EDITORIAL

MOVING FORWARD IN HARD TIMES,
AND IN THIS ISSUE

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For the last four years I have introduced the December issue of this biannual journal with an editorial documenting the central contribution of the Trump/Biden augmented Blockade to Cuba’s ongoing economic hard times. That not only was but still remains appropriate for this international journal on “all things Cuban”. The United States has made it clear for decades that it (correctly) considers itself militarily and economically powerful enough to disregard international law whenever it chooses to do so. What can be done today that will contribute to someday making the US end its aggression is to make it pay the political price of the damage to its reputation from shining a light on its illegal activities.

This editorial will call attention to the other side of the coin. Given the Blockade which for the Cubans for the present is a given like the law of gravity, the question for the Cuban people and their government is: what can Cuba do today to improve the lives of its citizens? Cuba is, in fact, constantly engaged in a plethora of programs directed to that goal – some new and some old (and some old with new modifications), and some short-term and some long-term. And while some are directly aimed at Cuba’s very difficult economic situation, others are aimed at a variety of the other dimensions of “life in Cuba”. Most of these issues are being discussed around the world – improved technology in all aspects of daily life (and the potential human problems of some new technologies), preparing for the sweeping problems from climate change that have already begun worldwide, reconsidering what humanity wants its twenty-first-century “family units” to look like and do, reconsidering what the twenty-first-century governing institutions of society should look like and do, and so on. This editorial will highlight just a few of the many things Cuba is trying to do today to “try to move forward in hard times”. The take-away message from this editorial, however, is much broader than the details of the small set of such programs that will be indicated. The take-way message is, rather, that despite the acuteness of
its current economic situation, Cuba continues, beyond its immediate economic imperatives, to try to promote a broad spectrum of policies, and to build the corresponding programs for, the “educational, scientific, technical and cultural development of the country” (2019 Constitution, article 13).

The Assistant Editor of the International Journal of Cuba Studies (IJCS), Marcel Kunzman, has long run a German language site, Cuba Heute (https://cubaheute.de/), where he selects and posts a broad and rich sample of “news and its background out of Cuba”. Starting in January 2023, the International Institute for the Study of Cuba (IISC), the home institution of the IJCS, began to publish these in English translation for our readers. These can be accessed from the home page of the IISC (https://cubastudies.org/) under the category “News”.

Drawing on this source, here are some brief discussions of a small sample of the broad spectrum of issues that Cuba is trying to “move forward on in hard times”. Expressions in quotes are titles of articles there, with their dates given. One article discussing a number of these issues is “Parliamentary summer session: No easy solutions in sight” dated July 28, which is referenced for a number of the issues in the list that follows.

**Improving technology and infrastructure for “improved daily life”**

- Conversion to digital TV ("Parliamentary summer session" July 28)
- “Faster internet” (April 29)
- “Cuba wants to equip long-distance trains with WLAN” (March 17)
- Improving infrastructure. This is above all an economic issue, and as such very hard to accomplish when facing serious economic problems. “Parliamentary summer session” July 28 discusses plans for the following major infrastructure issues – transportation, water supply, electricity, and gas (on this last one, see also the article “Strategic partnership in the making: Cuba and Russia plan long-term energy deal” June 14)

**International support for the poor of the world**

- Presidency of Group of 77 + China (Cuba has indicated that this is its top foreign policy priority this year, see “Parliamentary summer session” July 28)
- “A dose of hope: What the world can learn from Cuba’s vaccination campaign” June 7

The vaccination development programs are of course very much also a domestic quality of life issue. See also the article by Yaffe in this issue for further discussion on both these issues of the presidency of the Group of 77 + China and
vaccines, including market value estimates of the value of Cuba’s ODA (overseas development assistance), and in particular its medical ODA.

