

"We are realists... we dream the impossible" - Che



Fire This Time!



U.S. President Obama in Cuba

A Special Cuba Section
Page 22-37

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF
IRELAND'S EASTER
UPRISING OF 1916



Page 12

CANADA'S HIDDEN WAR IN IRAQ

Page 4

REPEAL BILL C-51!



Page 6

FREE U.S. POLITICAL
PRISONER
MUMIA ABU-JAMAL
NOW!



The World Stands
with Venezuela!



Pages 8, 9, 37, 38

PROMISES, PROMISES...



Artwork: Justin Landia

THE
GOVERNMENT
OF CANADA
FAILS
INDIGENOUS
CHILDREN &
YOUTH

Page 16



New Era of War & Occupation



By Nita Palmer

Nearly fifteen years have passed since the US launched its deadly aerial assault on Afghanistan in October 2001. NATO troops arrived soon after, promising to help create a more democratic and peaceful Afghanistan, which would no longer be a 'safe haven for terrorists'.

Today, it seems as though the mainstream media has all but forgotten this war, as eyes turn to the crises in Syria, Iraq, and beyond. The war in Afghanistan is far from over, however. In fact, 2015 was the deadliest year for Afghan civilians since the war began, with more than 11,000 men, women, and children killed.

13,200 NATO troops remain in the country under the banner of Operation Resolute Support. Officially, NATO has ended combat operations in the country and maintains a force only to "train, advise, and assist" Afghan forces. However, "training and advising" involves direct battlefield support of Afghan forces, and "assistance" often comes in the form of US/NATO airstrikes. Elite US special operations forces also carry out counter terrorism operations in the form of home raids, torture, interrogation and even murder (Matthieu

Aikins, "The A-Team Killings", Rolling Stone, November 2013). The 'new face' of the US and NATO in Afghanistan is little different than before.

On October 15, 2015 US President Barack Obama announced that the US mission in Afghanistan would not end in 2016, but would see around 5,500 troops stay in the country through 2017. This announcement came mere days after a US airstrike on a Medcins Sans Frontieres hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan killed more than 30 innocent people.

This war has indeed brought change to Afghanistan, but none for the better – at least for the majority of Afghans. Foreign corporations and wealthy local elite have profited from the expansion of resource extraction and the hospitality industry which serves the constant stream of foreigners through Kabul. Warlords too have profited from the exponential expansion of the drug trade which began after 2001. Most Afghans, though, have seen little if any change for the better and much change for the worse. Three quarters of the county still lacks access to clean drinking water; 90%

lack adequate sanitation facilities (World Health Organization). More than half of the country's children experience stunted growth due to malnutrition, according to UN data. Healthcare remains tragically inadequate, with MSF reporting in 2014 that one in eight Afghans were unable to reach a hospital for urgent care due to the ongoing fighting. Today, the security situation in the country is worsening rapidly. This not only puts Afghans directly at risk, but prevents the sick and injured from accessing care, children from attending school, and adults from securing employment. In short, the US/NATO occupation has torn the country to pieces.

Negotiating with the Taliban and 'Playing Not to Lose'

Life certainly wasn't easy for Afghans living under Taliban rule prior to 2001. The country was poor, education was scarce, and basic human and women's rights were essentially non-existent. Little has fundamentally changed today, however. The US may have built some schools, but they are staggeringly understaffed and under-equipped, and students often cannot attend because of the ongoing fighting. There may

be women in the Afghan Parliament, but there are also increasing numbers of women whose lives are so desperate they resort to suicide to escape their situation.

The US and NATO have failed to improve the living conditions of Afghans; they also have failed to stop terrorism. The Taliban have been rapidly gaining ground in Afghanistan, now controlling significant areas of the country. As well, Daesh (Islamic State) fighters have gained control in some areas, with the Pentagon estimating that there are about 1000-3000 Daesh militants in Afghanistan.

The US is no longer trying to defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan – they are desperately trying to negotiate with them. The Quadrilateral Coordination Group – composed of representatives from the US, China, Afghanistan, and Pakistan – met in Islamabad, Pakistan in January. Reopening talks with the Taliban was a key point on the agenda. Several US policy analysts are suggesting some sort of power-sharing agreement with the Taliban. Writing for Foreign Policy Magazine, Emile Simpson suggests that, “the West could see an endpoint in accepting a Taliban takeover of [some] areas, while helping to consolidate Kabul’s position in the predominantly Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara areas in the center, north, and west of the country where Afghan President Ashraf Ghani’s government has more support.”

Two points are apparent from this. Firstly, the Taliban’s human rights record was obviously never a fundamental concern for the US, since they are now eager to negotiate with them. If the real reason for this protracted war was to bring human rights to Afghans, the US would continue fighting the Taliban, not try to arrange a power-sharing agreement. Secondly, it is clear that the US does not see a possibility of final victory over the Taliban. Born from Afghanistan’s long history of resistance to foreign domination, the Taliban have shown that they may be set back, but never defeated as long as there are Afghans willing to join them to fight against the foreign occupiers. Jeff Eggers, a senior policy analyst for Washington-based policy think tank Rand Corporation, wrote in an article for Politico that the US is “at best, playing not to lose” in Afghanistan.

Ruling Class Calls for Extension and Expansion of War

Fifteen years of war, billions of taxpayer dollars, and at least tens of thousands of lives lost have not brought the victory for the US and NATO in Afghanistan. However, they have no intention of putting an end to this catastrophe. Most important foreign policy analysis groups and journals – including the Rand Corporation, the

Brookings Institution, and Foreign Policy Magazine, have called for a renewed war drive in Afghanistan, by expanding and extending the mission.

An opinion piece by Vanda Felbab-Brown, a senior fellow at Foreign Policy, states, “... strong ground forces cannot compensate for inadequate air support, modern intelligence capabilities, well-functioning logistics (to maintain vehicles and keep essential supplies available), and higher-order assistance for Afghanistan’s still-nascent security institutions. The United States must help fill these critical gaps while maintaining its promises to complete these critical, but unfinished, programs. The United States must also amend the very restrictive rules of engagement that currently limit air support capabilities, and restore intelligence assets that have been withdrawn.”

In other words, the US must expand its ability to carry out airstrikes (which have already killed thousands of Afghans), as well as further its support for the Afghan Army. Afghan forces will remain the cannon fodder, dying in the thousands as they fight the US war against the Taliban and other insurgent groups. In this way, they can continue the war without (they hope) too much outcry from the American public.

What is the US/NATO Objective?

Given how costly and unpopular the longest war in American history has been, one might wonder why the US and their NATO allies do not just cut their losses and leave Afghanistan. However, the intention of the West in Afghanistan was never simply to win the war there. In fact, the US and NATO plan to maintain a long-term presence in the country. Speaking to the Washington Post, a senior Pentagon official explained: “What we’ve learned is that you can’t really leave... the local forces need air support, intelligence and help with logistics. They are not going to be ready in three years or five years. You have to be there for a very long time.”

The US does not plan to leave Afghanistan any time soon. It is telling that President Obama’s latest troop commitment comes with no set end date. They have also built several large bases and a large embassy in the country, indicating their intention to remain for a long period of time.

In truth, the war in Afghanistan never was about defeating the Taliban or al-Qaeda or establishing human rights in Afghanistan. The primary objective was, and continues to be, the establishment of a base of operations in an important strategic location. As the US and their allies face rising economic competition from growing powers such

as China and Russia, they are moving to establish their dominance in many regions of the world in order to maintain control over important trade markets and resource-rich areas. Afghanistan provides the perfect base of operations for US interests in the Middle East and Central Asia.

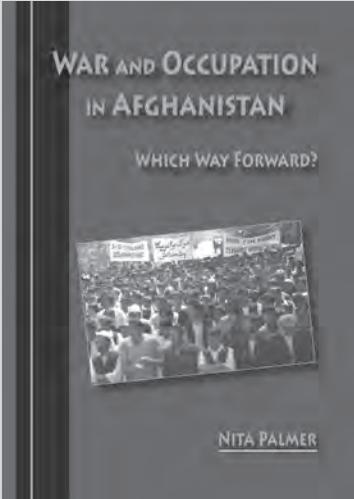
Troops Out Now!

Make no mistake – although we see few reports of US or NATO soldiers dying in Afghanistan, the war there marches on. It is Afghans – soldiers and civilians alike – who are dying in the tens of thousands each year in this US/NATO war. Afghans are suffering and dying every day as a result of a war which has only engendered terrorism, violence and division and eroded basic human rights and living conditions. This war is not in the interests of Afghans, Americans, Canadians, or the overwhelming majority of people around the world. We must not forget about this ongoing tragedy in Afghanistan. We must demand that all foreign forces leave Afghanistan immediately and let the Afghan people determine the future of their own country.

US/NATO Out of Afghanistan Now!

Battle of Ideas Press

**WAR AND OCCUPATION
IN AFGHANISTAN
WHICH WAY FORWARD?**



BY NITA PALMER

Nita Palmer is an author and researcher on the war in Afghanistan. She is a member of the editorial board of Vancouver, Canada-based social justice newspaper Fire This Time.

January 2010, paperback, \$7.00
155 pages, illustrated,
Copyright © 2010 by Battle of Ideas Press

WWW.BATTLEOFIDEASPRESS.COM
INFO@BATTLEOFIDEASPRESS.COM

CANADA'S HIDDEN WAR IN IRAQ



By Janine Solanki

"It will be dangerous. It will be clear that on occasion to defend ourselves or defend those who we are with, we will have to fight" - Canadian Chief of Defense Staff General Jonathan Vance

For those who thought that Canada's recent combat mission in Iraq is over and Canadian troops have been relegated to a milder, friendlier sounding "train, advise and assist" mission, don't be mistaken on the timing of the quote above. The comments by Canada's top general were not in reference to Canada's combat mission in Iraq under the government of Stephen Harper, rather they were made on February 19, 2016. That is, four days after Canada's fighter jets ceased their airstrikes in Iraq, ending Canada's combat mission as determined by the new Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. So if Canada's combat mission in Iraq is over, why is the new "train, advise and assist" mission so dangerous, and why will Canadian soldiers be fighting?

Canada's War in Iraq – Conservative Style

Before we talk about Canada's "refocused" mission in Iraq, let's understand what Canada's military has been doing in Iraq under the previous Conservative government of Canada. Canada's "Operation IMPACT" began on September 4th, 2014, with the stated aim of fighting Daesh (also known as ISIS) in Iraq and Syria. Most noted, of course, was Canada's six CF-18 Hornet fighter jets, CP-140 Aurora surveillance aircraft and the CC-150T Polaris aerial refueller. As of March 22nd, 2016 this air force conducted 2,222 sorties, which included 1378 sorties conducted by the fighter jets, resulting in 246 airstrikes in Iraq and 5 in Syria. Canada also had 69 special-forces soldiers in northern Iraq training Kurdish troops, as well as 600 Royal Canadian Air Force personnel deployed as part of Joint Task Force-Iraq, to "work with other coalition countries to advise and assist the Iraqi government with their security forces." In 2014 Canada's air force also delivered more than 1,600,000 pounds of military supplies to Iraq, including small arms, ammunition and other military equipment donated by countries allied to the foreign forces in Iraq.

Canada's War in Iraq – Liberal Style

Following the election of the new Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Canada's mission in Iraq and Syria was revised with the pretext of stopping Canadian airstrikes and continuing involvement in a "non-combat"



military capacity. But is this mission really non-combat, and does non-combat operations really equal a better policy in Iraq and Syria?

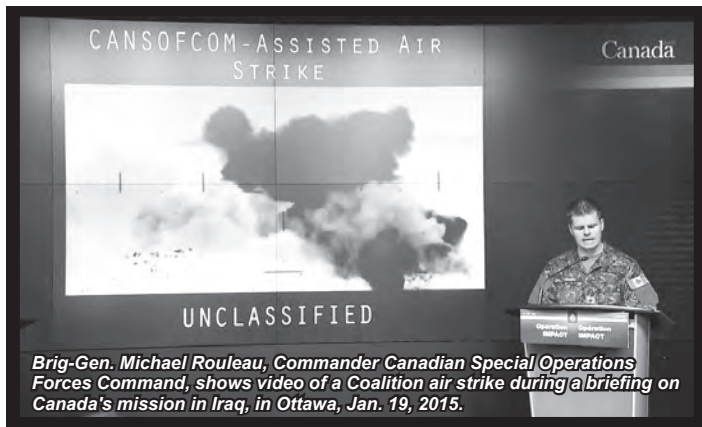
While the fighter jets ceased airstrike operations as of February 15th 2016, Canada's aerial refueller continues to provide fuel to other coalition aircraft (24,000,000 pounds of fuel as of March 22nd 2016). The two surveillance aircraft continue to "contribute to coalition intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities". So, although Canadian fighter jets may not be dropping the bombs, Canada is doing the behind-the-scenes work to enable the fighter jets of other countries to drop their bombs!

In terms of military personnel, this number has increased from 650 to 830, which includes tripling the "train, advise and assist" mission in northern Iraq from 69 to 200 special forces. While the mainstream headlines don't delve much deeper than those basic figures, let's ask a few questions. Who are these "special forces"? They are made up of the Joint Task Force 2 (JTF2) counter-terrorism unit as well as the Canadian Special Operations Regiment. In 2010 the Globe and Mail described the Joint Task Force 2 as "a shadowy counterterrorism force about which little concrete can be said" and "Canada's most elite troops – the faceless soldiers who go to places they won't name, to complete missions they won't talk about." How about the claim that the "train, advise and assist" mission is a non-combat mission? The quote at the beginning of this article already explicitly states that the troops will be engaged in fighting. Exactly how close to the front lines these troops are was proved on March 6th, 2015 when Sgt. Andrew Joseph Doiron, from the Canadian Special Operations Regiment, was killed in a friendly

fire incident while on the training mission in northern Iraq. Further investigation brought to light that about 20% of the training mission takes place close to or directly at the front lines, which is where Doiron was killed when Canadian troops were mistaken for Daesh fighters. Furthermore, as of March 8th, 2016 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's new "non-combat" military strategy authorized Canadian soldiers to shoot first in Iraq as soon as they detect "hostile intent" from Daesh fighters. So, if Canada's special forces spend 20% of their time at the front lines, where they will doubtlessly be subject to "hostile intent" and authorized to shoot, how likely is it that Canadian soldiers in Iraq will not be engaged in combat?

