with devastating effects are never repeated. One example is Sandy, which in 2012 killed 147 people, 72 of them in the United States, and caused major damage to eastern Cuba.

Latin American Council of Churches in Havana

By Orlando ORAMAS

HAVANA._ Catholic churches can be spotted on any corner, right down the street, and in any neighborhood. Wherever a majestically-built church is found, two or three simpler ones are almost always nearby, in Sao Paulo, Havana, Caracas, or San Salvador.

They serve the human and the divine. They turn faith into a highly social practice, fighting juvenile delinquency, early or unwanted pregnancy, drug addiction, and other problems in Latin American society.

There are also Christian churches: Baptist, Methodist, Anglican, Pentecostal, Moravian, Mennonite, and others, as well as Christian associations that make up the Latin American Council of Churches, LACC, which held its sixth General Assembly May 22-26 in Havana.

Cuba was granted the venue in 2011, but the meeting's initial schedule was put off for months because the U.S. Department of the Treasury froze funds that were to be used for financing the Havana meeting, as part of enforcing the punitive laws of the U.S. blockade that has been imposed on Cuba for more than 50 years.

This is an example how the blockade not only affects Cubans, believers or not, but also other people in the region.

"With or without blockade we held our assembly in Cuba," said Bishop Julio Murray, who presided over the forum as president of the LACC board of directors for the last six years.

In an interview with the Prensa Latina news agency, Murray praised the work of Cuba's churches and the collaboration of different Cuban institutions in holding a successful meeting.

"The tasks, delegations, and concrete efforts of the Cuban people, its churches and authorities, were many and diverse following the board of directors' decision that Havana should host our sixth assembly," added Murray, who is a Panamanian bishop.



PHOTO: Manuel Muñoz.

He praised a cross made and donated by artisans from Matanzas province who are involved in a religious program called Cairo. "It is a very original cross that reflects details from different places. It is a two-sided cross; the front represents the day and the activities of the Cuban people; its reverse represents night in Cuba."

PASTORAL LETTER OF HAVANA

The LACC 6th General Assembly approved a Pastoral Letter of Havana and elected its new board of directors, with an Argentine cleric, Felipe Adolf, as its president.

Adolf, a Lutheran pastor who officiates in Ecuador, said the meeting "was important because it provides us with very clear instructions for working with churches and their influence in society."

The LACC General Assembly meets every six years to assess its work and plan future tasks, Adolf said, noting that "situations change during that time."

"It was very important for the LACC to meet in Cuba, which suffers from the effects of the blockade, and we wanted to make the concrete gesture of coming and expressing our solidarity," he said. In fact, the meeting's central theme was

"Affirming an Ecumenism of Concrete Actions."

Regional representatives from Puerto Rico, Cuba, Nicaragua, Honduras, Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Panama were elected to the new LACC board of directors.

The Pastoral Letter of Havana expresses postures on current affairs, such as condemnation of the blockade of Cuba and opposition to illegal detentions and torture at the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo. It also expresses support for pro-integration processes in Latin America, which are reflected in blocs such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Union of South American Nations.

The document also criticizes "the commercial exploitation of natural resources by transnational" corporations and condemns "interference by the media and foreign capital" in the strengthening of the democratic process in Venezuela.

Similarly, it demands self-determination for Puerto Rico and the release of Puerto Rican independence fighter Oscar López Rivera, and calls upon Britain and Argentina to discuss the issue of sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, among other issues.

"We have fulfilled and surpassed all expectations, because we are leaving Havana with a pastoral letter that allows us to identify concrete actions for unity among churches and among Latin America and the Caribbean," Murray said.

SOLIDARITY WITH THE CUBAN FIVE

One of the LACC sessions at Havana's Hotel Habana Libre featured solidarity with the five Cubans unjustly sentenced to prison terms in the United States for combating terrorist plots against Cuba. The Cuban Five are Gerardo Hernández, Fernando González, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, and René González, the latter of whom is now in Cuba after serving 13 years.

René González was presented with the Cross of Solidarity, and Joel Ortega Dopico, president of the Cuban Council of Churches, gave him a Bible—a book that speaks about freedom and life, Ortega Dopico said.

Reinerio Arce, rector of the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Matanzas, said that the Cuban Pastoral Platform is working for the Cuban Five to be reunited with their families. He noted that the U.S. Council of Churches supports their cause, adding: "as the Bible says, the truth will set them free."

René González praised his four comrades who are still in prison, saying, "They do not deserve to be there, because they were defending what is most sacred for all religions, which is life," and he added that more efforts were needed to bring them home.

The LACC 6th Assembly leaves a mandate for the next six years: any church committed to life and public influence must walk hand-in-hand with the neediest.

"We leave Havana with the conviction of having fulfilled our tasks; the Lord has inspired us with new energy, but also commitments and challenges," a U.S. delegate said.



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Promising Results from Stem Cell Therapy in Cuba

By Juliette **MORALES**

HAVANA._ Without having to pay a penny, about 5,000 Cubans nationwide have benefited from regenerative stem cell therapy, a revolutionary medical treatment that is still being developed internationally.

Regenerative medicine seeks to improve or replace biological functions, and this is where stem cell research comes in.

In clinical trials in Cuba, adult stem cells are extracted from a patient's bone marrow or peripheral blood depending on the person's illness, according to Porfirio Hernández, vice president of the Institute of Hematology and Immunology and coordinator of the Ministry of Public Health's National Regenerative Medicine Group.

Adult stem cells are found in all multicellular organisms and can divide (through mitosis) and differentiate into diverse specialized cell types, hence their potential for treating many different diseases.

This type of therapy is still in the experimental research stage, but has



Doctors Porfirio Hernández, José Manuel Ballester and Ernesto de la Torre.

PHOTO: Institute of Hematology and Immunology.

been proven effective in a large number of cases of vascular disorders involving lower-limb circulation problems, Hernández said in an interview with *The Havana Reporter*.

A good part of the lower leg was saved in about 50 percent of the cases treated, he said, adding that the figure was not higher because many patients did not seek medical attention until their disease was in a very advanced state.

With early treatment, amputation can be avoided in cases of patients with advanced, but not critical, arterial insufficiency; these are patients who can walk up to 200 meters without feeling pain, Hernández said.

Stem cell therapy was provided to about 5,000 patients thanks to the development of Cuba's healthcare system, which is free, he emphasized.

Encouraging results have been

obtained among patients with multiple fractures and with lymphatic filariasis, known as elephantitis, as well as periodontitis, or pyorrhea.

Other beneficiaries include patients with arthrosis of the knee, stroke, heart attack, and periodontal lesions, he said.

Hernández noted that Cuba and Brazil have plans for a two-year stem cell project for treating lower limb ischemia that is set to begin this year.

Patients involved in this cooperation project have not responded to conventional treatments and do not have any better options, he said.

The mononuclear cells that will be used in these studies have the content of adult stem cells from bone marrow, which are easy to handle and have been proven effective, he said.

The Cuban centers that will participate in this project include the Institute of Hematology and Immunology and the Enrique Cabrera General Teaching Hospital, better known as Hospital Nacional, both in Havana.

Cooperation for Battling Invasive Species

By Raúl **GARCÍA**

SANCTI SPÍRITUS._ The UN Development Program is working with Cuban experts in the central province of Sancti Spíritus to battle invasive alien plant and animal species in four vulnerable areas. Néstor Álvarez, chief environmental management specialist at the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA) in this province, told the Prensa Latina news agency that their goal is to contribute to the conservation of the environment and the balance of its ecosystems.

The four vulnerable areas in question are part of the municipality of Trinidad: Ancon peninsula (with extensive tourism development), Topes de Collantes (a protected natural landscape), Valle de los Ingenios (a World Heritage Site), and the quartzite sands of Casilda.

In seeking to rescue the ecosystem, the initiative promotes strategies for the control and management of invasive populations through training and research in the field. The top priority at this time is to protect the natural environment of the Peninsula of Ancon, which has been affected by human activity such as the building of infrastructure on the dunes and poor forest cover, Álvarez said.



Néstor Álvarez, chief environmental management specialist at the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA).

PHOTO: Mario Sombert.

The peninsula has a very fragile, sandy ecosystem and the presence of invasive alien plant and animal species can accelerate the harmful effects of tourist activity, he noted. Studies show that more than 320

invasive plant species live in Cuba, having been introduced intentionally and unintentionally by human beings. Sicklebush (*Dichrostachys cinerea*), or *marabú* as it is known in Cuba, a thorny fast-spreading shrub, tops the list of the 100 most invasive plant species in the archipelago.

