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International Solidarity Conference in Cuba calls for ‘counteroffensive against imperialism’

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November 24, 2019



Photo: Bill Hackwell





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Havana — According to the conference final declaration, 1,332 activists and revolutionaries from 86 countries around the world attended the three-day Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Conference for Democracy and Against Neoliberalism in the Cuban capital from Nov. 1-3.

Contingents represented more than 750 organizations united in remarkable and vigorous solidarity for socialist Cuba.

The call for this gathering was announced following May Day 2018 by the president of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), Fernando Gonzalez Llort. Gonzalez is one of the Cuban 5 heroes who spent long years imprisoned in the U.S., which Jose Marti rightly termed “the belly of the beast.”

Gonzalez and Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla opened the conference, along with a video tribute to historic leader of the Cuban Revolution Fidel Castro, whose leadership was remembered throughout the weekend.

The event took on the character of a call to united action for international solidarity

in what a delegate from Peru named a counteroffensive to imperialist aggression and intervention in the Global South.

‘Dare to debunk myths’

Six work commission focused discussion and action proposals on topics ranging from people before free trade and transnationals; integration and common struggles; democracy, sovereignty and anti-imperialism; and decolonization, strategic communication and social struggle.

Young people from all around the world spoke in the youth commission, organized by Cuba’s Union of Young Communists (UJC).

The largest commission by far was solidarity with Cuba and other just causes.

This Cuba solidarity commission became a conference inside a conference. It was held at the campus of the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM), with two plenaries and cultural presentations from medical students.

ELAM students in their white coats, national dress and with some holding their national flags, lined the walkway into the school in a joyous greeting. Participants discussed action proposals divided by geographical regions to be reported back the next day.

Uniting all attendees was the common need to combat incorrect and slanderous attacks on socialism being made online and in the bourgeois news media.

In his keynote speech at the end of the conference, President Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela declared, “It’s necessary to take paths of courage and dare to debunk myths, blackmail, and lies.”

In the final action plan assembled by the conference, eight different proposed

actions involved media strategies, such as creating an Anti-Imperialist Media Alliance to create media that is “collectively organized and coordinated, for the truth and based on peoples’ resistance.”

The program pledged to support alternative news sources such as HispanTV, Russia Today, and Cubainformación, meant to be an alternative news source for solidarity with the Cuban struggle. Additionally, the conference resolved to carry out coordinated international media campaigns on the 17th of every month.

Cuban representatives and supporters vigorously denounced the U.S. blockade and demanded: #ManosFueraDeCuba (Hands Off Cuba)!

Internationalist unity

Resoundingly, the activists and representatives in the conference plenaries affirmed and reaffirmed their support for President Evo Morales and Bolivia. Speakers praised Evo for championing the fight against climate change in Latin America and the rights of Indigenous people and for implementing progressive reforms for the people of Bolivia.

Speakers opposed the neoliberal undertakings of the International Monetary Fund in various countries, including Ecuador. Representatives from Chile called for solidarity in the popular struggle against the brutal Piñera regime and overturning the legacy of the Pinochet dictatorship.

Again and again, representatives and speakers demanded freedom for falsely imprisoned former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Chants of “Lula Livre” rocked Havana’s Convention Center. Boxes containing more than 2 million Cuban signatures for his release were delivered to the Brazilian delegation.

Among many issues raised, the conference called for the liberation of Palestine from Israeli apartheid, the fall of the fascist Duterte regime in the Philippines, an end to

the trade war against China, and support for the people's movement in Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Indigenous activists from the Wet'suwet'en nation sang a protest chant in defense of Native land and the climate. Anti-imperialists from the United States raised the big banks' racist austerity measures in Detroit and big business attacks on public housing tenants in the South Bronx.

The conference celebrated the revolutionary advances made by Cuba in the fields of education and healthcare. Cuba founded the Latin American School of Medicine, which trains and sends doctors all over the world to countries where medical care is needed. Numerous current and former students of ELAM attended.

Cuba's historical defense of the liberation struggles on the African continent, including those in Angola, Namibia, Libya and Zimbabwe, was held in the highest esteem.

Venezuelan leader speaks

In the closing session, Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez and Army General and First Secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee Raul Castro Ruz were joined by Bolivarian Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro Moro.

Greeted by thunderous chants and cheering, President Nicolás Maduro put into words the overwhelming spirit of unity that flowed through the conference. "The revolutionary force of a conscious people is unstoppable," he proclaimed to an enthusiastic and emotional audience.

After analyzing 30 years of the history of struggle and revolution in Latin America, Maduro stated that through building unity, the people of Latin America may stand together and form an unstoppable resistance to neoliberalism and imperialism. He emphasized that building unity and solidarity is crucial for opening up "roads to the

truth” in the face of campaigns to divide left-wing, progressive and popular movements.

Furthermore, Maduro stressed, “It is the people that must stand together and obligate that our rulers stand together and respect each other.” He concluded that the people of Latin America share a common destiny and that the road to victory must be charted by the people with courage.

President Maduro described threats aimed at Bolivia’s President Evo Morales Ayma made by Luis Fernando Camacho, a fascist millionaire figure of the right-wing opposition. Morales was forced to renounce his title of democratically-elected leader of Bolivia under pressure from the OAS-backed fascist coup on Nov. 10, just a week after Maduro’s address in Havana.

According to Maduro, Camacho gave Evo an ultimatum to either leave his office in 24 hours or get “knocked out.” Maduro compared this threat to a Nazi tactic. Nevertheless, he confidently declared, “[The Bolivian opposition] will not be knocking out Evo. They will not be able to knock out the people of Bolivia. This ultimatum is not against Evo, it’s against the people of Bolivia — the Native people. That is the truth.”

The Bolivian military may have turned on the people in favor of the fascist opposition, but the people of Bolivia have not wavered in their support for Evo. Marches of tens of thousands of people, led by Indigenous Bolivians, have crowded the streets of El Alto and La Paz. The military has brutally injured hundreds and killed more than two dozen protestors, mainly Indigenous people, but the people’s resistance has not let up.

As Maduro projected: “The Native people, the miners, the peasants, the young people of the universities will be in the streets doing whatever it takes to support Evo Morales.” The people of Bolivia have yet to prove him wrong.

With emphasis on unity and the duty of the people to propel their leadership forward, Maduro concluded: “Let us have faith and optimism that a historic time has come for unity, and let us have the spiritual force to drive forward in these times in our history. Nobody will take that away from us. Brothers and sisters, ever onward to victory. We shall overcome.”