Then there is the question of a bit of simple mathematics. 830 Canadian military personnel in Iraq, minus 200 involved in the "train, advise and assist" mission equals 630 people whom we have very little information about what they are doing. While some of them are part of the continued air surveillance and refueling, the most concrete information to be found via the Canadian Forces Operation Impact website is that they will "support and enable the coalition and Iraqi security forces in the planning and execution of military operations" such as "intelligence operations; social media exploitation; targeting; and command and control." That command and control is a lot more than a simple footnote. On March 14th 2016 it was announced that Canadian Brigadier-General David Anderson is to command a coalition team working with Iraq's security ministries in Baghdad, in preparation for a military offensive against Daesh in Mosul and northwestern Iraq.

When faced with this closer inspection,



Brig-Gen. Michael Rouleau, Commander Canadian Special Operations Forces Command, shows video of a Coalition air strike during a briefing on Canada's mission in Iraq, in Ottawa, Jan. 19, 2015.

Canada's role in the war in Iraq is much more than a benign training mission. It is secretive special forces on the front lines, it is keeping coalition fighter jets in the skies, it is the eyes and ears of surveillance and intelligence and it is the decision makers of how this war is conducted. Not only does all the evidence point to this in reality being a combat mission, but it's even in charge of the "command and control" of much of the combat!

There is another aspect missing from Justin Trudeau's refocused "Operation Impact". While this Operation encompasses the war in Iraq and Syria, all we hear about is what Canada is doing in Iraq. So then, what is Canada doing in Syria? Does Canada have special operations troops in Syria? Is Canada involved in training, surveillance, intelligence or delivering arms? What are Operation Impact's plans for Syria? The simple fact is we don't know, and mainstream media is not asking these tough questions.

Canada's secret war in Iraq

"Ironically, the Canadians indirectly provide more support for us in Iraq than most of those 46 countries that are fully supporting us." - Paul Cellucci, former US Ambassador to Canada, March 27, 2003.

The fact is, Canada's current participation in the war in Iraq is nothing new. What's new is only the fact that it is public information. In 2011 WikiLeaks obtained a classified US document, which shows that senior Canadian officials met with American and British diplomats on the same day that former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announced to parliament that Canada would not participate in the war on Iraq. The confidential document from this meeting notes that former Canadian Foreign Affairs official James Wright "emphasized" that contrary to public statements by the prime minister, Canadian naval and air forces could be "discreetly" put to use during the pending U.S.-led assault on Iraq and its aftermath," as reported in a 2011 CBC news article.

From what information can be gleaned from these secret operations, Canada's involvement in the 2003 war on Iraq was quite similar to their current participation. Canada's navy was instrumental, with about 1,300 personnel on at least five frigates and one destroyer deployed to the Persian Gulf. Canada's air force also had a role, with surveillance and transport aircraft

as well as Canadian Forces members on crews on Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft, which served to guide fighter jets and bombers in airstrikes. Canada also provided airspace to US war planes transporting soldiers to Iraq, which regularly stopped in Newfoundland to refuel and switch crews.

Canada also had a significant role in determining the course of the war in Iraq. In February 2003 during the lead up to the invasion of Iraq, Canada transferred 25 military planners to the US military's forward command post in Qatar in the Persian Gulf. In 2004, Canadian Brigadier General Walter Natynczyk (former Canadian Chief of Defence Staff) was deputy chief of policy, strategy and planning in Iraq, with 35,000 US, British and Australian troops under his command.

Another way that Canada is truly part of the war machine, is by the production of weapons and arms. Canada was the largest foreign supplier of arms to the US for the war in Iraq. In 2004 Canadian corporation SNC-Lavalin had a 5-year contract to supply the US Army with 300-500 million bullets per year. The most recent controversy is Canada's \$15 billion deal to supply Saudi Arabia with Light Armoured Vehicles, which despite the deceptive name are a full-fledged, weaponized military machine. The new Liberal government is still going forward with this deal, despite the government's own rules to curb shipments to countries with a 'persistent record of serious violations of the human rights of their citizens.' It is no secret that Saudi Arabia is one of the worst violators of human rights.

13 years of war in Iraq

The propaganda machines do a great job of selling the new war in Iraq as a necessary fight against Daesh. But we have 13 years of the war in Iraq to see that the US-led war has brought unimagined death and destruction to Iraq. Over 1 million Iraqis were killed as a result of the Iraq war, according to British polling group Opinion Research Business. Health indicators plummeted following the Iraq war, especially in areas where the US army used depleted uranium which has caused horrific birth defects, high cancer rates and environmental devastation. The World Health Organization has estimated that 70 percent of Iraqis lack access to clean water and 80 percent lack proper sanitation. Before the 2003 invasion, school enrollment rates were nearly 100%. By September 2006, only 30% of Iraq's 3.5 million students were enrolled in school. These statistics could go on and on, but the war in Iraq didn't only cause Iraq to have every standard of life worsen. Instability,

poverty and sectarianism under US occupation fueled the rise of extremist groups such as Daesh. Now the US and their imperialist allies have a new excuse to carry on another war in Iraq. They have created their own enemy in order to bomb the country again, now in the name of fighting Daesh. While the US and their imperialist allies in Iraq claim to not hit civilian targets, in August 2015 The Guardian reported findings of 52 airstrikes in this new war in Iraq which have killed more than 450 civilians, including 100 children.

The new era of war and occupation

The new era of war and occupation, beginning with the war in Afghanistan in 2001 to now, has reduced countries to chaos and destruction to the point that they are unlivable. It is imperialist forces such as the US, Canada, Britain and their allies that have caused the world's worst refugee crisis since World War II. Refugees have made the dangerous journey to Europe from Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and Palestine - all countries which have been plagued by the imperialist wars and occupations. While Canada, the US and European countries try to shift the blame, they must take responsibility for this massive human tragedy by opening the doors to refugees and furthermore, by stopping their wars and occupations abroad, the cause for refugees to leave their homelands in the first place.

In a few pages we have given just an overview into the bloody hands the government of Canada has in Iraq, which they are experts at hiding behind words such as "training", "non-combat" and "advising". For peace and justice loving people in Canada especially, it is our job to hold the government of Canada to account for these crimes and to demand that they end any involvement whatsoever in war and occupation.

Canada out of Iraq!
No to war and occupation!
Yes to self-determination!

Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki



**SATURDAY
APRIL 23
2PM**
Vancouver
Art Gallery
Robson Street @
Howe Street
Downtown Vancouver BC

**CANADA OUT OF IRAQ! • CANADA
OUT OF AFGHANISTAN! • US/
UK/CANADA/France/NATO:
NO TO WAR ON SYRIA, IRAQ &
AFGHANISTAN! • SAUDI ARABIA
HANDS OFF: YEMEN, SYRIA & IRAQ!
• TURKEY OUT OF SYRIA & IRAQ!**

Imperialists Stop Aiding ISIS/ISIL/Daesh! • No to Islamophobia! • U.S. Hands Off Libya! • Israel Hands Off Palestine! • Open the Borders: Stop War & Occupation, Not Refugees! • U.S./EU/NATO/Canada: Hands Off Ukraine! • U.S. Hands Off Venezuela! • End the Blockade of Cuba! • Lift All Sanctions Against Iran! • Free Private Manning, Soldier of Humanity! • No to U.S. Drones! • U.S. Hands Off North Africa & the Middle East! • No to War & Occupation! Yes to Self-Determination! • No to War & Occupation! No to Environmental Degradation! • Money for Jobs, Housing, Healthcare & Education, Not For War & Occupation! • Self-Determination for Indigenous Nations & All Oppressed Nations! • Repeal Inhuman & Repressive Bill C-51!

**MOBILIZATION AGAINST WAR & OCCUPATION (MAWO)
WWW.MAWOVANCOVER.ORG**

BILL C-51

A FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CANADA

By Thomas Davies

It's a simple method for understanding true intentions: Judge based on actions, not words. This is just as true with governments as it is with people. It's with this criteria we should evaluate Justin Trudeau and the Liberal majority government in Canada – especially when it comes to something as important as the controversial, human rights trampling law known as Bill C-51. When we compare what they have said with what they have done, we realize that something is very wrong. Especially when we see what the consequences are for people in Canada as CSIS, the RCMP and various government agencies move forward in using their new-found powers to undermine our privacy, freedom of speech and many other fundamental human rights.

They voted for it!

The first fundamental contradiction of the Liberal Party on Bill C-51 was that despite criticizing then Prime Minister Harper and the Conservative government for introducing a law with “problematic elements” that, “didn't do enough to uphold and protect people's rights” all 33 Liberal MPS who voted on Bill C-51 voted in favour of it! Even after they acknowledged the significant “public pressure” against Bill C-51.

Liberal MP Yvonne Jones said, “Bill C-51 is not the ideal bill; it's a typical Harper Conservative bill, where they start out to do something good and they always build in some unnecessary evil in that bill; it's a normal practice for the Harper government.”

Then she voted for it.

Many local Liberal party members left the party in disgust over the hypocrisy, and one star election candidate, veteran David MacLeod resigned. He wrote, “The reason for my resignation was Liberal Party of Canada support for Bill-C 51, The Anti-Terrorism Act.” He concluded that Bill C-51 is a, “very disturbing piece of legislation that undermines Canadian democracy and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.”

The Next Contradiction

In justifying the absurd position of voting for something you acknowledge violates human rights, Justin Trudeau promised that, “As the party of the Charter [of Rights and Freedoms], as the party that has always understood how important people's rights and freedoms are, as someone who has demonstrated it on a wide range of issues throughout my leadership, we will move on it [Bill C-51] very quickly.”

Very quickly? The Liberal government took office 5 months ago, and while we have been told that Minister of Public Safety Ralph Goodale will be in charge of handling Bill C-51, there has been nothing concrete undertaken regarding Bill C-51 despite vague and undefined promises regarding some sort of consultation.

The Liberals know that the longer Bill C-51 remains a law the more difficult it could be to reverse and repeal the Bill as the police, secret police and government agencies move forward in implementing it. No party that, “has always understood how important people's rights and freedoms are” would allow that to happen.

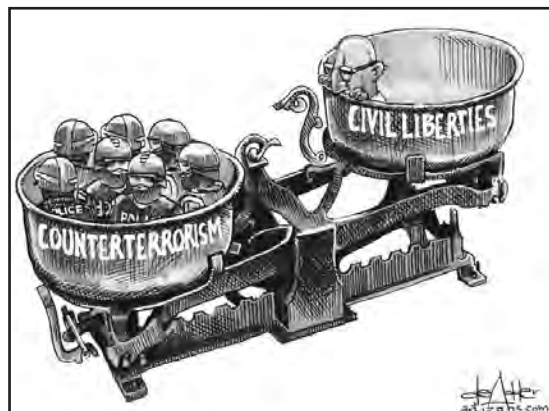
Consultation? With Who?

While government statements regarding Bill C-51 have been few and far between, there has been promise of a public consultation.

The Liberal Party website originally promised that after they have introduced new legislation amending certain parts of Bill C-51 that, “we will launch broad public consultations, to engage and seek the input of Canadians and subject-matter experts”. Most recently, the one sentence mention of Bill C-51 in the Federal Budget said simply “consultation.”

How has this played out? So far the good Minister Goodale has flown to England, France and the United States for cooperation and advice from these governments - all of which either have similar or worse rights violating “anti-terrorism” legislation in place, and absolutely no intention of changing it.

As we pointed out in Volume 10, Issue 2 of *Fire This Time*, “It's a bit strange that



Minister Goodale would think he'd need to take a long flight over the Atlantic to get advice about Bill C-51. Organizations and individuals across Canada have been making it clear from many different perspectives for over a year now. Over 311,000 people have signed the online petition demanding the immediate repeal of Bill C-51, making it one of the most popular petitions in the history of Canada. The Guardian newspaper also reported, “No legislation in memory has united such a diverse array of prominent opponents as the proposed legislation...The campaign to stop Bill C-51 grew to include virtually every civil-rights group, law professor, retired judge, author, editorialist and public intellectual in Canada.”

What's Actually Happening – They Are Using Bill C-51 Constantly and Secretly

So while the Liberals stall against any action against Bill C-51, they are moving ahead with its implementation, as are CSIS, the RCMP and government agencies. While we know of some general facts about what is going on, Bill C-51's allowance for increased secrecy means we know few details:

- The Toronto Star wrote on March 8 that CSIS director Michel Coulombe had told a Senate committee, “CSIS agents have used the extraordinary powers of Bill C-51

Passers-by stop to sign the petition to repeal bill C-51 at New West Skytrain Station, March 28, 2016



to disrupt suspected terrorist threats nearly two dozen times since last autumn, even as public and political debate over the new terror law still rages.” The Star continued, “The use of such powers is shrouded in secrecy...Coulombe also refused to say how many success stories CSIS has had where it was able to disrupt plots.”