This list also includes the bush mallow (genus *Malacothamnus*), Australian pine (*Casuarina equisetifolia*); ipil-ipil (*Leucaena leucocephala*), rose apple (*Syzygium jambos*), sweet acacia or aroma (*Acacia farnesiana*), African tulip tree (*Spathodea Campanulata*), and Melaleuca quinquenervia or cayepút.

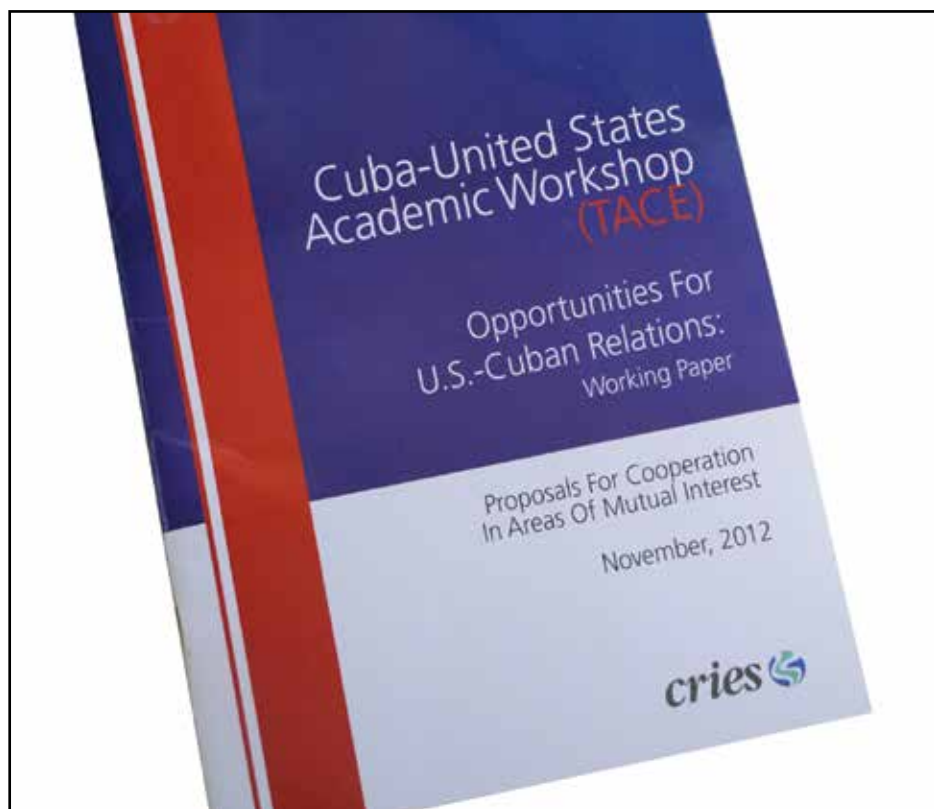
Invasive plants negatively affect biodiversity, endemic flora, and fragile ecosystems, altering the landscape, and they hurt the quality of soils, water, and beaches, Álvarez noted.

In addition, they are detrimental to agriculture, forestry, and agricultural and livestock production, and pose obstacles to activities conducted in dams, small reservoirs, canals, and aerated lagoons, he said.

In areas affected by these species, efforts underway to counter their effects include reforestation and the recovery of natural flora.

Academic Diplomacy, One More Element in the Cuba-US Conflict

By Miguel LOZANO



In the book seen above, US and Cuban scholars make 25 recommendations for improving relations between their two countries.



Milagros Martínez was one of the Cuban participants in the Cuban-U.S. Academic Workshop who was unable to be at its presentation in Washington because she was denied a U.S. entry visa.

WASHINGTON.— Like the ping-pong diplomacy that brought China and the United States closer together, “academic diplomacy” could initiate a dialogue between the two sides of the half century-long Cuba-U.S. conflict, experts from both countries say. Toward that end, academics from both sides devoted four years to reaching a consensus on possible areas for beginning talks between Washington and Havana, despite mutual distrust. This exercise was called the Cuban-U.S. Academic Workshop (known as TACE for its initials in Spanish) and it was presented in Washington at the 31st International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, which was held May 29-June 1.

The Regional Economic and Social Research Coordinating Association, a network of several dozen academic centers, research institutions and NGOs, acted as facilitator in this work, with results that the workshop’s president, Andrés Serbín, said were consistent with prior recommendations. In an interview, Serbín said that one of the most important aspects of the proposal is that concrete points were covered by consensus, and after a long period of distant relations, necessary bridges were built for improving those relations. In his opinion, this facilitates continued progress of much of what is done at the hemispheric level to improve US-Cuba relations.

At the same time, he acknowledged that negotiations can be extremely complicated in the U.S. political system, although the outlook is positive for certain economic measures taken without consulting Congress. As examples, Serbín mentioned the easing of regulations on remittances

and U.S.-Cuba travel by Cuban-Americans and others, as well as food sales that, even with restrictions, call the blockade into question, he said.

Philip Brenner of American University said that the spirit of TACE is to help initiate a process of eliminating distrust, which is why the goal is to get the final proposals to Cuban and U.S. officials. In an interview with Prensa Latina, Brenner said that the most important aspect of TACE was that it continued for four years with the participation of former U.S. officials and presidential advisors.

Brenner noted that the U.S. participants were able to meet with Cuban academics and former officials to dig at the root of the problem and find ways to deal with distrust that has been exacerbated by a long history of U.S. aggression against the Cuban Revolution. Regarding what kind of space exists for initiatives of this kind in the Barack Obama administration, Brenner said that there were possibilities for taking small steps, although “unfortunately, the president has not shown much interest in Latin America.” If the Obama administration truly paid attention to Latin America and understood that Cuba is a very important symbol for the region, real possibilities for making process would exist, he said.

Another TACE participant, former Cuban diplomat Carlos Alzugaray, said that better relations were inevitable, because current U.S. policy is a failure. “We have chosen very concrete issues, but there has been agreement on all of them, and if agreements exist between academics who have been diplomats, they can exist between the two governments,” he said. Obama is in a position to take a step, Alzugaray added. He won the elections, does not have to

stand for re-election, and showed that he can win with non-extremist positions, even if they are not the ones that one would wish for, Alzugaray noted. Even with those positions, an election can be won in Florida, he commented.

A total of 25 joint recommendations were published in the book *Oportunidad para las relaciones Cuba-Estados Unidos* (Opportunity for Cuba-United States Relations), in the fields of academic, scientific/technical and cultural cooperation; freedom to travel; international trade and development; terrorism and security, and environment. As an example of existing distrust and hostility, two Cuban participants, Milagros Martínez and Rafael Hernández, were absent from the presentation because U.S. authorities denied them and a dozen other Cuban academics entry visas.

The book suggests “that the United States government remove Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, given that its inclusion on that list is an obstacle to cooperation between the two countries on the fight against terrorism.” Other areas include exchange between high-ranking officials; mutual recognition of proposals for improving security; talks for agreements on fighting terrorism and drugs; and a review of sentences given to individuals convicted of crimes committed in the name of a foreign country. For academic cooperation, recommendations include improving processes for the granting of visas; adjustments to migration policy; promotion of meetings among prominent individuals; and the U.S. elimination of restrictions on acquiring resources for civilian research. Others proposals include: simplifying bureaucratic processes for

travel; eliminating sanctions on banks and commercial entities associated with the right to travel; mutually facilitation of insurance and medical services; monitoring of operators’ practices; and eliminating spending limits and the ban on credit card use for U.S. travelers.

In addition, Washington is asked to acknowledge economic changes in Cuba and Havana is asked to continue that process. The proposal asks Washington to modify regulations that force Havana to buy food and medicine in cash upfront; not to hinder remittances; and to analyze Cuba’s return to international financial organizations. In the area of environment, the proposal is to eliminate the ban on the transfer of technology for disaster risk mitigation; to foster cooperation among local governments and nongovernmental organizations; and to hold talks on disaster management, joint plans for earthquakes, and protocols for fishing. With the conclusion of the TACE academic exercise, now the goal is to take these 25 proposals to both governments, and with that, academics hope to open up space for eliminating the distrust and hostility that has separated the two countries for more than half a century.

In participating in a panel discussion on Cuba and the United States at the LASA Congress, José R. Cabañas, chief of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., also referred to a number of issues that are obstacles to bilateral relations. He agreed with the TACE academics who oppose justifications for keeping Cuba on the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Academics say removing Cuba from the list could be one of the first actions to open up the road to normalizing relations.