**World Climate Crisis**

- Implementation of the Tarea Vida. For one good short investigation of Cuba’s major efforts for its people in regard to this sweeping world problem, see the chapter “Cuba’s Tarea Vida: Sustainable Development and Combating Climate Change” by Helen Yaffe in the book *Disaster Preparedness and Climate Change in Cuba* edited by Kirk, Story and Clayfield, which I did a book review of in last year’s issue 14(2) of this journal. For a longer, very much “on the ground” view of this program in Cuba, see the one-hour video she produced on it, “Cuba’s Life Task: Combating Climate Change”, available on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=APN6N45Q6iU

**Governance**

- Strengthening the link between MPs and voters, an issue of concern around the world today. “In response to the drop in voter turnout, the National Assembly was tasked with drawing up new standards aimed at strengthening the link between MPs and voters. From now on, members of parliament must visit their constituency at least once every three months. What is customary at the local level poses a greater challenge for elected officials at the national level who live in Havana but have their constituency in other provinces. It was announced that failure to comply with this principle can be grounds for removal by the electorate under the imperative mandate.” (“Parliament summer session.” July 28)

**Families, legally redefining them, and the roles of people in them**

- The New Family Code. This was accepted overwhelmingly by a national referendum on September 25, 2022, and enabling-legislation continues to be passed in accordance with it. I highlighted some of the major issues involved in it in my introductory editorial to issue 14(2) of this journal last year, issues that are very much part of the worldwide discussion on the nature and the role of families in the twenty-first century.
- The new “Integral Policy for the Care of Children and Adolescents” was passed by parliament, in which more than 20,000 children and young people participated in drafting the law, by way of discussion forums and questionnaires. “Parliament summer session.” July 28.
Culture

- While of course the Havana Book fair is very long-standing, it is a high visibility commitment of resources, in this case to culture, in these economically hard times. “31st Havana International Book Fair ended”, February 24.

As the International Journal of Cuban Studies always strives to do, the six academic articles in this issue bring to our readers research on different dimensions of Cuban reality. The first two articles are related to the “world press headlines” dimension of Cuba’s serious economic problems. The first article, “Trumpism, Cuban Americans, and the fetishism of politics” by Rodney A. González Maestrey, looks from a new perspective at the much-studied issue of the main (not only) cause of Cuba’s economic problems today, the Trump (now Trump/Biden) major escalation of the US’s aggression against Cuba. The second article, “Inflation in Cuba: an analysis from the perspective of the main nominal anchors of monetary policy” by Sergio Truebas Acosta, looks at some measures being taken by the Cuban government, and proposes others it argues should be taken, to address one highly visible and politically sensitive aspect of the Island’s serious economic problems, the high inflation.

The third through fifth articles then research a different dimension of Cuba’s reality, expressed in the first book review in this issue as “things done differently in Cuba from other countries because of its Revolution”. For decades domestic and international supporters of Cuba’s Revolution (and neutral but objective observers, for example from the international medical community) have pointed to the exceptional humanistic value of the international medical assistance provided to the world by this (relatively poor) country. This topic is discussed and researched much less today, but as the third article “Cuban Medical Internationalism: a Paradigm for South-South Cooperation” by Helen Yaffe makes clear, Cuba is still making a major contribution to world health. This contribution is entirely disproportionate to its population and wealth and is occurring despite its current serious economic problems, and Cuba does this because of its Revolution. The fourth article, “Why has Marxism-Leninism Succeeded in Cuba?” by Joe Pateman and John Pateman, researches a different question about Cuba’s Revolution – why, given that it did not start off as Marxist-Leninist, did the dynamics of the unfolding Revolution take it to that worldview? The final article researching a topic very much reflecting this dimension of Cuban reality of “things done differently in Cuba from other countries because of its Revolution”, “Impacto socioeconómico de los resultados deportivos de Cuba en los Juegos Olímpicos” by José Ramón Sanabria Navarro,
William Alejandro Niebles Nuñez, and Yailina Silveira Pérez, addresses the socio-economic impact of the exceptional results obtained by Cuba in the Olympic Games over decades.

Finally, the last article “El verticalismo residencial en La Habana promovido por la Ley de Propiedad Horizontal (1952–1959)” by Ruslan Muñoz Hernández, Alexis Jesús Rouco Méndez, and Beatriz Fernández González, looks at the capital’s architecture, one aspect of still another dimension of today’s Cuban reality, its history, and in this case Cuba’s history right before the Revolution.