- On March 24, the Canadian Press reported that, “At least four federal agencies have used controversial information-sharing powers in Canada’s new anti-terrorism law...Briefing notes prepared for Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale say Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Canada Border Services Agency, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and a fourth agency whose name is blacked out of the records have used the provisions.”

- The Canadian Press also reported on March 27 that, “The federal government has issued guidance to Canada’s spy

agency on using contentious new anti-terrorism laws — but most of the instructions won’t be made public.” They also quoted Josh Paterson, executive director of the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, “One of our greatest concerns with C-51 is that CSIS has been given extraordinary new powers, including the power to break the law and violate the Constitution...it’s troubling that so much of the minister’s high-level, general direction to CSIS on how the agency should interpret its new powers is blacked out.”

So the Liberals have been able to move forward on Bill C-51, they’ve just moved forward in its implementation.

It’s Up to Us

“We are targeted by these terrorists for no other reason than we are Canadians. They want to harm us because they hate our society and the values it represents.”

“Those who would attack us want to

change all that. They hate the way we live. They seek to instil division, fear and loathing in everything we do. They want us to see our neighbours differently. They abhor tolerance and accommodation. Pluralism is anathema to them. Freedom, democracy and respect for human differences are to be despised.”

Are those two quotes from same person? No. The first is from Stephen Harper when he first introduced Bill C-51. The second was made recently by Minister Ralph Goodale when he was explaining the Liberal party’s approach to security and Bill C-51. Both are overflowing with exaggeration and meant to confuse the issue to justify Bill C-51’s violation of our human rights.

It is obvious that the Liberals are not interested in representing the clear voice of the majority of people across Canada who oppose Bill C-51. They could have repealed it 5 months ago if they had wanted to. Instead, regardless of previous statements, they have deliberately stalled the discussion and moved forward with the Bill’s implementation. CSIS, the RCMP and other government agencies have been only to follow along.

Fortunately groups and individuals continue to organize against Bill C-51 and encounter a very positive response from the public. The Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 in Vancouver organized its 55th consecutive weekly action against Bill C-51, and the Toronto Coalition to Stop Bill C-51 continues to organize regular meetings and recently held a successful concert and fundraiser titled, “Funk the Police State.” The online petition against Bill C-51 continues to collect signatures and has established itself as one of the most popular petitions in the history of Canada.

When the Liberal Party held their federal convention in Victoria on March 12, a Globe and Mail reporter inside posted on Twitter that the convention speaker was forced to acknowledge the loud drumming of the protesters demanding a repeal of Bill C-51 outside. Now is an especially important time to continue our public activity demanding against Bill C-51. We too must match our words with our actions, so wherever the Canadian government goes it cannot escape our demand, “REPEAL BILL C-51 NOW!”

Follow Thomas on Twitter: @thomasdavies59



Stop Bill C51 protest in Victoria, March 12, 2016



Banner drop to repeal bill C-51 in Burnaby, March 21, 2016

VANCOUVER FIGHTS BILL C-51

By Thomas Davies

March was another busy and productive month for the Vancouver-based Working Group to Stop Bill C-51!

The group began by marking one year of consistent organizing with its 52nd action in 52 weeks – a picket and petition drive at Vancouver’s busiest transit hub, the Broadway and Commercial intersection. The Working Group also organized two more picket and petition drives in March – one at the Burrard Skytrain in downtown Vancouver and another at New Westminster Station.

The group was also invited to spend a busy weekend collecting signatures and tabling at the BC Teacher’s Federation 100th Annual General Meeting. Teachers were especially concerned with Bill C-51’s vague language regarding those accused of “advocating or promoting the commission of terrorism offences in general”. Legal experts have pointed out that it could easily be used to target those teaching or even encouraging discussion on issues related to terrorism and its root causes.

Finally, in the continuing effort to diversify its actions the Working Group organized its second banner drop at a overpass over Kingsway Avenue in Burnaby, a primary inter-urban road. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with supportive honks, whistles, waves and even a cow-bell clanging from drivers, cyclists and pedestrians.

The Working Groups is committed to continuing to organize its weekly actions until Bill C-51 is fully repealed. The energetic and consistent public response to the weekly actions reaffirms that many people continue to be outraged that Bill C-51 continues to exist. As every month passes and the Canadian government continues to maintain the controversial law, the work to demand a full repeal of Bill C-51 is as important as ever.

The Venezuelan people collected over 10 million signatures against Obama's executive order



OBAMA REPEAL THE EXECUTIVE ORDER NOW!

THE WORLD STANDS WITH VENEZUELA!

By Alison Bodine

"We here in Venezuela say. We are sovereign and independent, we are not a colony of anybody Chavez lives, the struggle continues," - Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro

On March 3, 2016 U.S. President Barack Obama once again declared Venezuela to be an "extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States" by renewing an Executive Order against Venezuela that the White House first issued one year ago. This decree also allows the United States to extend existing sanctions against Venezuela.

One has to wonder how it is that a country with less than 10% of the population of the United States, and 3200km away, can pose a "threat to the national security" of the United States, a country with a military budget equal to every other military budget in the world combined.

However, the dangerous hypocrisy of United States policy against Venezuela doesn't end there. On top of the Executive Order, the U.S. government has a nearly 18-year long campaign of constant intervention meant to destabilize Venezuela and overthrow the Bolivarian revolution, which began making great gains for poor and working people

in Venezuela with the election of the late Comandante Hugo Chavez in 1998. U.S. intervention has many different forms, from funding and support for violent counter-revolutionary political parties and so-called civil society organizations, to the re-activation of the U.S. Navy's Fourth Fleet in the Caribbean Sea, economic sabotage and NSA (National Security Agency) spying on Venezuela's state-run oil company PDVSA.

On January 5, 2016 U.S. intervention in Venezuela expanded when a new National Assembly, made-up of majority counter-revolutionary right-wing politicians, took office. This National Assembly was elected in December of 2015, in the midst of an economic war brought on by Venezuela's capitalist class and their foreign imperialist allies. Since the 1999, this is the first time that the U.S.-backed opposition has held a majority in parliament.

In just the last three months the counter-revolutionaries in the National Assembly have not only openly declared their mission to overthrow the legitimate government of President Nicolas Maduro, they have also attempted to pass laws that turn back the important gains made by the people of Venezuela. This includes an "Amnesty Law," which calls for the release of violent opposition leaders and organizers found

guilty of crimes, including involvement in the April 2002 attempted coup d'état against President Chavez and the 2014 "Guarimbas" protests which killed 43 people. Other bills under discussion in the National Assembly include reactionary measures for the privatization of land, public housing and state run companies. This National Assembly has also revealed their true allegiance when they appealed to the Organization of American States (OAS), which includes the U.S. and Canada, to intervene in Venezuela's internal affairs last month.

Amidst continued foreign intervention, recent mass-media headlines continue to spell out the intentions of the U.S. government and their imperialist allies in Venezuela. Take, for example, the New York Times March 3, 2016 Editorial "The Push to Oust Maduro [the current President of Venezuela]" or the CNN Money article from January "5 reasons why Venezuela's economy is in a 'meltdown'." Also in March, 2016 Bloomberg News is even bold enough to ask "How Much Time Does Maduro Have?"

There is a lot about Venezuela today, as well as the gains made for poor and oppressed people in Venezuela, that is missing from the headlines in mainstream Western

media. While they were busy reporting on the ‘collapsing’ Venezuelan economy they left out the report that at the end of December, the Bolivarian Revolution delivered its one-millionth home as part of a massive social housing project undertaken in just five years. They also haven’t talked about the 10,000 pensions that were just approved by President Maduro for people that work in industries related to the sea. And of course, they would never mention that the Venezuelan National Assembly passed a ground-breaking Seed Law on December 23, 2015, before the new National Assembly took power, which protect farmers and food sovereignty and bans GMO seeds.

Today, the people of Venezuela, led by President Nicolas Maduro and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, are continuing to build their revolution. They are doing this through mass mobilizations and organizing on the streets, as well as through the emergency economic decree. This decree, approved by the Supreme Court, gives President Nicolas Maduro the power to implement emergency measures across all sectors of Venezuelan society including hydrocarbons, petro-chemicals, agriculture, mining, telecommunications, construction, industry, military industry and tourism



We are anti-imperialists! Venezuela Respects itself! #ObamaTheThreatIsYou

and to stop hoarding and sabotage by the Venezuelan counter-revolutionary capitalist class.

The Executive Order declaring that Venezuela is a “threat to U.S. national security” and the last three months of foreign intervention alone are a clear sign that the U.S. is not going to change its policy of promoting and supporting counter-revolution and violence in Venezuela. However, as the U.S. government and their allies around the world and in Venezuela are attempting to strangle the Bolivarian Revolution, international sympathy and solidarity with the people of Venezuela is growing. This includes not only support from peace-loving people around the world, but also from foreign governments that stand with Venezuela’s right to sovereignty and self-determination. These nations include the 120 countries of the non-aligned movement and the Community of Latin American States (CELAC) among others. Below is a statement of support from the Group of 77, plus China in Support of the Venezuelan government.

The World Stands with Venezuela!
Obama: Repeal the Executive Order!
U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!

Alison on Twitter: @Alisoncolette

Declaration in Support of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

|||||
The Group of 77 and China expresses its rejection to the latest decision of the Government of the United States of America to expand its unilateral sanctions against the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on March 9th 2015, under the Executive Order signed by President Barack Obama, which declares “a national emergency with respects to the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States posed by the situation in Venezuela”

We reaffirm, at the same time, the Declaration adopted at the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Group of 77 held in Santa Cruz

de la Sierra that firmly rejects the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions, against developing countries.

The Group of 77 and China deplores these measures and reiterates its firm support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. In this regard, the Group of 77 and China emphasizes the need to respect international law, including the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration of Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

The G-77 and China underlines the positive contribution of Venezuela to the strengthening of South-South Cooperation, solidarity and friendship

among all peoples and nations, with a view to promoting peace and development.

The Group of 77 and China conveys its solidarity and support to the Venezuelan Government affected by these measures which do not contribute, in any way, to the spirit of political and economic dialogue and understanding among countries. To the same extent, we urge the international community to adopt urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive economic measures against any State, in particular, developing countries.

The G-77 and China calls upon the Government of the United States to evaluate and implement alternatives for a dialogue with the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, under the principle of respect to sovereignty and self determination of the peoples. Therefore, it urges to repeal the aforementioned Executive Order.

New York, 25 March 2015

By Manuel Yepe*

Development Aid

The US government encourages domestic capital flight to poor regions through tax exemptions and other investment incentives for its corporate branches abroad. Such a strategy damages small and medium US producers and angers workers in that country who are affected by the flight of jobs that end up overseas.

Is this a kind gesture by the superpower in solidarity with the workers in the poor countries of the Third World? Of course it is not.

Note that, as far as industry and banks in the United States and other Western corporations increase their investments in the Third World, poverty in these regions is growing, rather than decreasing. When transnational capital comes into contact with the rich natural resources of the South—with its low wages, high profits and almost total absence of environmental regulations, taxes, and safety labor provisions—everything changes in the interests of the new “benefactors” from the North.

As a result, transnational companies are replacing—in those countries where they have not done so yet—the local bourgeoisie, taking over their markets.

According to the Mexican experience of economic integration with the United States: in a short time the subsidized surplus products of the US agricultural trade cartel are supplying—with their artificially low prices—the local markets thus removing the Mexican producers and traders from those places. Through their agents, they expropriate the best land in these countries through the system of comprehensive crop buying (cash-crop) for export. These are usually monocultures which require lots of pesticides and are leaving less and less space for growing multiple varieties of the organic crops which have fed the local population for centuries.

It should be clarified that the savings that big corporations obtain from cheap labor in poor countries do not translate into lower prices for consumers in the United



For the Developed

States or other places. Corporations do not hire labor in remote areas so that consumers in their countries save money; their goal is to increase their profit margin.

As a rule, foreign aid from the United States is linked to transnational investment and is designed to subsidize the building of infrastructures that corporations need to operate in the Third World, such as ports, airports, highways and refineries.

When aid is delivered to governments it comes with many strings attached.

the personal coffers of corrupt officials in the recipient countries who participate in the negotiations.

In 1944, the United Nations created the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), allegedly responsible for channeling aid to developing nations.

However, in both organizations, the voting power is determined by the financial contributions of each country. This is why the United States, the largest donor, is the member which truly approves the decisions, assisted by a select group of bankers and officials of the economics ministries from the richest nations.

When any poor country fails to pay their debts to one of these two institutions, it runs the risk that the IMF will impose a “structural adjustment program” (SAP) by means of which they are forced to grant tax benefits to transnational corporations and reduce social benefits to their own workers.

The IMF puts pressure on debtor nations to privatize their economies, to sell their mines railways and public services belonging to the state at low prices. They must cut their subsidies for health, education, transport and basic foods; and spend less on the welfare of their people to meet their debt obligations.

Such is the true story of the “aid for development”.



Usually, the aid recipient nation is required to give preference in its purchases and sales to US entities; and the acquisition of goods and food for local consumption must give priority to imported goods, so that, together with the debt, they create dependency.

Much of the aid money goes directly into

** Manuel E. Yepe is a lawyer, economist and journalist. He is a professor at the Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana. He was Cuba's ambassador to Romania, general director of the Prensa Latina agency; vice president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television; founder and national director of the Technological Information System (TIPS) of the United Nations Program for Development in Cuba, and secretary of the Cuban Movement for the Peace and Sovereignty of the Peoples.*

*www.englishmanuelyepe.wordpress.com
A CubaNews translation.
Edited by Walter Lippman.
www.walterlippmann.com*



*** EN ESPAÑOL ***

*Por Manuel Yepe**

El gobierno de Estados Unidos fomenta la fuga capitales de su país hacia regiones pobres mediante exenciones impositivas y otros estímulos a las inversiones de sus corporaciones en el exterior, lo que perjudica a medianos y pequeños productores estadounidenses e indigna a los trabajadores del país que se ven afectados por la fuga de los puestos de trabajo que de esa manera van a parar al extranjero. ¿Acaso se trata de un gesto bondadoso de la superpotencia en solidaridad con los trabajadores de los países pobres del tercer mundo? Por supuesto que no.