SPOTLIGHT ON

In Venice, Cuban Art Perverts the Classics

By CharlyMORALES

VENICE, that romantic city furrowed with canals and dark, inimical waters, is once again hosting the most important art fair in the world, the Biennale, and Cuba is attending this 55th edition with an irreverent collection of work for its pavilion: *La Perversión de lo clásico: Anarquía de los relatos / The Perversion of the Classic: Anarchy of Narrations*.

Some 3,000 visitors attended the opening of the Cuban Pavilion, which features the work of artists Sandra Ramos, Antonio Eligio Fernández, Nelson & Liudmila, Lázaro Saavedra, and María Magdalena Campos, all under the auspices of the Wifredo Lam Center of Contemporary Art in Havana.

The idea was to achieve a coherent dialogue with works of Roman art, hence the strategic nature of the Cuban Pavilion at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Venezia in the legendary Piazza de San Marco.

For this exhibit, Cuba's artists are proposing themes associated with migration, conflicts of borders and limits, notions of cultural identity associated with symbols like the national flag, music and incisive, sometimes corrosive humor.

Meanwhile, the work of Cuban artist Humberto Díaz will be on exhibit in the Latin American Pavilion

as a guest, organized by the well-known curator Alfons Hug.

Despite the fact that some people question its biennial nature, the mega-fair in Venice is considered a safe bet for legitimizing contemporary art, and for fomenting theoretical debate.

The Cubans are sharing their exhibit with seven non-Cuban artists, including Pedro Costa, Gilberto Zorio, H.H. Lim, Wang Du and the legendary Hermann Nitsch.

In the museum's courtyard of sarcophagi, Sandro Ramos' *Bridges Series* installations receive visitors with a reflection on the intertwining ties of migration. María Magdalena Campos-Pons and Neil Leonard have an installation, *La letra del año/Letter of the Year*, made up of small cages. And Glenda León proposes a dialogue with the cosmos in her *Música de las esferas/Music of the Spheres*, in Palas Ateneas Hall. Meanwhile, Tonel looks back at his life in three pieces: *Constructivo/Constructive*, *Por una radio constructiva/For a constructive radio* and *Autorretrato a los 50 años/Self-portrait at age 50*.

Perhaps the most impressive of all is a video installation, *Absolut Revolution*, by the artistic duo Nelson & Liudmila: the obelisk-shaped monument in Havana's Plaza de la Revolución is surrounded by the sea, under the eyes of Roman generals Marcus Aurelius and Pompey.



The Art of Storms

By AdalysPILAR

PINAR DEL RÍO._ Famous for his landscapes of marinas and storms, Cuban artist Humberto "El Negro" Hernández is holding an exhibition of paintings in Santiago de Cuba based on Hurricane Sandy, which caused great damage to that eastern Cuban city last year.

The exhibition of 10 pieces by Hernández, one of Cuba's most important painters, will open in July at the local offices of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba.

The show is being held eight months after Sandy hit eastern Cuba, leaving a wake of destruction. Reconstruction and recovery work continues.

"I saw the moving images of the (hurricane's) ravages and decided to devote a series to it," the artist told the Prensa Latina news agency. "It is based on what happened in the wake of the hurricane, but the result is a transformation; it is my point of view about what happened."

Hernández, whose much sought-after work can be found in 30 countries—including Germany, Chile, China, Ecuador, Spain, Mongolia, and United States—said that he was very enthusiastic about his exhibition.

"It's exciting for me to be there (in Santiago) again after 20 years. It is a privilege to be there with my work, among all of the people I love," he said.

Acrylic on canvas and ink on cardstock are the main techniques used in this collection. The pieces depict marinas



during hurricanes, he said. "I was born in Puerto Esperanza, a small coastal town in Pinar del Río province, and the waves and views of the coasts have been with me for three decades, in a mysterious mix of lyrical abstractionism, expressionism and other styles."

The storm theme is recurrent in his work, perhaps because of the frequent passing of hurricanes in Pinar del Río, Cuba's westernmost province.

Several of his pieces were part of a recent landscape exhibition at the UNESCO offices in Paris, and he frequently exhibits abroad.

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THEATER

*Note: theater companies are in parentheses

Raquel Revuelta



Línea esq. B, Vedado. Tel: 833-0225. — Sala Osvaldo Dragun: Fri. June 21, 28, Sat. 22, 29, and Sun. 23, 30 (6pm): Las penas que a mi me matan / These Heartaches are Killing Me (Teatro de Bolsillo, starring Misleydis Ferrer). In this monologue, an actress wants to quit the trade, but remains trapped in the twists and turns of memory as she confronts the challenge of her last character.

Adolfo Llauradó

Calle 11 e/ D y E, Vedado. Tel: 832-5373 — Fri. June 21, 28, Sat. 22, 29 (8pm) and Sun. 23, 30 (5pm): Santa Cecilia / Saint Cecilia (Aire Frío). In this play written by Cuban Abilio Estévez in the 1990s, Saint Cecilia, a mythical woman from popular tradition, describes Havana from the late 19th century through the early 20th, lamenting the disappearance of its magical essence.

Bertolt Brecht



Calle 13 esq. I, Vedado. Tel: 832-9359 — Sala Tito Junco. Every Fri. & Sat. (8pm) and Sun. (5pm) in June: Blue/Orange (Teatro El Público). This play by Joe Penhall, directed by Stephen Bayly and performed by the local group Peña Meisner, follows the events at a psychiatric hospital where two doctors debate the release of a patient.

GETTING

THR RECOMMENDS

- **Jojazz pianists**, Wed. June 26, 11 pm, Café Jazz Miramar
- **Camerata Romeu**, Thurs. June 29, 6 pm, Basílica Menor San Francisco de Asís
- **Fiesta de Fuego**, July 3-9, Santiago de Cuba

Argos Teatro



Ayestarán, esq. 20 de Mayo, Cerro. Tel: 878-5551 — Fri. June 21, 28, Sat. 22, 29 (8pm) and Sun. 23, 30 (5pm): Fichenla si pueden / Classify Her if You Can (Argos Teatro). In director Carlos Celdrán's version of Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Respectful Prostitute*, Lizi, a young prostitute who has returned to a small town, is caught up in a web of blackmail and pressure to testify against a black man who is being framed.

Hubert de Blanck

Calzada entre B y C, Vedado. Plaza de la Revolución. Tel: 830-1011 — Fri. June 21, 28, Sat. 22, 29 (8:30pm) and Sun. 23, 30 (5pm): Tu ternura Molotov / Your Molotov Kisses (Compañía Hubert de Blanck). This play by Venezuelan Gustavo Ott focuses on intolerance and terrorism, political correctness and double standards, as a middle-class couple makes meticulous plans to have a baby.

MUSIC

Teatro Nacional

Loma y 39, Plaza de la Revolución. Tel: 878-5590 — Sun. June 30 (11am): Saxophonist Javier Zalba.

Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes

Trocadero e/ Monserrate y Zulueta, Habana Vieja. Tel: 861-0241 — Sat. 22 (4pm): Soprano Lucy Provedo.

Basílica Menor San Francisco de Asís



Oficios e/ Amargura y Churruga, Habana Vieja. Tel.: 862-9683 — Thu. June 20 (6pm): Camerata Vocale Sine Nomine, directed by Leonor Suarez Dulzaides, accompanied by the Orchestra of the ISA (Higher Arts Institute). Sat. 22 (6pm): The Vocal Leo chorus, directed by Corina Campos, celebrates its 20th anniversary. Thu. 29 (6pm): All-women's chamber orchestra Camerata Romeu, directed by Zenaida Romeu.

Casa Natal de José Martí, (Cuba's National Hero)



Calle Leonor Perez e/ Picota y Egido, Habana Vieja. Tel: 861-3778 — Wed. June 26 (10am): Soloist Noemi Valdes and pianist Juan Espinosa.

Casa Balear

Calle 23 y G, Vedado. Tel: 830-4524 — Fri. June 21 (5pm): "Afternoon of Boleros," hosted by soloist Maureen Garcia. Thu. 27 (4-8pm): "Danzón Angoa," an afternoon of Cuba's national dance, the danzón, with live music.

Casa África

Obra Pía e/ San Ignacio y Mercaderes, Habana Vieja. Tel: 861-5798 — Thu. June 27 (3 pm): Cultural gala featuring the all-woman Afro-Cuban music and dance group Rumba Morena.

Patio Amarillo

San Ignacio esq. Empedrado. Habana Vieja. Tel: 861-3419. — Wednesdays in June (8pm): Son Jazz group, Thursdays (8:30pm): Konclave (traditional Cuban music), Fridays (8pm): Charly Salgado (trova).

NIGHTCLUBS & CABARETS

Asociación Canaria

Monserrate e/ Neptuno y Ánimas, Centro Habana. Tel: 866-8493 — Sundays in June (7-10pm): "Habana Ritmos" salsa and other Cuban music for dancing.

Union Árabe

Paseo del Prado e/ Ánimas y Trocadero. Tel: 861-0582. — Sundays in June (6-10:30 pm): Salsa dancing.

Jardines del 1830



Malecón y Calle 22, Vedado. Tel: 838-3091 — Every Tue. & Thu. in Jun (8:30pm) and Sun. (5pm): Moncada (trova/pop).

Submarino Amarillo

Calle 17 esq. a 12, Vedado. Habana. Tel: 830-6808 — Live bands play Beatles covers and rock music nightly at this Beatles-themed bar and nightclub.

Casa de la Música de Galiano



Galiano e/ Neptuno y Concordia, Centro Habana. Tel: 862-4165 — Tuesdays in June (8pm): Los 4 Intokables (reggaeton), Wednesdays (11pm): Maykel Blanco (salsa), Saturdays (5pm) Combinación de La Habana (salsa).

Café Cantante / Teatro Nacional



Loma y 39, Plaza de la Revolución. Tel: 878-4275 — Every Friday night in June (11pm): popular trova singer-songwriter Santiago Feliú and friends host weekly late-night jam.

Café Jazz Miramar

94 y 5ta Avenida, Miramar. Tel: 209-2719. Live jazz nightly starting at 11pm. Thurs. 20; Descemer Bueno & Friends; Wed. 26 (11pm): "Pianos Jojazz," pianists from the Jojazz young jazz musicians' festival.

La Zorra y el Cuervo

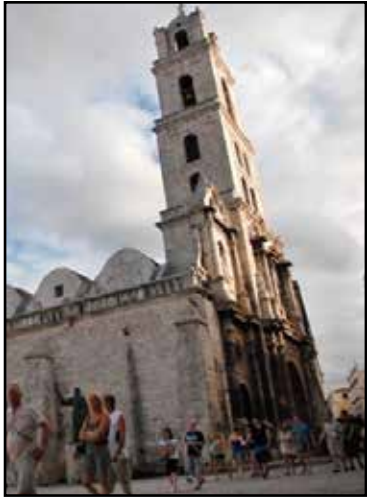
Calle 23 y O, Vedado. Tel: 833-2402. Live jazz nightly featuring

AROUND

(THR is not responsible for any changes made by sponsoring organizations)

ART GALLERIES & MUSEUMS

Basílica Menor San Francisco de Asís



Oficios e/ Amargura y Churruga, Habana Vieja. Tel.: 862-9683 — Museum of sacred art: “Este es el rey de los judíos” / This is the King of the Jews, a selection of more than 20 crucifixes, will be open until August.

Museo de la Orfebrería Obispo e/ Mercaderes y Oficios, Habana Vieja. Tel: 863-9861 — Fri. June 21 (3 pm): Opening of TransformArte, featuring sculptures and utilitarian objects in metalwork by Silvestre Narciso Vargas Ramírez. Fri. June (3 p.m.): Opening of Recreaciones / Recreations, pieces in metal by artist/artisan Eduardo Muñiz Márquez, inspired by the work of Wifredo Lam.

Casa Oswaldo Guayasamín Obrapia e/ Oficios y Mercaderes, Habana Vieja. Tel: 861-3843 — Fri. June 21 (5 pm): Opening of the installation “I’m going to tell short stories that you have told me...” by Dayana Trigo Ramos.

Factoría Habana Calle O’Reilly, e/ Habana y Aguiar, Habana Vieja. Tel: 864-9518. — Through the month of June: “The Wiles of the Innocents,” featuring

Cuban artists Celia & Yúnior, Ricardo Miguel Hernández, Grethell Rasúa, Luis Gárciga, Marianela Orozco, Nestor Siré and Renier Quer.

Palacio de Lombillo Empedrado esq. Mercaderes, Habana Vieja. Tel: 861- 5798 — Through June: exhibitions Santo sudor/Holy Sweat, by Joao Bosco, and La Matriz/The Womb by Ramon Rodriguez Fernandez Manglar.

Museo Farmacia Taquechel Calle Obispo e/ Mercaderes y San Ignacio, Habana Vieja. Tel: 862-9286 — Throughout the month of June: Flowers and Leaves in the Art of Healing and presentations on aromatherapy.

Casa del Benemérito de las Américas Benito Juárez Obrapia e/ Mercaderes y Oficios, Habana Vieja. Tel: 861-8166

— Until July 7: Photography exhibition Orígenes/Origins, by Mexican Miguel Milló.

Casa Simón Bolívar Mercaderes e/ Obrapia y Lamaparilla, Habana Vieja. Tel: 861-3988 — Through June: photo exhibition “Caleidoscopio” (Kaleidoscope).

DANCE

Cine Teatro Favorito Belascoain e/ Sitios y Peñalver, Centro Habana. Tel: 878-2650 — Sun. June 27 (5pm): Modern dance company Danza Espiral from Matanzas.

Teatro Mella Línea e/ A y B, Vedado. Tel: 833-8696. — Fri. June 21, Sat. 22 (8:30pm) and Sun. 23 (5pm): The Ballet Litz Alfonso performs various Spanish dance pieces.

Patio Sevillano

Trocadero esq. Prado (Hotel Sevilla), Habana Vieja. Tel: 860-9046 — Every Sat. in June (9pm): Flamenco dancing.

Centro de Danza de La Habana

Prado e/ Ingenios y Refugio, Habana Vieja. Tel: Fri. June 21 (3pm): Cuban/Haitian folkloric music/dance company BanRara

Espacio Barcelona- Habana



Barcelona esq. Aguila, Centro Habana. Tel: 864-9576 — Wed. June 19 (7pm): Flamenco Inside, artistic/ educational event on flamenco song and dance led by performers from the Ecos Spanish dance company.

CARIBBEAN FESTIVAL

A Celebration of Popular Culture

By OsmarÁLVAREZ

SANTIAGO DE CUBA._ Every year, the summer in this eastern Cuban city kicks off with the Caribbean Festival, or Fiesta of Fire (*Fiesta del Fuego*), bringing all of the color, music, art and tradition of popular Latin American and Caribbean culture. This year, the 33rd Festival will be held July 3-9.

It is an opportunity for intellectuals and artists from all over the world to converge in an embrace of solidarity for learning about and enjoying authentically popular culture, creating a dialogue among different expressions, beliefs, rites and customs that identify this region. The program includes a wide range of activities that will be held in more than 50 venues in the city and in nearby towns.

One of the most attractive opening ceremonies is the Parade of the Serpent (*Desfile de la Serpiente*), a procession where Cuban and foreign groups of artists display their abilities for thousands of spectators who follow them as they wind their way from the Plaza de Marte to the city’s emblematic park, Parque Céspedes.

With such a diverse and colorful program, participants and guests have a great time, but above all it is the central axis of this event that makes it unique: championing indigenous cultures. In this mix of academic conferences, dance, and religious ceremonies, the center of gravity is popular culture. “The Caribbean that Unites Us” is the main



academic conference, and this year scholars from more than 20 countries will exchange views on topics such as the Colombian Caribbean, relations between Caribbean nations, the region’s culture of resistance, and migration processes.

However, in the Fiesta of Fire even academic events involve the people in general, and some are held in public places to propitiate a cultural dialogue and mutual understanding. As its founder, Joel James used to say, “It is a carnival of Caribbean spirituality.”

This year, the streets, plazas and parks of Santiago will fill up with more than 1,000 traditional artists from some 30 countries, who will share their culture and experiences with their local hosts. The largest delegation is expected to come from Colombia—the Colombian Caribbean is the guest region of honor this year. Visitors also are expected from Venezuela, Mexico, Argentina, Puerto Rico, United States, Brazil and Curacao.

Another traditional ceremony on July 9 marks the conclusion of the Fiesta: the Burning of the Devil (*La Quema del Diablo*). A human chain will parade down Aguilera street from the Parque Céspedes to the portside avenue, where they will perform a ceremony to burn all that is bad and clear the way for next year’s Fiesta, which will honor the culture of Suriname.

PHOTOS: FERRAL

Prensa Latina News Agency: A Voice from This Side of the World

By Luisa María GONZÁLEZ

HAVANA. In the mid-20th century, before the existence of the Internet, Blackberries, or social networks, channels of communication were narrower and less accessible, and the media was largely controlled by hegemonic minorities, making it easy to silence any voice that was different.