Nótese que en la medida que la industria y los bancos de Estados Unidos y otras corporaciones occidentales incrementan sus inversiones en el tercer mundo, crece, en vez de disminuir, la pobreza en estas regiones. Cuando el capital transnacional entra en contacto con los ricos recursos naturales del Sur, con sus bajos salarios, altas ganancias y la casi total inexistencia de regulaciones medioambientales, impuestos, y disposiciones para la seguridad laboral, todo se modifica en función de los intereses los nuevos “benefactores” del Norte.

A resultas de ello las transnacionales están desplazando, allí donde no lo

han hecho ya, a las burguesías locales, asumiendo el control de sus mercados.

Según la experiencia mexicana de integración económica con Estados Unidos, en poco tiempo los subsidiados productos excedentes de los integrantes del cártel estadounidense del comercio agrícola, abastecen con sus artificiales bajos precios a los mercados locales desplazando de esas plazas a productores y comerciantes mexicanos.

Mediante testafierros suyos, expropián las mejores tierras en estos países mediante el sistema de la compra integral de cosechas (cash-crop) para la exportación. Generalmente se trata de monocultivos que requieren gran cantidad de pesticidas y van dejando cada vez menos espacio para el cultivo de múltiples variedades de cosechas orgánicas con las que por siglos se ha alimentado la población local.

Pero es preciso aclarar que los ahorros que las grandes corporaciones obtienen con la mano de obra barata de los países pobres no se traducen en precios más bajos para consumidores de Estados Unidos ni los de otros sitios. Las corporaciones no contratan mano de obra en regiones lejanas para que los consumidores de su país puedan ahorrar dinero, el objetivo es incrementar su margen de beneficios.

Como regla, la ayuda al exterior de Estados Unidos va unida a la inversión transnacional y está diseñada para subvencionar la construcción de las

infraestructuras que las corporaciones necesitan para poder operar en el Tercer Mundo, como son puertos, aeropuertos, autopistas y refinerías.

Cuando la ayuda se entrega a los gobiernos viene con muchas ataduras. Por lo general, a la nación receptora de la ayuda se le exige dar preferencia en sus compras a las ventas de entidades estadounidenses y la adquisición de mercancías y alimentos para consumo local deben dar prioridad a mercancías importadas, de manera que, junto a la deuda, creen dependencia.

Una buena parte de la ayuda monetaria, va directamente a las arcas personales de funcionarios corruptos de los países receptores que participan en las negociaciones.

La Organización de Naciones Unidas creó en 1944 el Banco Mundial y el Fondo Monetario Internacional (FMI), supuestamente encargados de canalizar la ayuda al desarrollo de las naciones.

Pero, en ambas organizaciones, el poder de voto está determinado por las contribuciones financieras de cada país, razón por la cual Estados Unidos, el mayor donante, es el que verdaderamente aprueba las decisiones, asistido de un selecto grupo de banqueros y funcionarios de los ministerios de economía de las naciones más ricas.

Cuando cualquier país pobre incurre en el impago de sus deudas con alguna de estas dos instituciones, corre el riesgo de que el FMI le imponga un “Programa de ajuste estructural” (SAP, por sus siglas en inglés) consistente en el otorgamiento de beneficios fiscales a las corporaciones transnacionales y reducción de beneficios sociales a sus propios trabajadores.

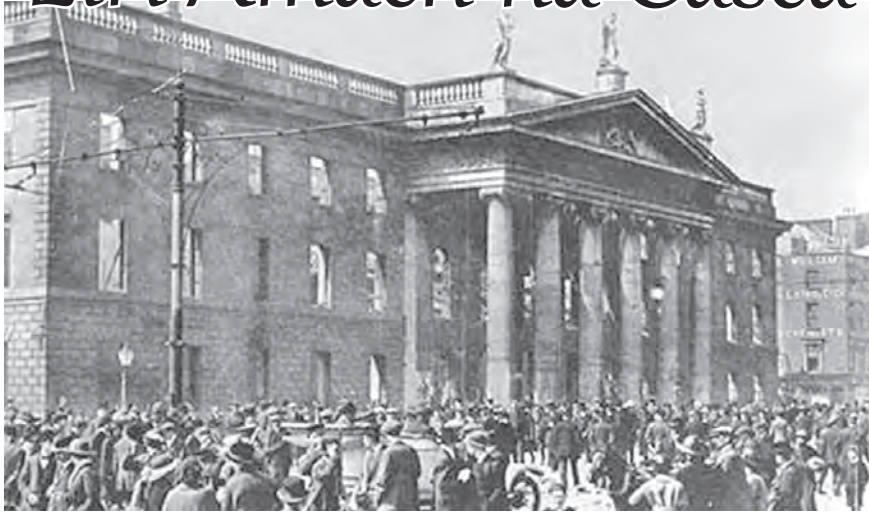
El FMI presiona a las naciones deudoras para que privaticen sus economías, vendan a precios bajos sus minas, ferrocarriles y servicios públicos pertenecientes al estado. Deben recortar sus subvenciones a la salud, la educación, el transporte y los alimentos básicos, gastando menos en el bienestar de su población para poder hacer frente a los pagos de la deuda.

Tal es la verdadera historia de la “ayuda al desarrollo”.

** Manuel E. Yepe Menendez es periodista y se desempeña como Profesor adjunto en el Instituto Superior de las Relaciones Internacionales de La Habana.*

www.manuelyepe.wordpress.com

Éirí Amach na Cásca



100 Anniversary of Ireland's Revolutionary Uprising of 1916

Introduction by y Sarah Alwell

100 years ago history was made on the streets of Dublin as a small and poor island nation took a stand against one of the world's mightiest powers. It's a history not to be forgotten, remembered in the story books of Ireland's school children and the architecture of its cities' boulevards and laneways. There isn't a single soul from that island who doesn't remember the day.

Today, in a world defined by imperialist war and occupation, when we need to remember that we have more in common with our brothers and sisters across the Middle East and North Africa than we do with the Western governments waging war against them, we would do well to keep that memory close. And the rest of the world would do well to remember it also. If only because

that was the day that British colonial rule received its first real blow in Europe, as Irish revolutionary rebels fought and declared an independent Irish Republic, free from the chains of British colonialism that had bound and bled them for 800 years.

The uprising was ultimately physically defeated, its leaders shamefully executed by firing squad. But it was already too late for Britain. The seeds of rebellion had been planted, and began spreading among other oppressed nations around the world. As James Connolly, a leader of the Easter Rising, once said: "If you strike at, imprison, or kill us, out of our prisons or graves we will still evoke a spirit that will thwart you, and perhaps, raise a force that will destroy you! We defy you! Do your worst!"

On the 100 year anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1916, Fire This Time would like to share this short article published by TeleSUR, to help understand the facts and the significance of this historical event in a struggle that is far from over as the battle for the independence of Northern Ireland and for a United Ireland once and for all still continues today.

And as we commemorate it, let us also remember that the faces of the brave men and women who defied the odds one hundred years ago in Dublin, could easily be the faces of Iraqis, Afghans and Palestinians today; and many others who are struggling against imperialism for dignity and self-determination. If we remember our history, we cannot misplace our solidarity. The struggle continues!

Five Things You Really Need to Know About Ireland's Easter Rising

**originally published by TeleSUR*

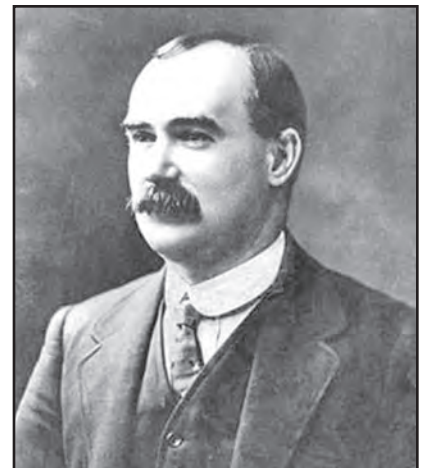
① It Struck a Blow at the British Empire and for Independence Worldwide

During Easter Week 1916, Irish revolutionaries rose up to declare independence and an end to British imperial rule of their nation. Barricades across the capital city of Dublin sprung up with revolutionaries taking over key strategic landmarks and issuing the following Proclamation:

"We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland

and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people...

...we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades in arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations...



James Connolly, one of the principal organizers and leading revolutionary of the Easter Rising.



Tens of thousands attend Easter Rising Centenary Commemoration in Dublin - some in period costume, like this little boy dressed as a revolutionary Irish rebel.

...The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all of the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien Government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.”

② It Inspired the Push for Socialism and Revolution in Europe

Ireland’s Easter rebellion has often been described as the first socialist revolution

in Europe. One of the leaders James Connolly was an important international socialist figure.

It was certainly the first major revolt by the exploited in Europe since the beginning of World War I, which had turned nation against nation and dampened internal class struggles as the pressure to “fight for your country” trumped the calls to fight for social justice. Ireland’s rebellion was soon followed by other rebellions in Europe against the war and for socialism including in Russia in 1917 and Germany in 1918-19.

③ The British Empire Showed Its Cruelty – Within Its Own Borders

The rebellion was viciously put down by the British Army which sent in 20,000 troops and even used a gunboat, destroying large areas of Dublin. After the defeat of the rebellion, all seven signatories to Ireland’s Proclamation of Independence were executed by British soldiers along with

other leaders. In the days following the rebellion’s defeat, 1,500 people were rounded up and interned.

④ The Rebellion Sparked Huge Public Sympathy

The ruthless reaction by the British forces served only to spur the revolutionary movement which swept the general election just two years later with Irish nationalist party Sinn Fein winning 73 of the 105 seats. In 1919, Sinn Fein MPs declared a separate revolutionary parliament and ratified the 1916 independence proclamation.

⑤ Women Played an Important Role

The 1,400 or so Irish rebels involved in the



Members of ‘Cumann na mBan’- the womens rebel organization in 1916.

uprising included 200 from the women’s military brigade Cumann na mBan. Constance Markievicz was one of the most prominent women in the rebellion. A politician, freedom fighter, suffragette and socialist, she was jailed when the rebellion failed but later became one of the first women in the world to hold a Cabinet position (as minister for labor) in the soon to be formed Irish Republic.

Source: www.telesurto.net/english/index.html



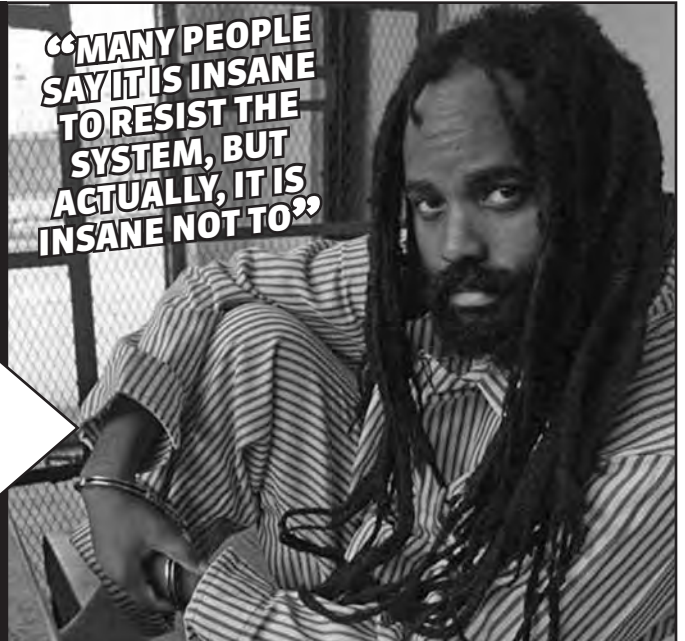
Many homes in Dublin were destroyed by the British bombing raids.



U.S. Political Prisoner MUMIA ABU-JAMAL Needs Your Help!

FREE MUMIA NOW!

“MANY PEOPLE
SAY IT IS INSANE
TO RESIST THE
SYSTEM, BUT
ACTUALLY, IT IS
INSANE NOT TO”



Introduction by Noah Fine

Mumia Abu-Jamal has spent the last 34 years in U.S. prison. The majority of that time he has spent in solitary confinement and on death row. Mumia is a political prisoner, one of the longest standing political prisoners in the U.S. For hundreds of thousands of people around the world, especially for Black and minority groups in the U.S., Mumia is a hero. A symbol of the struggle of Black people for their rights and the criminal crackdown of the U.S. ruling class on oppressed people when they decide to stand up and fight back.

In 1982 Mumia was given the death penalty charged unjustly for the murder of a Philadelphia police officer. In reality the police needed a scapegoat for a dead cop and who better to place the blame on than a young revolutionary journalist and Black Panther Party member.

Mumia's health is deteriorating. He has contracted Hepatitis C while in prison and the U.S. Government refuses to grant him access to a proper cure.

Fire This Time Newspaper defends Mumia's demand for treatment for himself and the rest of the inmates at the Pennsylvania penitentiary where Mumia is held. Furthermore Fire This Time calls on the U.S. Government and President Obama to immediately free Mumia Abu-Jamal by granting him a pardon.

The text of an urgent petition related to demanding the cure for Hepatitis C for Mumia is printed below. Fire This Time would like to encourage all our readers to sign

the petition online by visiting: <http://www.iacenter.org/mumiahepsign/>

For more information on Mumia's case please visit: <http://www.freemumia.com>

To Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf

We call on you to make the cure for hepatitis-C possible for thousands of Pennsylvanians infected with this virus, including up to 10,000 in PA prisons and 45,000 in Philadelphia. There is a cure that is 95 percent effective but Gilead Sciences charges up to \$94,500 for the 12-week long treatment with Sovaldi or Harvoni. Thousands are being denied the hep C cure by Medicaid, the Veterans Administration, personal medical insurers and the PA Department of Corrections. In 2015, while many people were suffering and dying from cirrhosis or cancer of the liver because they didn't have the means to pay the steep price for the cure, Gilead made an obscene \$17 billion in profits.

As we informed you in petitions last year, political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal almost died from hepatitis C complication. The DOC spent over \$160,000 treating Abu-Jamal's hep C symptoms but refuses to provide him with the available cure. The cost of the DOC's refusal to cure the disease when first detected is not only immeasurable in suffering and loss of lives of state prisoners but leads to higher financial expenses as the disease is allowed to develop into cirrhosis or cancer of the liver. We ask you to make the DOC's hep C protocol a guide for treatment and

eradication of HCV, not a manual for the denial of care. Prisoners with untreated hep C unknowingly bring this deadly disease back to their communities – often to neighborhoods with poor access to quality healthcare.

HCV is a greater threat to PA residents than HIV, Ebola or Zika. Countries such as Egypt and India are providing the hep C cure to their patients for a tiny fraction of the cost in this country. Why not Pennsylvania? Gov. Wolf, it is your job to see to it that everyone with the hep C virus should get the cure - those in prison too.

For prisoners like Mumia Abu-Jamal, untreated hepatitis C is a death sentence. The PA DOC's refusal to fully treat Abu-Jamal and other prisoners is a clear violation of the U.S. Constitution's Eight Amendment prohibiting cruel and unusual punishment. In light of the PA DOC's refusal to provide the cure to HCV, we therefore call on you to release Mumia Abu-Jamal and all other prisoners needlessly suffering from untreated hepatitis C.

Please sign by submitting form above by Friday, April 15. The signed petitions will be delivered to Governor Wolf on Friday, April 22.

International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition, NYC Campaign to Bring Mumia Home International Action Center The MOVE Organization

Stop the Killing of Palestinians

Palestinian Struggle for Self-determination and Liberation Continues

By Noah Fine

Blood trickles down a street in Hebron, West Bank, Palestine. The scene from a video online that's been viewed hundreds of thousands of times. A young Palestinian, Abed al-Fattah Yusri al-Sharif, lies on the street. His head moves side to side as shown in the video. It seems barely any life is left in the 21-year-old body, certainly not a threat for the dozens of Israeli Defence Force (IDF) soldiers milling about. A soldier receives a command, walks over to the fading Palestinian youth, cocks his rifle, aims and shoots the young man with

Screen shot from video showing murder of Palestinian youth Abed al-Fattah Yusri al-Sharif by IDF soldier. March 24, 2016.



a direct kill-shot to the head. The blood spills beyond the videos editing to block out the gore of the scene.

The scenario played out on March 24, 2016 when friends Abed al-Fattah Yusri al-Sharif and Ramzi al-Qasrawi were being questioned by an IDF soldier at a checkpoint to the entrance of the Tel Rumeida neighbourhood of Hebron. In an altercation the two Palestinians attacked the IDF soldier with a knife wounding him slightly on the arm. The two Palestinian youth aged 20 and 21 were left dead. What really happened at the 'checkpoint'? We may never know. The truth lies between a slightly wounded soldier and two dead boys. The possibility of then breathing Yusri al-Sharif, to tell his side of the story vanished as quickly as the bullet entered his skull.

The Third Intifada

Since October 2015, a wave of resistance and struggle has been waged by Palestinian people. From the West Bank, Gaza, the refugee camps and inside Israel itself, Palestinians led by youth including women have been demonstrating their frustration towards oppressive police and arm forces of the Israeli-Zionist regime. These demonstrations have taken many forms. From peaceful protests to violent actions especially

aimed at IDF soldiers and Israeli police as happened on March 24. However the root of the problem, no matter what form the act of resistance takes be it violent or peaceful come from the same place: the occupation of Palestine and the violent, brutal and criminal Israeli war machine to protect and maintain this brutal and illegal occupation.

Generation after generation of Palestinian youth over the past 70 years have grown up in a constant state of violence and desperation. However, Jewish people living in Israel would be making a mistake and are in many cases, if they are blaming Palestinian people for the bloodshed. Although minimal compared to Palestinian fatalities at the hands of the IDF, Jewish-Israeli casualties are the direct result of Israel's occupation, racism, suppression and punishment of Palestinian people. It is Israel that created the context Palestinians and Jews live in today.

The IDF's decision to murder Abed al-Fattah Yusri al-Sharif in cold blood demonstrates the Israeli governments insistence not to quell the violence but in fact provoke more.

The Numbers Speak for Themselves

According to the website ifamericansknew.org between the year 2000 and 2015, 9,271 Palestinian people were killed by the IDF. In that same time the Israeli casualties amounted to 1,217. Even for IDF soldiers the biggest threat to their lives is not attacks by Palestinians. Suicide is one of the leading causes of death among IDF soldiers. A 2015 report by Israeli liberal news source Haaretz discovered that 15 soldiers commit suicide that year alone.

Two Sides, One Problem

As time continues on and all of the past 'solutions' fade into oblivion another solution to the almost 70-year-old crisis faced by both Palestinians and Jews becomes ever more reasonable and viable. Although at first it may seem impossible, upon further inspection may stand out as the one to hold water.

The video recorded at the March 24, slaying of the two Palestinian youth was filmed by an Israeli NGO called B'tselem, which monitors the way Palestinians are treated at IDF checkpoints. B'tselem is just one of

dozens of Jewish organizations which have as their mandate to monitor and protect the lives of Palestinians against the IDF and Israeli Zionist State. The basis for the organization of a new way of life for Jews and Palestinians is already and has for a long time been taking shape. Both are victims of the same criminal policies and actions of Zionism.

What Albert Einstein said

In New York on April 17, 1938 prominent Jewish theoretical physicist, Albert Einstein gave a speech on the question of Zionism in which he at that time, ten years before the establishment of the state of Israel, already understood what the outcome of such a disastrous ideology such as Zionism would lead to when he said:

"I should much rather see reasonable agreement with the Arabs on the basis of living together in peace than the creation of a Jewish state. Apart from the practical considerations, my awareness of the essential nature of Judaism resists the idea of a Jewish state with borders, an army, and a measure of temporal power no matter how modest. I am afraid of the inner damage Judaism will sustain – especially from the development of a narrow nationalism within our own ranks, against which we have already had to fight without a Jewish state."

Einstein's contribution to the question of Zionism almost 80 years ago remains as true today as ever. The criminal creation and continued existence of the State of Israel has worked to destroy first the heroic people of Palestine but combined with it the Jewish people themselves. Where the solution lies Einstein lays out succinctly in the opening sentence, "I should much rather see reasonable agreement with the Arabs on the basis of living together in peace..." It is exactly that process which Palestinians and Jews need to work towards today: a single, secular society and state in which Palestinians and Jews live together in peace. To each, equally, a vote to decide the direction their united state of Palestinians and Jewish-Israelis takes.

If 80 years ago Einstein could envision peace between the two peoples, than surely today the sanity of his statement should be clear and the aim of all parties struggling for social justice on both sides of the Palestine-Israeli conflict.

Self-determination for Palestine!
Stop killings of Palestinians!

Follow Noah on Twitter: @noahfine

PROMISES, PROMISES... LIBERAL GOVERNMENT FAILS INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Justin Trudeau & the Liberals are Promising “Transformational Change” for Aboriginal People in Canada, Can they Follow Through?

By Tamara Hansen

On Tuesday March 22, 2016 the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau and his Liberal Party announced their first national budget since winning the federal election in October of 2015. According to a CBC article, “Billions in new spending will be directed toward aboriginal programming, including funding to address issues including education, reserve water and child and family services, [...] The commitments are considered one of the central themes of the government’s first financial road map, with \$8.4 billion earmarked over the next five years.”

Of course, this sounds like a lot of money, but with the crisis facing Indigenous people across Canada, is money the only solution to the challenges? Will this money (\$8.4 billion over 5 years) be enough?

One important voice who is not convinced it is enough is Cindy Blackstock, the President of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society. Blackstock is also the courageous woman who took the previous Conservative government of Canada in front of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal over its unequal funding of on and off reserve child welfare services. She proved that the government of Canada has been short changing child

welfare services on reserves for years. The reason I call her courageous is because it took her nearly 10 years to finally prove the government’s negligence because the government of Canada invested hundreds of thousands of dollars to fight her every step of the way – when that money could have been going to protecting the rights and welfare of children. Sadly this is the Canada we continue to live in today.

Of the new budget Blackstock has said, “My feeling is, that bar falls far below what is required to meet the order by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal,” Blackstock continued in her discussion with the CBC, “It is \$71 million in year one and then \$99 million in year two. If you look at the overall figure it is over \$600 million, but that’s back-ended.” Blackstock also noted that much of the funding promised is not scheduled to be paid out until after the next election, making it unstable funding at best.

The supposed “good news” story surrounding the social spending in the Liberal party’s new budget has also had other dark clouds hanging over it.

Disaster After Disaster

On March 9, 2016 the Cross Lake First Nation in Manitoba declared a State of Emergency over suicides in their community. The First Nation suffered

six suicides in two months, leaving the reserve of 8,000 people in a state of shock and grief so deep that even health workers in the community were at a loss of what to do. Apparently in the two weeks before the declaration of the State



of Emergency the nursing station recorded 140 suicide attempts in only two weeks. Then on March 20, 2016 the National Post published an article titled, “Does it run in families like a disease? Five suicides in nine months open old wounds for Innu community” Another report of five First Nations people taking their own lives in only nine months. This time it was in a different community on the Innu territory of Uashat and Maliotenam in Quebec. Again, a small region with a population of 4,430.

According to statistics printed in “Manitoba Community Seeks Answers as Youth Suicides Soar” a March 11 article in the Globe & Mail: “Suicide and self-inflicted injuries are the leading cause of death for First Nations people up to the age of 44 in this country; First Nations youth are five to six times more likely to die by suicide than their non-indigenous counterparts; at 11 times the national average, suicide rates for Inuit youth are among the highest in the world.”

Despite the shock and sadness that one feels when reading about these very desperate situations in Canada for Indigenous people, it is not a shock to the government or people in power who have been aware of these ongoing problems





"Idle No More" National Day of Action, Oct. 7, 2013.

for decades. Many of the statistics are collected by the government's own Statistics Canada. While the Canadian public needs to stop turning a blind eye to these issues, the government of Canada is what is truly guilty of offering empty words and not looking for real solutions with Indigenous people in Canada.

Then the day after the Trudeau budget announcement, there was a new breaking

story: Children on the Kashechewan reserve covered in rashes and scabs. This community of 1,800 showed pictures to the world of children and babies with rashes and scabs on their faces and bodies. However, after Health Canada doctors visited the community they declared that the situation is not a medical emergency. The doctors diagnosed the children with scabies, mild impetigo and eczema. Apparently these conditions are most likely caused or made worse by

dry air, overcrowded living spaces and scratching.

However, the people of Kashechewan are very concerned that the cause is the water in their community, which has been contaminated before. Locals are demanding independent tests. However, the government and health officials continue to insist that there is nothing wrong with the water quality in Kashechewan. This is something we must pay attention to in the coming weeks.

Empty promises

So Trudeau's big fancy budget, with big promises of dollars in the billions for aboriginal people is coming very late, especially for the communities of Cross Lake, Uashat and Maliotenam. Not only that, but it is unclear what consultation aboriginal people in Canada will have on how the money is spent. It is clear that despite the large sounding price tag, that there are already shortages and money that won't be rolled out for years, while children and youth in aboriginal communities continue to bear the brunt of the government's inaction, shortcomings and failures.

Follow Tamara Hansen on Twitter: @THans01

Stop the War and Occupation! Troops Out Now! MAWO Vancouver's Antiwar Coalition Marks 13 Years Since the Invasion of Iraq!

By Alison Bodine

On March 18, 2003, the U.S. and their imperialist allies started bombing before invaded Iraq. Today, 13 years later, the statistics of life in Iraq are devastating. By various estimates at least 1 million people have lost their lives, the rate of cancer in the country has increased by 40 times, the infant mortality rate has increased 150 percent, 70 percent of Iraqis lack access to clean water and 80 percent lack proper sanitation. As if this isn't enough destruction, the occupation and war on Iraq by the U.S. and their imperialist allies like Canada continues today.

In order to mark this terrible anniversary and to invite people to get involved in organizing against war and occupation, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) organized two actions on March 18, 2016.

The first action was an antiwar and anti-occupation rally held at the busy Vancouver Art Gallery. Standing among bright banners and a bustling information tent, participants at the rally held signs demanding "Canada Out of Iraq! Canada Out of Afghanistan!" and "Stop War and Occupation, Not Refugees! Open



the Borders!" as they invited people passing by to sign a petition demanding that the government of Canada take their hands off Iraq and Syria.

The program of the March 18 MAWO rally showed the diversity of people in Vancouver standing up against imperialist wars. Speakers included Dr Aladdin Al-Khafaji, an Iraqi-Canadian and Muslim community organizer, Charles Boylan from the CPC-ML and Jim McMahan from the International Action Center (IAC) in Seattle, U.S., as well as MAWO organizers and executive committee members. There was also a special musical guest, Thomas P. Radcliffe, a Vietnam era U.S.

war resister and conscientious objector, who kept people singing for peace throughout the day.