As a result, the Revolution of dreams and defiance that triumphed in Cuba in 1959 had to create its own channels for telling its truth to the world.

It was also the truth of countries that historically had been exploited, excluded, and silenced by different forms of colonialism.

Therefore, the Prensa Latina news agency was created on June 16, 1959, on the initiative of Fidel Castro, leader of the Cuban Revolution, and guerrilla commander Ernesto Che Guevara, carried out by Argentine journalist Jorge Ricardo Masetti. Its purpose was to ensure visibility for the ideas and struggles that were taking place in this part of the planet.

The initial years were tough for the nascent news agency as it sought to expand throughout Latin America with the valuable collaboration of renowned

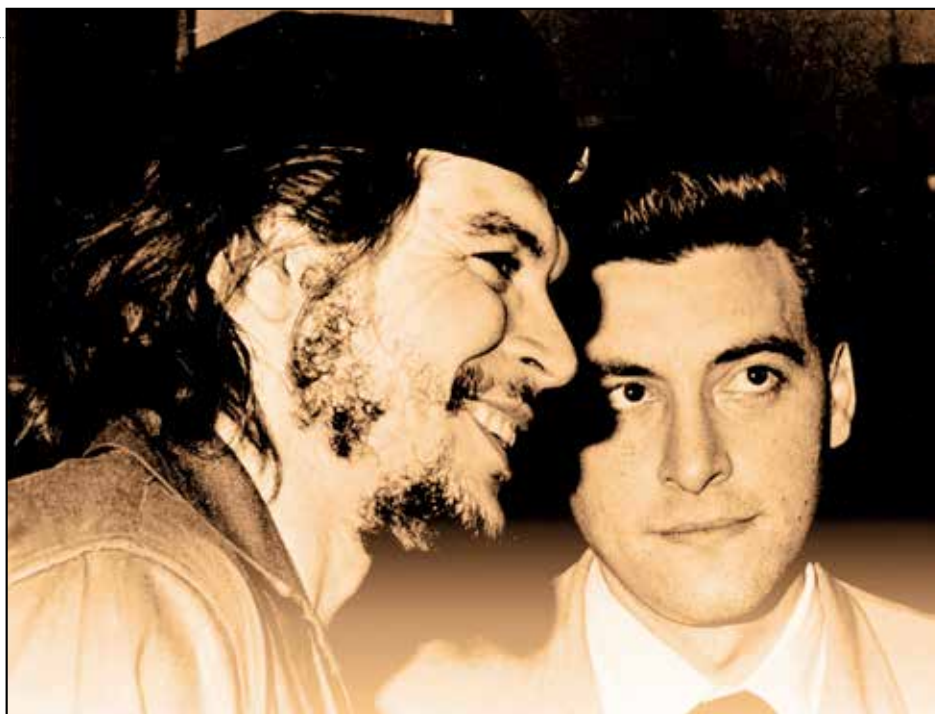


PHOTO: Prensa Latina Archives.
Commander Ernesto Che Guevara and Argentine journalist Jorge Ricardo Masetti, in the early days of the Prensa Latina news agency.

journalists such as Rodolfo Walsh and Gabriel García Márquez.

However, certain individuals and governments who had no interest in allowing the voice of the people to be heard gave themselves the task of hindering the consolidation of Prensa Latina: it was a time of many threats made toward the agency's correspondents, frequent break-ins of the agency's offices,

and desperate and unfounded public accusations.

Despite these hurdles, the tenacious crusade by PL's founders and those who carried on their work bore fruit, and this media organization now has 30 bureaus on several continents. Coverage reaches every country in South America, and PL has correspondents in many of the main cities of America, Asia, Africa, and

Europe. According to Prensa Latina president Luis Enrique González, in addition to its online news services, the agency's services include audio materials for radio, audiovisuals for television, a television news service, and multimedia products.

One important platform for Prensa Latina is its Internet portal, where web surfers can find daily news and stay up-to-date in Spanish, English, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, and Turkish. Also, PL has a webpage for its photo services, featuring high-quality photos of major world event from its archive, one of the best of post-1959 photos.

Prensa Latina currently has 17 periodicals and a publishing house that has issued a dozen books on the most diverse subjects. This, too, is a service available to clients anywhere in the world.

Through all of these channels, which are constantly growing and diversifying, the Prensa Latina news agency is devoted to carrying out responsible, attractive journalism, committed to truth and social progress, and showing how much can be done in Cuba, on this side of the world.

FIESTA DE SAN JUAN

Carnival Time in Camagüey

By Lázaro D. NAJARRO



PHOTO: Lázaro D. Najarro.

Camagüey. This June 24-29, hundreds of Cubans and foreigners are expected to visit Camagüey (capital of the central-eastern province of the same name) to enjoy the traditional Fiesta de San Juan, one of Cuba's oldest and most picturesque carnivals.

According to tradition, this fiesta was first held in June sometime between 1725 and 1728, and was associated with Catholic celebrations of Corpus Christi and Epiphany. It began as a solemn procession, with dances and parades by black slaves.

Subsequently, these celebrations became an opportunity for cattle ranchers to take their best stock to the city for sale. From the 19th century on, the fiesta changed, acquiring its own traditions, and included more events and activities.

The Fiesta de San Juan became a recreational activity of sorts for local residents and visitors after a long season of hard work. In the middle of summer, landowners and anyone else who wanted to join in would spend several days celebrating the end of harvest time.

These fiestas were initially held in ranching areas, but they eventually moved to the provincial capital as the region became economically, socially, culturally, and politically developed.

The festival begins on June 24 at 12:01 am with the reading of a traditional document authorizing the opening of festivities by the top local official. He or she performs this ritual on the balcony of the municipal government building in the city's historic district.

On the same day, people all over the city cook a typical Cuban dish—ajiaco, a stew made with meat and root vegetables, out in public over wood-burning stoves. As part of this process, they share stories and have a few drinks, while others make improvised bonfires in different parts of the city.

Floats, parades, musical groups, and lines of people dancing the conga are also typical of the Fiesta de San Juan carnival. The city comes alive with colorful decorations made by neighbors, and vehicles that take part in the parade are also dressed up. Competitions are held to choose the best-decorated neighborhoods and streets.

But one of the most attractive things about the



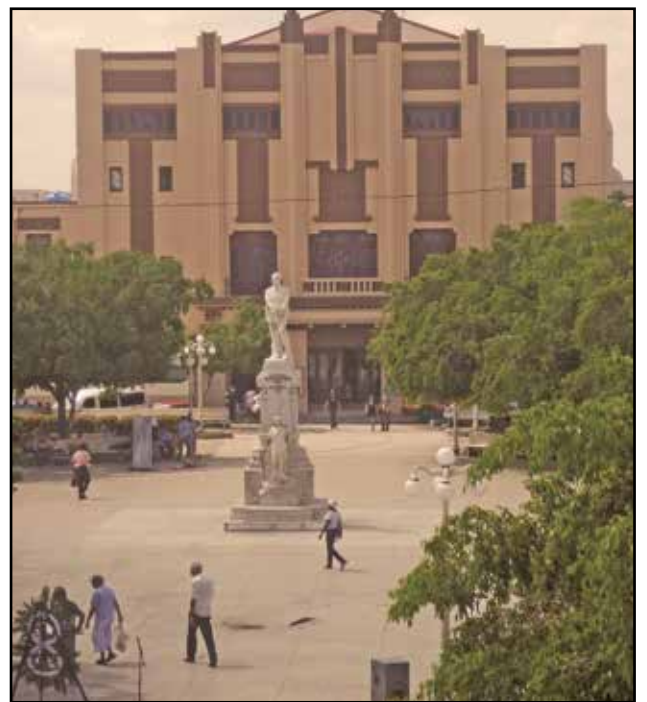
Camagüey festival is a ceremony that marks its closing. Residents file down the street in a procession for the imaginary burial of St. Peter on the afternoon of June 29, to the beating and clanging of drums, cowbells, and trumpets, always attracting a large crowd.

Other important components of this carnival time are traditional cooking, colorful customs, and popular dances, all forming part of the historic and cultural heritage of Camagüey—also known as the City of Tinajones, the large earthenware vessels used for storing water.

It is named after San Juan (St. John), but the carnival is associated with secular traditions, even though it coincides with the Catholic feast days for St. John the Baptist on June 24 and St. Peter on the 29th.

Holguín

"Beauty and history in eastern Cuba"



Text & photos: Lázaro D. NAJARRO

The eastern Cuban city of Holguín and the province of the same name have seen significant social and economic progress in recent years, and are among the island's most popular tourist destinations.

The name comes from a Spanish conquistador, Francisco García Holguín, who settled in the area with his wife, Doña Isabel Fernández de Sandoval, and their followers, officially founding what would later be the city on Apr. 4, 1545 (this is attributed more to tradition than to historical records).

Its parks and plazas were built mostly between two streets that run from north to south, the former San Isidoro and San Miguel, now Libertad and Maceo. Its architecture ranges from colonial to post-1959, and two of its churches are outstanding examples of colonial architecture: the Catedral de San Isidoro and the Iglesia de San José.



Promising Outlook for CELAC-India Relations

By Alberto **SALAZAR**

NEW DELHI_ The outlook for relations between the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and India is very promising.

This was the conclusion of both sides after a recent visit to New Delhi by Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla aimed at strengthening relations between Cuba and India, and the CELAC and India.

Trade between India and Latin America and the Caribbean stands at just over \$25 billion, and investments amount to some \$16 billion, basically in hydrocarbons, mining, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and information technologies.

But huge potential remains to be tapped: Latin American and Caribbean exports and imports to and from India represent only four percent of the region's total, and is the equivalent of just 10 percent of the region's trade with China. Experts say there is good reason to believe that India-CELAC trade may well rise to \$70 billion by 2015.

Latin America and the Caribbean are aware of the Indian economy's growth



Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla.

in the past 20 years; it is now the third largest in Asia, and in the coming 20 years it could rank among the world's largest thanks to achievements in industry, information technology, information and communications technology, and space and nuclear activities.

Now with a population of 1.21 billion, India is expected to have the largest

population on the planet by 2030; therefore, its needs for food and energy are and will be enormous, and the CELAC's 33 member countries have much to offer.

The fact that 20-some Latin American countries now have embassies in New Delhi, compared to just 12 in 2003, indicates that interest. "Businesses that are small on an Indian scale are large

in our countries, because the size of India's population and economy means that operations there are always in the millions of dollars," Jorge Cárdenas, the new Bolivian ambassador to New Delhi, told the Prensa Latina news agency.

In meetings with Indian Vice President Hamid Ansari and Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid, Rodríguez said that Latin America and the Caribbean, a region of 600 million inhabitants that is free of war and full of strategic and energy resources, also has much to offer.

He said that India and CELAC share a mutual interest in creating a multipolar, balanced world and allowing for the development of emerging countries, and that they have similar viewpoints on most international issues.

"We have common interests, objectives, and challenges, and have come to invite this huge nation to work together," said Rodríguez. Cuba holds the pro tempore presidency of the CELAC, which was founded in December 2011 in Caracas, Venezuela.

UNASUR

South America Looks to Add Value to its Raw Material Exports

By Mario **ESQUIVEL**

CARACAS_ The Union of South American Nations, UNASUR, a bloc of 12 countries with significant natural resource reserves, is assessing strategies to boost an economic model oriented toward raw materials processing.

This was precisely the focus of a UNASUR conference on natural resources and comprehensive regional development held recently in Caracas as part of initial efforts to give regional exports added value.

According to Alí Rodríguez, UNASUR general secretary, the 17 million square kilometers comprised by the bloc's 12 member countries hold important reserves of strategic minerals, as well as the most biodiverse area in the world, the Amazon. This means that UNASUR needs to generate a perspective on natural resources, Rodríguez told the Prensa Latina news agency.

Far beyond the export of raw materials, it is necessary to move toward the creation of added value, to provide more benefits for South America, which is rich in natural resources but has some 134 million people living in poverty, he said.

"We need to aim for progressive, rational development supported by the creation of a network of scientific centers that will give us our own geological network," he said.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) reports that the region holds 65 percent of the world's known lithium reserves; 42

percent of silver; 38 percent of copper; 33 percent of tin; and 21 percent of iron. It also holds significant deposits of bauxite (18 percent of the world's known reserves) and nickel (14 percent), while the region accounts for 25 percent of worldwide biofuel production and 13 percent of oil.

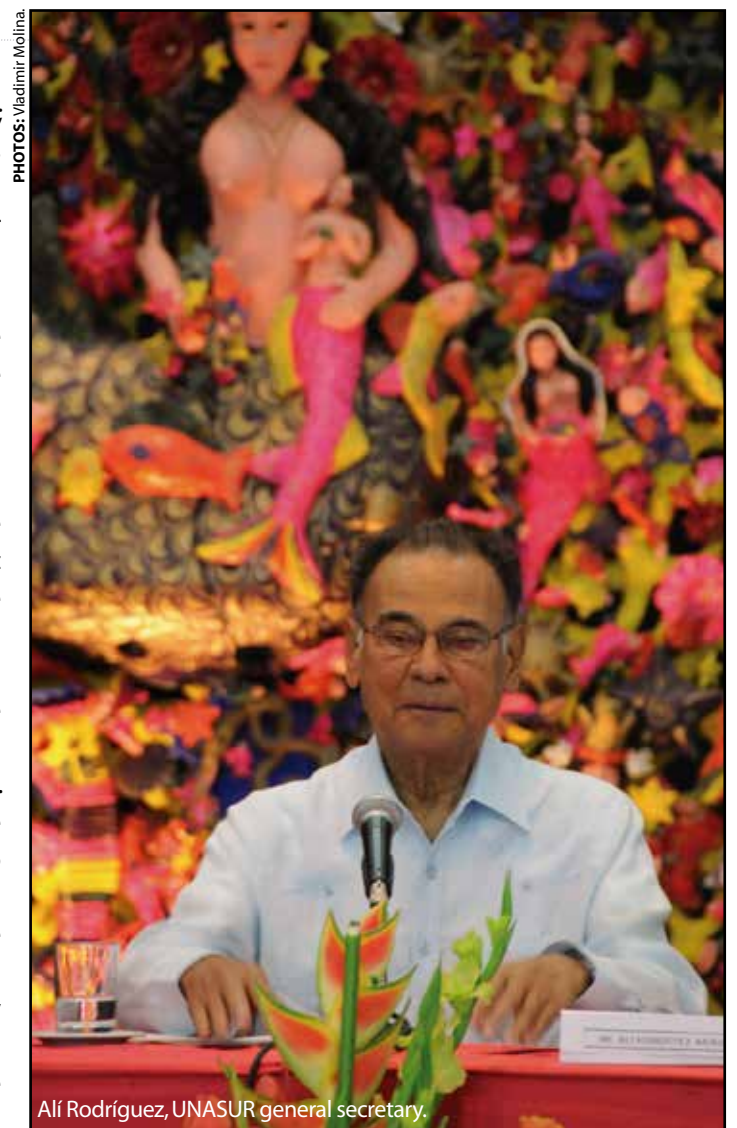
South America holds nearly 30 percent of the world's renewable water resources, representing more than 70 percent of the American continent's water, and 21 percent of the world's forest areas.

However, it still has weaknesses: productive and export structures based more on fixed comparative advantages (natural resources only) than on dynamic advantages, low levels of investment in infrastructure and exploration; and lags in innovation, science, and technology.

Historically, the region has failed to translate revenues from natural resource exports into long-term economic development processes, according to ECLAC.

The region, the ECLAC noted, faces the challenge of encouraging equal use of energy by all, to be able to reduce the gaps that still exist among the sub-regions.

Likewise, by creating mechanisms that ensure the efficient investment of profits obtained from natural resources currently selling for high prices, public policy must focus on how to handle socio-environmental conflicts that may arise from the exploitation of these resources.



Alí Rodríguez, UNASUR general secretary.

Looking to the Caribbean for Good Neighbors and Political Unity

By Yurién**PORTELLES**

HAVANA._ With four-plus decades of official relations and more than a century of ties to its fellow Caribbean countries, Cuba continues to look to this region for fostering good neighbors and unity in facing political challenges together.

One of Cuba's priorities as pro tempore president of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC, is achieving closer relations with these nations. Cuba's Caribbean neighbors view this island nation as an active member, and recognize it for its projection toward the Third World and against racism and colonialism, and its relations with African nations, the source of all of these nations' ethnographic roots.

Prime Minister Kenny Davis Anthony of Saint Lucia traveled to Havana in late May to meet with local authorities, including President Raúl Castro, and step up cooperation in several fields. Cuba will continue to be a friend of the government and people of Saint Lucia, Anthony said at the end of his visit.

He thanked Cuba for its cooperation in education and health, essentially, including the enrollment of nearly 100 young people from that country in Cuban schools.

Cuba began providing medical services in Saint Lucia in 2001, and 139 of its cooperation workers have provided services there to date. Some are part of the Operation Miracle vision restoration program.