Following the successful rally, Mobilization Against War and Occupation invited people to come to the second antiwar event for the day, a forum called "Building an Antiwar Movement in Canada." With this forum, MAWO brought together a dynamic panel of speakers representing different generations and backgrounds to discuss how we can work to build a more united and effective antiwar movement. This included two speakers from the United States, Joe Lombardo, co-chair of the United

continued on page 19

CELEBRANDO EL DÍA DE LA MUJER EN VANCOUVER

Comunidades en Solidaridad con Cuba en Vancouver
Celebran a las Mujeres Revolucionarias de Cuba y
Venezuela en el Día Internacional de la Mujer

Introducción por Alison Bodine

Las comunidades en Solidaridad con Cuba en Vancouver (VCSC) celebraron el día internacional de la mujer con un evento tanto político como cultural, el evento se llevó a cabo el día 9 de marzo a las 7 de la tarde en el centro comunitario Roundhouse en el centro de Vancouver. Este evento contó con la participación de personas de distintas comunidades quienes atendieron y aportaron en un dinámico panel, el cual contó con expositores internacionales y locales los cuales abarcaron los logros de la mujer en Cuba y Venezuela, además de las mujeres revolucionarias que han liderado la batalla por sus derechos.

El siguiente reporte de la velada, ha sido republicado del sitio web del consulado de Venezuela en

Vancouver; <http://www.consulvancouver.org> Con la intención de completar la información, algunos detalles serán agregados en el presente reporte. Además de la participación de las mujeres mencionadas en el reporte del consulado, el programa incluyó las palabras de Azza Robji, una joven mujer Tunecina organizadora por la justicia social y co-coordinadora de Amigos de Cuba en contra del Bloqueo, Vancouver. Azza habló acerca del ejemplo de Cuba y Venezuela en la defensa de los derechos de la mujer, para incentivar la lucha por los derechos de la mujer en Canadá y el mundo. El evento también dio espacio a la poesía, por Lucy Ortiz y Frida Marsolina miembros del colectivo de poesía en Vancouver "Proyecto cultural sur" leyeron sus propios escritos inspirados en la mujer, y Marieta Marín joven investigadora cubana de Camaguey y estudiante en Vancouver, declamo también una hermosa poesía.

Plan "Mama Rosa" fue presentado en Vancouver durante la celebración del Día Internacional de la Mujer

La Igualdad y Equidad de Género en Venezuela

Vancouver, B.C., 09.03.2016

Por Aitzanid Molero

La organización Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC), integrante del Frente de Solidaridad con Venezuela, conmemoró el Día Internacional de la Mujer el pasado 9 de marzo.

El evento contó con la participación de la Primera Secretaria de la Embajada de la República de Cuba, Miraly González González, quien a través de video conferencia desde la ciudad de Ottawa, envió sus felicitaciones a todas las mujeres revolucionarias presentes en el acto. Durante su intervención explicó los logros alcanzados en igualdad de género durante la Revolución Cubana y dio como ejemplo, el alto porcentaje de mujeres que se encuentran actualmente ejerciendo funciones en el gobierno.

Igualmente, Aleida Guevara, hija del Ché Guevara saludó a todas las mujeres luchadoras y activas, el cual fue correspondido con un caluroso aplauso.

Por su parte, la Cónsul General de Segunda de Venezuela, Aitzanid Molero, agradeció el interés por parte de los organizadores de realizar un evento en honor a las mujeres revolucionarias de Venezuela y Cuba. Señaló que el movimiento internacional de mujeres socialistas fue el precursor del Día Internacional de la Mujer, y resaltó los resultados de la Revolución Bolivariana en esta materia. Así mismo describió el Plan para la Igualdad y Equidad de Género "Mama Rosa" 2013 -2019, mismo que fue repartido a todos los asistentes. Para finalizar hizo cita del Comandante Eterno Hugo Chávez Frías:

"... Sin la verdadera liberación de la mujer, sería imposible la liberación plena de los pueblos y soy un convencido de que un auténtico socialista debe ser también un auténtico feminista".

Macarena Cataldo, miembro del Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) habló sobre el dictador Trujillo de República Dominicana. Relató la represión que ejerció sobre las hermanas Mirabal, quienes le hicieron frente y a pesar de ser asesinadas, fueron la inspiración para su derrocamiento y muerte.

Posteriormente se presentó el video realizado por la venezolana, Luz María Escarrá, que detalla el fondo de la Revolución Bolivariana y la mujer, su participación en la política actual y su papel en la construcción del poder popular.

Para finalizar, Kelly White integrante de las primeras naciones de Canadá, y Alison Bodine, miembro activista de esta organización, cantaron en honor a las mujeres revolucionaria.

CELEBRATING IWD IN VANCOUVER

Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba Celebrates the
Revolutionary Women of Cuba and Venezuela for IWD 2016!

Introduction by Alison Bodine

Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) celebrated International Women's Day (IWD) with a cultural and political evening on March 9, 2016 held at the Roundhouse Community Centre in downtown Vancouver. This event brought together people from many different communities to hear a dynamic line-up of international and local speakers discuss the great achievements made by the women of Cuba and Venezuela, revolutionaries who are leading the world-wide struggle for women's rights.

We here in Venezuela say. We are sovereign and independent, we are not a colony of anybody. Below is a report on the evening re-printed from the website of the Venezuelan Consulate in Vancouver, <http://www.consulvancouver.org>. For completeness, it is important to add that additional to what is written in the below report, the program also included words from Azza Robji, a young women social justice organizer originally from Tunisia and the co-coordinator of Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade - Vancouver, who spoke about the important example of the Cuban and Venezuelan women for people organizing for women's rights in Canada and around the world. There was also beautiful original poetry from representatives of the Latin American poetry collective Proyecto Cultural Sur Lucy Ortiz and Frida Marzolina, as well as a poetry reading by Marieta Marín, a Cuban researcher from Camaguey studying in Vancouver.

Plan "Mama Rosa" was presented in Vancouver during the celebration of International Women's Day

Gender Equality in Venezuela

Vancouver, B.C., 09.03.2016

Report by Aitzanid Molero

Translation by Alison Bodine and Macarena Cataldo

The Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC), a member of the Front of Solidarity with Venezuela, celebrated the International Women's Day last March 9.

First Secretary of the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba, Miraly González González, opened the event giving her congratulations to all revolutionary women present at the event through video conference from the city of Ottawa. During her speech she explained the achievements in gender equality during the Cuban Revolution and gave as an example the high percentage of women who are currently hold positions in government.

Aleida Guevara, daughter of Che Guevara also greeted the meeting in a letter to all women fighters and activists. The reading of this letter was reciprocated with warm applause.

For her part, the Second General Consul of Venezuela in Vancouver, Aitzanid Molero, welcomed the interest by the organizers to hold an event in honor of the revolutionary women of Venezuela and Cuba. She noted that the international socialist women's movement was the forerunner of the International Women's Day, and highlighted the results of the Bolivarian Revolution in this matter. In addition, she described Venezuela's Plan for Equality and Gender Equity "Mama Rosa" 2013 -2019, and also distributed a brochure on this plan to all attendees. She ended with a quote from the Eternal Comandante Hugo Chavez:

"... Without the true liberation of women, it would be impossible for the full liberation of peoples and I am convinced that a true socialist must also be a genuine feminist".

Macarena Cataldo, a member of the Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) spoke about the dictator Trujillo in the Dominican Republic. She recounted the repression exerted on the Mirabal sisters who bravely faced him and, despite being killed, were the inspiration for his overthrow and death.

Later a video from Venezuela by Luz María Escarrá was presented, detailing the background of the Bolivarian Revolution and women, explaining their participation in the politics today and their role in the construction of popular power.

To end, Kelly White member of the first nations of Canada, and Alison Bodine, a member activist organization, sang in honor of the revolutionary women.

continued from page 17

National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) in the United States, who spoke via video conference and Jim McMahan special guest from Seattle, Washington, long-time antiwar and social justice organizer with the International Action Centre. Other speakers included Mamdoh Ashir, an Iraqi-Canadian and Muslim community social justice organizer, Alison Bodine the chair of Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) and Azza Rojbi, a North African social justice organizer from Tunisia and MAWO executive member.

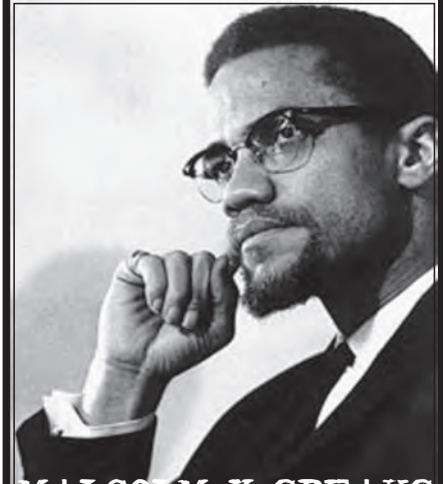
The public forum and the discussion that followed, both reviewed the history of the U.S.-led invasion, war and occupation of Iraq as well as explored the strategy of imperialism in the Middle East and Africa within the new era of war and occupation that began with the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. There was also an important focus on the necessity

of building a broader and more united international movement against imperialist wars both at home and abroad.

Other elements of the evening included moving musical performances from Thomas P. Radcliffe and two of Vancouver's best hip-hop MC's and community organizers, Estea Elements and Trevor Mills.

The government of Canada is a close ally of the U.S. government in this vicious war drive. Not only did Canada play a big part in the 2003 invasion of Iraq and continued occupation, the government of Canada is continuing to support and participate in imperialist wars and occupations in the Middle East and Africa today, from Syria and Palestine to Libya and the Saudi Arabian bombing of Yemen. Now it is more important than ever to get involved in building the antiwar movement in Canada and around the world. Join MAWO to organize against war & occupation!

“By Any Means Necessary...”



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

Revolutionary Black Liberation Leader in the U.S.
1925-1965

“We are living in a society that is by and large controlled by a people who believe in racism, and practice segregation and discrimination and racism. We believe in and I say that it is controlled, not by the well-meaning whites, but controlled by the segregationists, the racists. And you can see by the pattern that this society follows all over the world. Right now in Asia you have the American army dropping bombs on darkskinned people...”

It's racism. Racism practiced by America. Racism which involves a war against the dark-skinned people in Asia, another form of racism involving a war against the dark-skinned people in the Congo, as it involves a war against the dark-skinned people in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Rochester, New York. So we're not against people because they're white. But we're against those who practice racism. We're against those who drop bombs on people because their color happens to be of a different shade than yours. And because we're against it, the press says we're violent. We're not for violence. We're for peace. But the people that we're up against are for violence. You can't be peaceful when you're dealing with them. They accuse us of what they themselves are guilty of. This is what the criminal always does. They'll bomb you, then accuse you of bombing yourself. They'll crush your skull, then accuse you of attacking him. This is what the racists have always done the criminal, the one who has criminal processes developed to a science. Their practice is criminal action. And then use the press to make you victim—look like the victim is the criminal, and the criminal is the victim. This is how they do it.

“Not Just an American Problem, But a World Problem” – February 16, 1965

Subscribe to Fire This Time!

NAME

ADDRESS

EMAIL

PHONE (optional)

For a one year subscription,
12 issues, make cheque
payable to: "Nita Palmer"

Send along with form to:
PO Box 31607
Vancouver BC
V5L 5G3

Canada *SPECIAL OFFER* \$10

USA *SPECIAL OFFER* \$15

International \$30

Cuba & Venezuela FREE!

U.S. GOVERNMENT: LIFT THE BLOCKADE ON CUBA!

RETURN GUANTANAMO TO CUBA!



8TH MONTHLY PROTEST
SUNDAY APRIL 17, 2016
U.S. CONSULATE
4PM (1075 W. PENDER ST)
VANCOUVER, CANADA

FRIENDS OF CUBA AGAINST THE U.S. BLOCKADE - VANCOUVER
NOBLOQUEOVANCOUVER.GMAIL.COM | @NOBLOQUEOVAN
WWW.VANCUBAVSBLOCKADE.ORG

VIVA VENEZUELA! ICHAVÉZ PRESENTE!



U.S. HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION IN SOLIDARITY WITH VENEZUELA

Actions will take place in 40 countries around the world to condemn the right wing and imperialist aggression in Venezuela. This day also marks 226 years since The Signing of Venezuela's Declaration of Independence.