Educational cooperation between Cuba and Saint Lucia goes back to 1988; 313 students from Saint Lucia have graduated from Cuban schools, with 241 in educational specialties, 60 in health, and 12 in physical education and sports.



Prime Minister of Saint Lucia Kenny Davis Anthony.

From Haiti, Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe visited Havana in mid-May to continue strengthening bilateral ties.

Lamothe, who is also minister of planning and cooperation, met with Cuban authorities to discuss possibilities for extending literacy education in his country to reach some 600,000 people, and the creation of a network of community pharmacies for the Haitian people.

Cuba continues to work with Haiti on major cooperation projects, especially in health care, reaffirming relations that were established on the diplomatic level in 1904. Some 11,327 Cuban doctors have provided services in that nation since 1998, and since 1961, some 1,236 Haitians have graduated from Cuban schools, with 332 currently enrolled.

At the end of his visit, Lamothe praised Cuba's cooperation as "unconditional, providing much help to our people in areas like public health, sports,



Haitian Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe, right, and Cuban First Vice President Miguel Díaz-Canel.

construction and literacy. Without Cuba, we would not be where we are today."

Haitian Foreign Minister Pierre-Richard Casimir had made a previous visit to Havana, representing the Caribbean Community in an expanded meeting of the troika that presides over the CELAC.

Another important event this year was a visit to Port-au-Prince by Cuban First Vice President Miguel Díaz-Canel in the context of the 5th Summit of the Association of Caribbean States.

Díaz-Canel said that the common well-being of the peoples was attainable only with coordinated action and cooperation, reaffirming the urgent need for regional unity. "We believe in the idea of a united Caribbean, and we are certain that together we can overcome our current difficulties," he said.

Agrarian Agreement, a Step Forward toward Peace in Colombia

By Waldo**MENDILUZA**

HAVANA._ The Cuban capital was the setting for an announced agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) on agrarian reform, described by both sides as a step toward peace.

After a number of failed attempts to end the half century-long Colombian armed conflict, the agreement announced on May 26 paves the way for reconciliation, and was welcomed by various Colombian social actors.

"What we have achieved with in this agreement will mark the beginning of radical changes to Colombia's rural and agricultural situation, with equity and democracy," the government and the FARC said in their 16th joint communiqué, at the end of the ninth round of peace talks at Havana's international convention center.

For more than six months, the two sides have discussed the land issue, viewed as crucial because it is related to the origin and intensification of hostilities that have left thousands of people dead and millions displaced.

The two parties agreed to name the initiative "Toward a New Colombian Countryside: Integral Rural Reform." It is aimed at overcoming inequalities in the agrarian sector and compensating victims of dispossession and forced displacement.

Cuba and Norway, the guarantors of this latest



Pablo Catatumbo, left, with Iván Márquez, center, and the Norwegian and Cuban delegates to the talks.

attempt to reach peace in Colombia, presented the agreement to the media. It covers issues such as access to and use of land, infrastructure, land distribution, social development, the promotion of agricultural and livestock production, and food policies.

According to the Juan Manuel Santos government and the FARC, the agreement is an attempt to ameliorate the conflict's effects, update the land registry, define land borders, and provide social protection, prioritizing the fight against poverty and hunger.

The agreement temporarily puts an end to talks on the first item of the agenda for negotiations. Other agenda

items include political participation, drug trafficking, ending the conflict, attention to victims, and mechanisms for approving and verifying agreements.

The representatives of the two delegations to the peace talks, Humberto de la Calle for the government and Iván Márquez for the FARC, praised the agreement, but also made it clear that they continue to hold opposing views on Colombia's situation.

However, the two sides have expressed similar viewpoints on matters such as society's participation in the peace process,

the need for major changes in the countryside, and a social approach to the agrarian sector.

De la Calle called the agrarian reform agreement "a historic change, a rebirth of Colombia's countryside, which can be materialized when the conflict is brought to a successful end." He added that "everything will be done with full respect for private property."

The Colombian peace talks in Havana are based on the principle that no individual agreements will be implemented until a comprehensive peace agreement is reached covering all six issues on the negotiations agenda.

Regional Aviation Authorities Coordinate Safety, Training

By Roberto SALOMÓN

HAVANA._ Civil aviation directors from the Central Caribbean region held a four-day meeting in the Cuban capital, where they discussed issues such as operational safety, air navigation, and cooperation and training in that field, among others.

They especially focused on a new international action plan for air navigation services and gradual improvements to aviation systems.

In opening remarks, Cuban Transport Minister Cesar Arocha said the meeting would have a very positive impact on safety standards for airlines operating in the region.

Two factors in the Caribbean must be taken into account because they are related to and affect civil aviation: climate change and tourism development, Arocha said. "Both of these elements have an impact on air operations and on how we manage growth to ensure sustainability,"

he said. Increasing the quality and quantity of airport services and flight connections is indispensable to creating the optimum conditions for growing operations of any magnitude in the region, the Cuban minister said.

It is also important to ensure organized, stable, safe connections between the American continent and Caribbean islands, and between the islands, he added, noting that the region's socioeconomic development largely depends on tourism.

Loretta Martin, director of the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Regional Office for North America, Central America, and the Caribbean, told *The Havana Reporter* that despite the current economic and financial crisis, the airlines in general have been earning profits thanks to the growing use of air transport.

Martin, who co-chaired the meeting, said that the number of flights in Latin America and the Caribbean

registered a seven percent increase in 2012, and continued to rise, and she noted that nearly 35 percent of internationally traded goods are transported by air.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) recently announced that airlines in general are expected to earn some \$12.70 billion in profits 2013.

The ICAO will hold its most important event later this year: its 38th assembly, set for Sep.24-Oct.4, Martin said.

Referring to that meeting, the president of Cuba's Civil Aeronautics Institute, Alfredo P. Cordero, said that the issues discussed in Havana made it possible for participants to join together as a region on a number of important issues.

"We learned about the work that the Latin American Civil Aviation Commission is doing to prepare its members for this assembly, such as reports on surveys and on the region's common stances," he added.



HAVANA._ Access to "decent, adequate housing," as set out by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has always been a motive for conflicts, exclusion, and social problems. However, Cuba is implementing concrete policies to increase its per capita housing space.

According to UN estimates, more than 100 million people in the world are homeless and nearly one billion live in precarious conditions—a figure likely to rise to three billion by 2050.

Although Third World countries account for most homelessness, it is a universal problem. According to the website Sostenibilidad, austerity policies in Europe and North America have created exclusion in the housing sector, increasing precarious living conditions.

In Cuba, with a population of 11.2 million, the total number of housing units is reported at three million, with only 61 percent of those units in "good condition," while the rest are in "average to poor condition," according to the National Housing Institute.

The housing problem in Cuba is complicated by the fact that 75 percent of the population lives in urban areas, as reported by the National Statistics and Information Office. In the past 10 years, hurricanes and other climate-related disasters have damaged more than one million homes. This

Policies for Boosting Housing Construction, Repair

By Daniel URBINO

has made it impossible to complete various state housing construction projects, because resources have been allocated for recovery efforts in the hardest-hit areas.

As a result, self-built housing—construction by the household or where the household contracts a builder—is a strategy that has been encouraged over the last decade by providing citizens with loans, financial aid, and other mechanisms.

Council of Ministers Agreement 7387 is part of that strategy. It boosts an existing financial aid program for Cubans who are building or repairing their homes with more funds and payment facilities and broader eligibility. Since 2011, Cubans have been able to apply for bank loans or grants of up to 80,000 Cuban pesos (about \$3,500) for specific types of spending: materials and labor costs associated with housing construction or repair.

Now, that maximum has risen to 85,000 pesos (about \$200 more) and can be used to pay for transport as well, and the maximum loan or grant for applicants in earthquake-prone areas is 90,000 pesos (about \$3,900), said Anselmo Pagés, a representative of the Standing Commission for the Implementation and Development of the economic changes that are being implemented in the country.

Those eligible for grants include homeowners who need to repair or finish a 25-square-meter housing unit or who need to solve a plumbing problem.

As a new feature of the program, loan/grant recipients can buy a wide variety of construction and maintenance materials at stores that sell goods in CUCs (Cuban convertible pesos). Previously, they

could only buy P-350 cement at those shops, and had to buy other materials from state outlets that sell in Cuban pesos. Construction materials availability is another national priority. As of early May,

annual construction materials sales were up by 46 percent compared to last year, and totalled 650 million pesos (about \$27 million), said Pilar Fernández, head of the national retail sales group.