TUESDAY APRIL 19, 2016

1. PROTEST ACTION 4-5 PM
U.S. HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!
US CONSULATE IN VANCOUVER
1070 WEST PENDER STREET
2. INFO TABLING & PETITION 5:30-7pm
MADURO IS OUR PRESIDENT!
VANCOUVER ART GALLERY
ROBSON ST AT HOWE ST

Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice (FTTJ)
WWW.FIRETHISTIME.NET

100TH Anniversary of Ireland's Revolutionary Uprising of 1916

ÉIRÍ AMACH NA CÁSÇA

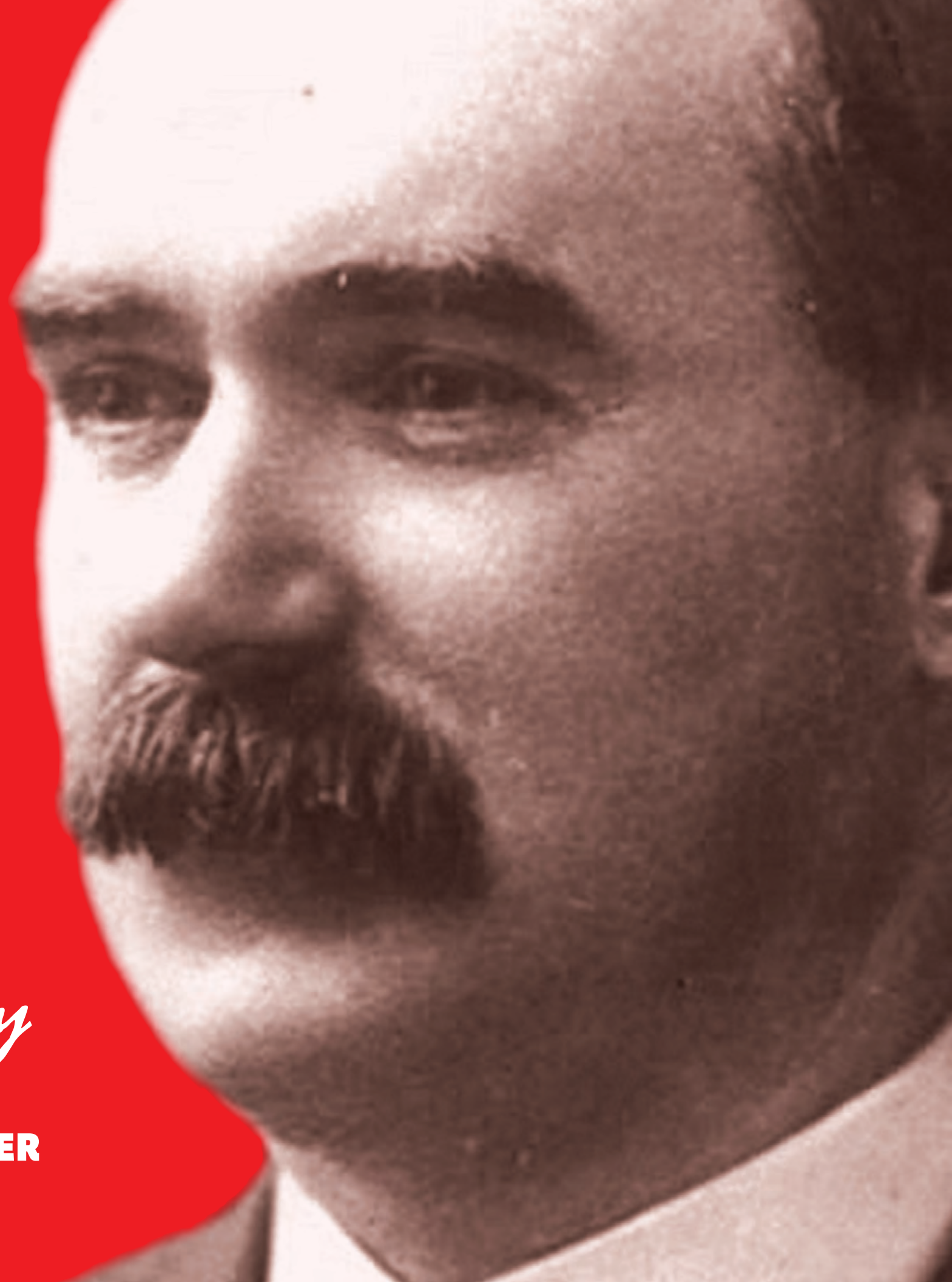
**IF YOU STRIKE AT,
IMPRISON, OR KILL US,
OUT OF OUR PRISONS OR
GRAVES WE WILL STILL
EVOKE A SPIRIT THAT
WILL THWART YOU AND
PERHAPS, RAISE A FORCE
THAT WILL DESTROY YOU!
WE DEFY YOU!
DO YOUR WORST!**

James Connolly
1868-1916



**REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST
IRISH INDEPENDENCE LEADER**

WWW.FIRETHISTIME.NET



OBAMA-IN-CUBA



By Tamara Hansen

On March 21, 2016 U.S. President Obama stood side by side with Cuban President Raul Castro in Havana, Cuba. The first United States President to visit Cuba since 1928, Obama's visit was a history making occasion. Together both presidents gave speeches to the people of Cuba and the world, about the on-going path towards the normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba after over 50 years of hostility.

On the following pages in this issue of Fire This Time you will have the chance to read a fantastic speech given by Cuban President Raul Castro as he stood next to U.S. President Barack Obama in Havana in front of dozens of international media cameras, played live to the world. You will also read a recently printed "Reflection by Fidel", one of Cuban revolutionary leader Comandante Fidel Castro's articles which reflects his thoughts and assessment after U.S. President Barack Obama's visit.

While we are not reprinting any of Obama's talks, they are all available on the White House's official website. However, the most telling part of Obama's speeches is not really what he said, but most revealing aspect of this historic "Joint Press Conference", were the things Obama did not say.

On Democracy & Human Rights

Obama stated, "We continue, as President Castro indicated, to have some very serious differences, including on democracy and human rights. And President Castro and I have had very frank and candid conversations on these subjects."

Of course, the "democracy" to Obama is what the U.S. government calls Cuba's "one-party system" versus the United States "two-party democracy". Cuba however, would consider itself to have a grassroots participative democracy – where everyone can run and participate no matter their wealth and the United States to have a bourgeois democracy – meaning no

matter which of the "two" parties you vote for, the wealthy elite are always the ones elected to power.

In 2008, New York Magazine wrote about Obama's personal wealth in the lead up to the presidential vote. "Compared to the average American, Obama is very wealthy. Compared to the other presidential candidates, he's an indigent. His current salary is \$165,200 (he earned \$60,000 as a state senator). [...] Obama has a hobo-like net worth of \$1.3 million." How could New York Magazine call a millionaire "hobo-like"? Because the other candidates were all multi-millionaires!

We all learned from the Occupy movement that only 1% of Americans are millionaires, and we know even less are multi-millionaires – so why does Obama get to call his system "democratic"? The definition of democracy is "government by the people; especially: rule of the majority." Is the U.S. ruled by the "majority" if the 99% who are not millionaires can never hope to have the wealth and power needed to be elected?

Beyond explaining the word "democracy", what Obama forgot to mention in his remarks was the violations of human rights happening in Cuba, right under his nose. Not under the jurisdiction of Fidel or Raul Castro, but under his jurisdiction in the U.S. prison "camp X-ray" in the U.S. occupied territory of Guantanamo Bay.

We know that Obama promised to close the prison camp at Guantanamo within 100 days of winning the presidency. However, we are now almost 8 years into his two terms and that bastion of human rights abuse run by the U.S. government and its military is still in operation. In a February 2016 article titled, "No one but himself to blame: how Obama's Guantánamo plans fell through" for the Guardian UK, journalist Spencer Ackerman explains, "Obama gave a speech on 21 May 2009 at the National Archives that [...] used all of the rhetoric against Guantánamo that the groups had compiled during the Bush years. Guantánamo had "set back [America's]

moral authority" and was a "rallying cry for our enemies". Some 240 detainees were in a "legal limbo". The military commissions were less efficient than civilian courts in dispensing justice. Guantánamo, all told, was "a mess".

Yet with the exception of torture, Obama chose to retain every objectionable practice at Guantánamo. While he said he preferred to try detainees in civilian courts, he defended the military commissions, and downplayed his 2006 Senate vote against them, calling them an "appropriate venue for trying detainees for violations of the laws of war".

Most importantly, Obama conceded a role for indefinite detention – this time in the United States. He called them "a number of people who cannot be prosecuted for past crimes, in some cases because evidence may be tainted, but who nonetheless pose a threat to the security of the United States".

The long quote from the article by Spencer Ackerman gives you an idea of how Obama's constructive rhetoric can move quickly from finding solutions to problems, to trying to





convince people that there is no real problem at all. While Obama suggested many times during his visit to Cuba that the Cuban government is the violator of human rights, about a thousand kilometres away in Guantanamo dozens of men have been “cleared for release” by the U.S. government – some for years – who are still languishing in prison. Others have been declared “prisoners for life” by the U.S. military because they are “said to be dangerous” but the military does not have enough evidence to charge them with anything.

On Sovereignty

Obama explained, “The United States recognizes progress that Cuba has made as a nation, its enormous achievements in education and in health care. And perhaps most importantly, I affirmed that Cuba’s destiny will not be decided by the United States or any other nation. Cuba is sovereign and, rightly, has great pride. And the future of Cuba will be decided by Cubans, not by anybody else.”

What Obama did not mention here is if this means the U.S. government will stop investing millions of dollars every year into “democracy building” projects in Cuba? The National Endowment for Democracy and other government sponsored U.S. institutions have been famously funnelling money to the so-called “Cuban opposition” for decades. Obviously the opposition has not grown or gained any real momentum, or Obama would not be forced to negotiate with the rightful sovereign and revolutionary government of the Cuban people, the one lead by Raul Castro. It would seem that Obama should put his money where his mouth is and let Cuba decide its own future, free of U.S. sponsored “regime change” programs.

On the U.S.-Cuba Thaw (or path towards normalization of relations)

To demonstrate some of the work happening between the U.S. and Cuba today, Obama gave a long list of items that they are working

on thus far. He said, “And today, I can report that we continue to move forward on many fronts when it comes to normalizing relations.” Obama goes on to state:

“We’re moving ahead with more opportunities for Americans to travel to Cuba and interact with the Cuban people”

“U.S. airlines will begin direct commercial flights this year”

“We’re moving ahead with more trade”

“We welcome Cuba’s important announcement that it plans to end the 10 percent penalty on [U.S.] dollar conversions here”

“We’ve agreed to deepen our cooperation on agriculture to support our farmers and our ranchers”

“We’re moving ahead with our efforts to help connect more Cubans to the Internet and the global economy”

“We’re moving ahead with more educational exchanges”

“We’re moving ahead with more events and exchanges that bring Cubans and Americans together”

“We’re moving ahead with partnerships in health, science, and the environment”

“We’re moving ahead with our closer cooperation on regional security”

Here Obama failed to mention that the Cuban people and government have been seeking this cooperation for over 50 years since the triumph of the Cuban revolution. It was the U.S. government, under both Republican and Democratic presidents, who have unjustly blockaded Cuba, trying to bully the people of Cuba into poverty and misery in the hopes they would abandon their revolution.

The revolutionary government of Cuba is different than some other communist systems, which have opted for isolation or focusing inward on building their version of socialism. Cuba is a revolutionary internationalist country. They have always sought to empower oppressed and working people in all countries of the world to strive for better living conditions and justice. It was these ideas that took Cuba to Africa to fight against Apartheid and more recently against Ebola; that took Cuba to Pakistan to provide free doctors after the earthquake in 2005; or that led revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara to leave his family and new homeland behind to fight with the people of the Congo and Bolivia for their liberation.

By speaking of partnerships, projects and cooperation Obama is omitting that it was his predecessors and their policies which held back this friendship. Not only did they want to strangle Cuba’s revolution, but they also limited the travel of Americans to Cuba, afraid that too many Americans might see and be inspired by the truth – that the revolution in Cuba brought tremendous gains and dignity to its people.

On the Blockade

Mixed in with the long list of projects the U.S.

and Cuba are working on together, Obama adds in, “I continue to call on Congress to lift the trade embargo, I discussed with President Castro the steps we urge Cuba to take to show that it’s ready to do more business, which includes allowing more joint ventures and allowing foreign companies to hire Cubans directly.”

First what Obama and the U.S. never call their sanctions against Cuba is a “blockade”. Cuba, on the other hand, only uses the word blockade. Why? Here is an explanation from the website cubavsbloqueo.cu: “Why blockade instead of embargo? The actions implemented against Cuba by the United States Government do not fit in the definition of embargo. Cuba is not indebted to the United States and didn’t commit crime whatsoever which might deserve the seizure and settlement of goods in the United States’ favor. Cuba is not and has never been a threat for the United States, therefore the allegations these actions are applied in self-defense are contrary to international law. The United States use the term “embargo” to avoid recognition that wartime measures are applied against Cuba, of undeclared war against the Cuban people. On the other hand, the isolation, asphyxiation and immobility Cuba is submitted to is categorized as a blockade, which means cutting, closing, cut off communication abroad

Battle of Ideas Press

5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership

By Tamara Hansen

“The battles Cuba has fought have not been easy. Some were physical battles, such as the battle against bandits in the Escambray Mountains or the Bay of Pigs invasion. However, most were not battles of physical might, but battles of ideas. But with every twist and turn, every up and down Fidel has been one of the first leaders to say, ‘this way forward’ or ‘we made a wrong turn, we must change course.’”

Tamara Hansen is the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba ten times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.



April 2010, paperback, 312 pages, illustrated, \$10.00
ISBN 978-0-9864716-1-2 | Copyright © 2010 by Battle of Ideas Press
PO Box 21607, Vancouver, BC, V5L 5G3, Canada

WWW.BATTLEOFIDEASPRESS.COM
INFO@BATTLEOFIDEASPRESS.COM

OUR HERITAGE



Haydée Santamaría
1922-1980

Haydée Santamaría is a fundamental leader of the Cuban Revolution. She and Melba Hernández were the two women participants in the assault on the Moncada Barracks on July 26, 1953. Led by Fidel Castro, the assault was a military failure as most of the young participants were captured and tortured to death, but it is credited as the spark that lit the flame of the Cuban Revolution.

She survived prison and was a founder of the 26th of July Movement, led by Fidel Castro, Raul Castro, and Che Guevara. When the July 26 Movement led the Cuban Revolution to victory in 1959 she founded and directed, "La Casa de las Américas", which became the most important cultural institution in Latin America. Haydée was also an original member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba.