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Leinier Domínguez, a Worthy Heir to Capablanca

By AdriánMENGANA

HAVANA._ With the victory of Leinier Domínguez at the 2013 Thessaloniki Grand Prix in Greece, Cuba's chess players conquered the most important trophy of the 21st century, adding a new distinction to their rich heritage.

Domínguez won six matches, five of them against players who had more than 2,700 ELO points; tied four; and lost only in the first round, against Gata Kamsky of the United States.

His wins and draws allowed Domínguez to add 30 ELO points, for a total of 2,757, a national and Latin American record, which is why he will hold 11th place in the next update of the world ranking.

Domínguez—winner of the 2008 world championship in fast chess in Almaty—beat Bulgarian Veselin Topalov (2,793 ELO), Italian Fabiano Caruana (2,774), Ukrainian Vassily Ivanchuk (2,755), Uzbek Rustam Kasimdzhanov (2,699), and Russians Peter Svidler (2,769) and Alexander Morozevich (2,760).

Now the best player in Latin America, Domínguez is a worthy heir to his compatriot, José Raúl Capablanca, who was chess world champion from 1921 to 1927, and he is also the product of a chess competition project that has nothing to do with commercialization or professional sports. Argentine-Cuban revolutionary Commander Ernesto Che Guevara, a huge fan of chess, was one of the proponents of that project, which was designed by a group of specialists in 1959 and supported by Cuba's National Sports Institute, INDER.

A year after the creation of INDER in 1961, chess lovers received the pleasant news that an annual international



PHOTO: José Tito Merino

tournament would be held: the Capablanca Memorial, named after Latin America's doyen and one of the most prestigious players from this part of the world.

During those early years of the Cuban Revolution, solid steps were taken to make chess a mass sport, and in 1964, a book especially aimed at young people was published: *Ajedrez Curso Moderno* (Modern Chess Course).

Shortly after that, the "scientific game" got another boost when Havana organized the 17th World Chess Olympiad from Oct. 23 to Nov. 20, 1966, featuring more than 300 chess players representing 52 countries.

The competition turned Cuba into one giant, powerful chessboard. The halls where players were competing filled to bursting with spectators, and those who couldn't get in followed the games through gigantic mural boards placed outside the Hotel Habana Libre, the Olympiad's venue.

In 1968, Cuban Silvino García was unbeaten when he won the 3rd Pan-American Championship in Havana, and he took an important step toward his goal of becoming a Grand Master, which he reached in 1975, the first Cuban to do so. He was followed by the late Guillermo García, in 1976; Amador Rodríguez (1977), Román Hernández (1978), Jesús Nogueiras (1979), Reinaldo Vera (1988) and Walter Arencibia (1990), for a total of 23 male Grand Masters to date.

Among women players, the first Cuban to attain that title was Vivian Ramón in 1998, the first Latin American woman to do so. Subsequently, Maritza Arribas (1999), Suleinnis Piña (2002), Zirka Frómata (2008), Yaniet Marrero (2008) and Oleiny Linares (2010) became Grand Masters.

TEÓFILO STEVENSON INTERNATIONAL MEMORIAL TEAM TOURNAMENT

Honoring the All-Time Greatest Cuban Boxer

By LemayPADRÓN

HAVANA._ Beginning next year, Cuba plans to hold a new international boxing tournament with some of the best teams in the world to honor its three-time Olympic and world heavyweight champion, the late Teófilo Stevenson.

Alejandro Barrientos, vice president of the Cuban federation of sports judges and referees, said the Teófilo Stevenson International Memorial Tournament will be a team competition event, with boxers competing in all 10 Olympic weight divisions. The idea for the three-day event is to invite squads from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, with some of the world's top champs, to compete with local boxers.

Christian Jiménez, president of the Cuban Sports Institute (INDER), highlighted the importance of the coming tournament as a tribute to Cuba's all-time greatest boxer.

"We want to organize a top-level event, to do justice to his (Stevenson's) name," he told reporters at a press conference.

A date had not been set when *The Havana Reporter* went to press, but the goal was to hold it a few days before the 2014 Giraldo Córdova Cardín Tournament, so that visiting teams can participate in both.

This year, one initiative honoring the great Cuban champ was the Teófilo Stevenson National Cup, which was held in mid-May for boxers in the 71-91 kg divisions.

CUBA'S GREATEST BOXER

With three Olympic gold medals, Stevenson was the most extraordinary amateur heavyweight boxer ever, and one of the best in any weight division.

He won his first Olympic gold at the 1972 Munich Olympics, when faced down Duane Bobick of the United States, referred to by the U.S. press as the "Big White Hope," and who was expected to overshadow the legendary Joe Louis, or even Muhammad Ali himself. However, Bobick suffered a stunning loss when he ran into Stevenson's powerful right-hand punch and he was never the same again.

Subsequently, the great Cuban athlete from Las Tunas province won three world championship titles, one after another: in Havana, in 1974; Belgrade, 1978; and Reno, 1986. The first two were in +81 kg division, and the third was in the +91 kg. Stevenson won his Olympic titles in Munich-1972, Montreal-1976, and Moscow-1980, and was proclaimed champion at the 1974 and 1982 Central American and Caribbean Games, in Santo Domingo and in Havana, respectively.

At home, he was an 11-time national champion, and a runner-up champion, and he was nine-time winner of the traditional Giraldo Córdova Cardín International Memorial Tournament, which was considered to be as competitive as a world championship. In 1984, he respected Cuba's



PHOTO: Joaquín Vinas

decision not to attend the Los Angeles Olympics, where he could have won his fourth Olympic title. Stevenson was tempted to enter professional boxing and came close to fighting the legendary Muhammad Ali for a purse of \$5 million, but the match never happened.

Nobody ever knocked out Stevenson, but he knocked out many an opponent with his devastating punches, often with a single jab. Stevenson won all of the awards granted by the International Amateur Boxing Association (AIBA), including the Val Barker Trophy for best world boxer, and the Fair Play Trophy for his gentlemanly conduct in the ring.

US Sticks to Its Old Policy: Cuba Still on Terrorist List

By **Waldo MENDILUZA**

HAVANA.— The United States decided to keep Cuba on its list of "state sponsors of terrorism," a decision widely criticized as part of a failed policy left over from the Cold War.

A diverse array of voices in both countries and the international community expressed their disagreement with the announcement made on May 30 by the U.S. State Department, which defended its decision by accusing Cuba of harboring U.S. fugitives and others described by Washington as terrorists.

In the United States, prominent individuals such as former diplomat Wayne Smith, curator and philanthropist Gilbert Brownstone, and academic Arturo López-Levy spoke out against Cuba's inclusion on the list, which Washington has issued since December 1979.

No evidence exists to justify keeping Cuba on the list, said Smith, who headed the U.S. Interests Section in Cuba from 1979 to 1982. Brownstone said that it was the United States that should be included on such a list, given the protection it provides to criminal groups in its territory, in addition to its past relations with other terrorists in the world.

López-Levy lambasted the White House for giving in to the political manipulation of those who defend the blockade, in reference to the economic, commercial and financial sanctions that Washington has implemented against Cuba for more than half a century.

In Cuba, the Foreign Ministry described the U.S. accusation that Cuba sponsors terrorism as "shameful."

"The only purpose of this discredited exercise against Cuba is to try to justify maintaining the blockade, a failed



Leyde Rodríguez, historian and international relations scholar.

policy that the entire world condemns," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. The U.S. government uses "ridiculous accusations" and "feeble arguments" to keep Cuba on its unilateral list, the statement said.

A long line of U.S. administrations has said that U.S. fugitives are in Cuba, and that the island harbors members of the Basque ETA and of Colombian guerrilla groups, the statement said. In fact, the ETA members are in Cuba as the result of a request made by Spain's government in the 1980s, and with respect to Colombian insurgents, Cuba is a guarantor for the peace talks involving the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP), it said.

Cuban academics and citizens also spoke out against the State Department's decision, describing it as anachronistic.

Leyde Rodríguez, a historian and international relations scholar, said that the policy is a leftover from the Cold War that makes the United States look bad at home and abroad. Nobody in the world sees Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism; on the contrary, they see it "as a victim of terrorism," he told *The Havana Reporter*.

Rodríguez noted that nearly 3,500 Cubans lost their lives and 2,100 were left disabled as the result of terrorist actions promoted, organized, and financed in the United States. Moreover, Cuba has ratified global agreements against terrorism, repeatedly stating its willingness to cooperate in anti-terror efforts. In fact, Cuba has made a proposal—ignored by the United States—to sign a bilateral agreement in that respect.

Worldwide, a number of countries have expressed their opposition to Washington's decision, and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America bloc (ALBA) described it as "absurd" and "unsustainable."

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