"Do you know what that means! Do you know what it means for a woman not to have to marry for economic reasons? Here women didn't work because they couldn't find jobs. You had to have an extensive education, and even then you were earned less than any man. Even if you weren't in love you had to pretend to be to solve the financial problem. Or you had to be married if you wanted to have a child, because having a child without being married, that was as much as asking to be rejected by society. Do you know what it means to have a child with whomever you want to be the father, and you don't want to marry him for whatever reason? You know what it means to break with all that! And that man has to give his surname if the woman wants him to, but if the woman doesn't demand that, she just gives the child her surname and that's that. You've got to remember that in Latin-America we have a strong Spanish influence, and Cuba was the last colony to liberate itself from Spanish rule, so the influence is very strong."



Tourism is a risky business. Obama forgot to mention how Americans used to view Cuba in the 1950s, as an American playground for the wealthy elite. Tourism at that time meant drug trafficking, gambling, prostitution and while it gave some Cubans good paying jobs – there was widespread poverty throughout the island. It was this contradiction between the immensely wealthy and the desperately poor – that led to the Cuban people rising up for justice and organizing their revolution.

to achieve the country's surrender by dint of hunger or the use of force."

Secondly, why is the blockade (or embargo as Obama calls it) only a small note within Obama's speech? This is the main demand of the Cuban people and government. If you want all of the projects and cooperation to flourish as stated above, the blockade must be lifted! Besides, while it is true that to end some major aspects of the blockade Obama would need the support of the United States' Congress, there are still many measures he can take as head of state, which Cuba has been urging him to do. Again his lack of action speaks just as loud, if not louder, than his words.

On the future

To wrap up his remarks Obama expressed, "With every passing day, more Americans are coming to Cuba, more U.S. businesses and schools and faith groups are working to forge new partnerships with the Cuban people. More Cubans are benefitting from the opportunities that this travel and trade bring."

While Obama tried to say these new relations are about letting Cubans decide the future of Cuba, it sounds here like he is talking more and more about how Americans will impact Cubans. Looking at other American tourist destinations from Mexico, to Puerto Rico, to Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic, we have to ask if workers in these countries really benefitting from the "opportunities that this travel and trade bring"?

What Obama did say makes it sound as if the people of the third world, or developing nations which have beach resorts are praying for the arrival of American tourists (of course those involved directly in the tourism industry probably are) as an answer to their countries 'developing' status. Unfortunately for Obama there is not one case of a country rising above its "developing" status due to American tourists.

What Obama failed to mention, is that Americans still cannot freely travel to Cuba. While his administration has modified some aspects of the travel ban, Americans need special permission from their government (in the form of licences) to travel to Cuba. How's that for 'freedom' and 'human rights'?

What we can learn...

Finally, Obama also did not mention what the people of Cuba can teach Americans – because this is what the U.S. government is most afraid of and why for over 50 years they have continued to prevent the American people from travelling freely to socialist Cuba. The U.S. government is afraid of losing the battle of ideas. That American tourists will not win over Cubans to capitalism, but that the Cuban people might teach the Americans something about power of Cuban socialism.

Despite the thaw in U.S.-Cuba relations it was a battle of ideas on display on March 21, 2016 as Obama and Raul stood side by side.

Follow Tamara on Twitter: @THans01

Raúl Castro : The blockade stands as the most important obstacle to our economic development and the well being of the Cuban people



Transcript of Cuban President Raul Castro's remarks at a joint press conference with President Barack Obama in Havana on March 21, 2016

Mr. President Barack Obama, we are pleased to welcome you on this, the first visit of a president of the United States of America to our country in 88 years.

We have observed that in the 15 months that have passed since the decision was made to establish our diplomatic relations, we have obtained concrete results. We were able to resume direct postal exchanges and we signed an agreement to resume commercial flights.

We have signed two memorandums of understanding on the protection of the environment and maritime areas, and another one to secure the safety of sea navigation. Today, another one will be signed on cooperation of the area of agriculture. At the moment, another set of bilateral instruments are being negotiated to cooperate in such areas as counter narcotics, the safety of commerce, and travelers and health. About this last issue, we have agreed to deepen our cooperation in the prevention and treatment of transmissible diseases, such as Zika, and non-transmissible chronic diseases, cancer included.

This cooperation is beneficial not only for Cuba and the United States, but also for our hemisphere at large. Following the decisions made by President Obama to modify the application of some aspects of the blockade, Cuban enterprises and their American counterparts are working to identify possible commercial operations that could materialize in the still restrictive framework of existing regulations.

The fact is that some have already materialized, especially in the area of telecommunications — an area in which our country already has a program designed on the basis of its priorities and the necessary technological sovereignty, one that can secure the appropriate (ph) views and the service of national interests.

Progress has also been made toward the acquisition of medicines, medical materiel and equipment for power generation and environmental protection, these among others. Much more could be done if the blockade were lifted.

We recognize the position of President Obama and his administration against the blockade, and his repeated appeals to Congress to have it removed. The most recent measures adopted by his administration are positive but insufficient. I had the opportunity to discuss with the president other steps that we think could be taken in order to remove restrictions that remain in force, and make a significant contribution to the debunking of the blockade.

This is essential, because the blockade remains in force and because it contains discouraging elements and intimidating effects and extra-territorial outreach.

I put forward to the president some examples on this, showing their negative consequences for both Cuba and other countries. The blockade stands as the most important obstacle to our economic development and the wellbeing of the Cuban people. That's why its removal will be of the essence to normalize bilateral relations. And actually, it will also bring benefits to the Cuban emigrants who wish the best for their families and their country.

In order to move forward towards normalization, it will also be necessary to return the territory illegally occupied by Guantanamo Naval

Base. Since they stand as the two main obstacles, these issues were again dealt with in the editorial ran on March 9 by the official newspaper of the Communist Party of Cuba.

And again, only four days ago, in the press conference offered by our Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez, those pieces extensively reported by the media.

Other policies should also be abolished for normal relations to develop between the United States and Cuba. No one should intend to have the Cuban people renounce the destiny it chose in freedom and sovereignty, the same for which you have made enormous sacrifices.

We also discussed international issues, particularly those that could have an impact on regional peace and stability. We had thought to discuss other issues, but we did not have enough time. I had planned to raise our concern over the destabilization some are trying to promote in Venezuela, something which we consider to be counterproductive to the overall situation in the continent. I did not have the chance to raise with him, I'm raising it here.

Likewise, we talked about the ongoing peace process in Colombia and the effort to put an end to that conflict. There are profound differences between our countries that will not go away. Since we hold different concepts on many subjects such as political systems, democracy, the exercise of human rights, social justice, international relations and world peace and stability.

We defend human rights. In our view, civil, political, economic, social and cultural

continued on page 27



Raúl Castro : El bloqueo es el obstáculo más importante para nuestro desarrollo económico y el bienestar del pueblo cubano

Declaración a la prensa del Presidente de Cuba, Raúl Castro Ruz. 21 de marzo de 2016

Señor presidente Barack Obama:

Nos complace recibirlo en la primera visita de un mandatario de los Estados Unidos a nuestro país después de 88 años.

Deseamos que durante su breve estancia en la isla pueda apreciar la hospitalidad del pueblo cubano, que nunca ha abrigado sentimientos de animosidad hacia el pueblo estadounidense, al que nos unen lazos históricos, culturales y afectivos.

Su visita es un paso importante en el proceso hacia la mejoría de las relaciones bilaterales, que esperamos contribuya a impulsar mayores avances en nuestros vínculos, en beneficio de ambas naciones y de la región.

Acabamos de sostener un constructivo y útil encuentro, que da continuidad a los dos anteriores que sostuvimos en Panamá y Nueva York.

Constatamos que en los 15 meses transcurridos desde que anunciamos la decisión de restablecer las relaciones diplomáticas hemos obtenido resultados concretos.

Reanudamos el correo postal directo y firmamos un acuerdo para restablecer los vuelos regulares.

Hemos ampliado la cooperación en áreas de interés mutuo. Suscribimos dos memorandos de entendimiento sobre protección del medio ambiente y áreas marinas, y otro para mejorar la seguridad de la navegación marítima. Hoy se firmará uno más sobre cooperación en la agricultura.

Actualmente se está negociando otro grupo de instrumentos bilaterales para cooperar en esferas como el enfrentamiento al narcotráfico, la seguridad del comercio y de los viajeros,

y la salud. Sobre esta última, hemos acordado profundizar la colaboración en la prevención y tratamiento de enfermedades transmisibles como el Zika y de enfermedades crónicas no transmisibles, incluyendo el cáncer. Esta cooperación es beneficiosa no solo para Cuba y Estados Unidos, sino también para nuestro hemisferio.

A partir de las decisiones adoptadas por el presidente Obama para modificar la aplicación de algunos aspectos del bloqueo, empresas cubanas y sus contrapartes estadounidenses trabajan en la identificación de posibles operaciones comerciales que se pudieran concretar en el marco aún restrictivo de las regulaciones en vigor.

Algunas se han materializado, especialmente en el área de las telecomunicaciones, ámbito en el que nuestro país cuenta con un programa basado en sus prioridades de desarrollo y en la necesaria soberanía tecnológica, que garantice el uso apropiado de estas al servicio de los intereses nacionales.

También se avanza en negociaciones para la adquisición de medicamentos, equipos médicos y equipamiento para generación de energía y protección del medio ambiente, entre otras.

Mucho más pudiera hacerse si se levantara el bloqueo de los Estados Unidos.

Reconocemos la posición del presidente Obama y de su gobierno contra el bloqueo y los reiterados llamados que ha hecho al Congreso para que lo elimine.

Las últimas medidas adoptadas por su gobierno son positivas, pero no suficientes. Intercambié con el Presidente sobre otras medidas que pensamos pueden tomarse para eliminar restricciones aún vigentes y hacer una importante contribución al desmantelamiento del bloqueo.

Esto es esencial, porque el bloqueo continúa en vigor y tiene componentes disuasivos y efectos intimidatorios de alcance extraterritorial, sobre lo cual le expuse algunos ejemplos al Presidente para mostrarle sus consecuencias negativas para Cuba y otros Estados.

El bloqueo es el obstáculo más importante para nuestro desarrollo económico y el bienestar del pueblo cubano. Por eso, su eliminación será esencial para normalizar las relaciones bilaterales. También será beneficioso para la emigración cubana, que desea lo mejor para sus familias y su país.

Para avanzar hacia la normalización también será necesario que se devuelva el territorio ilegalmente ocupado por la Base Naval en Guantánamo.

Ambos temas, por ser los principales obstáculos, fueron abordados, una vez más, en el Editorial publicado el 9 de marzo pasado en el órgano oficial del Partido Comunista de Cuba y, hace solo cuatro días, en la conferencia de prensa de nuestro canciller Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, ampliamente divulgados por la prensa.

Asimismo, otras políticas debieran ser superadas para que pueda haber relaciones normales entre Cuba y los Estados Unidos. No debiera pretenderse para ello que el pueblo cubano renuncie al destino que libre y soberanamente ha escogido y por el que ha hecho inmensos sacrificios.

Intercambiamos además sobre temas internacionales, en particular, aquellos que pudieran afectar la paz y la estabilidad regional.

Especialmente estaba previsto y no hubo tiempo para concluirlo, el abordar nuestra preocupación por la situación de desestabilización que se intenta fomentar en Venezuela, lo cual es contraproducente para

el ambiente en el continente, pero lo expreso en esta ocasión.

Igualmente, dialogamos sobre la marcha del proceso de paz en Colombia y los esfuerzos para poner fin a este conflicto.

Existen profundas diferencias entre nuestros países que no van a desaparecer, pues tenemos concepciones distintas sobre muchos temas, como los modelos políticos, la democracia, el ejercicio de los derechos humanos, la justicia social, las relaciones internacionales, la paz y la estabilidad mundial.

Defendemos los derechos humanos. Consideramos que los derechos civiles, políticos, económicos, sociales y culturales son indivisibles, interdependientes y universales. No concebimos que un gobierno no defienda y garantice el derecho a la salud, a la educación, a la seguridad social, a la alimentación y al desarrollo, al salario igual por trabajo igual y a los derechos de los niños. Nos oponemos a la manipulación política y el doble rasero sobre los derechos humanos.

Cuba tiene mucho que decir y que mostrar en esta materia y, por ello, le reiteraré al Presidente nuestra disposición a mantener el diálogo que iniciamos.

El pasado 17 de diciembre de 2014, cuando anunciamos la decisión de restablecer las relaciones diplomáticas expresé: “debemos aprender el arte de convivir, de forma civilizada, con nuestras diferencias”.

El 15 de julio de 2015 ante nuestro Parlamento señalé: “Cambiar todo lo que deba ser cambiado es asunto soberano y exclusivo de los cubanos. El Gobierno Revolucionario tiene la disposición de avanzar en la normalización de las relaciones, convencido de que ambos países podemos cooperar y coexistir civilizadamente, en beneficio mutuo, por encima de las diferencias que tenemos y seguramente tendremos, y contribuir con ello a la paz, la seguridad, la estabilidad, el desarrollo y la equidad en nuestro continente y el mundo”.

Hoy ratifico que debemos poner en práctica el arte de la convivencia civilizada, que implica aceptar y respetar las diferencias y no hacer de ellas el centro de nuestra relación, sino promover vínculos que privilegien el beneficio de ambos países y pueblos y concentrarnos en lo que nos acerca y no en lo que nos separa.

Coincidimos en que nos queda por delante un largo y complejo camino por recorrer. Pero lo importante es que hemos comenzado a dar pasos para construir una relación de nuevo tipo, como la que nunca ha existido entre Cuba y los Estados Unidos.

Destruir un puente es fácil y requiere poco tiempo. Reconstruirlo sólidamente es una tarea mucho más larga y difícil.

Después de cuatro intentos fallidos, en una muestra de voluntad y perseverancia, el 2 de septiembre del 2013, la nadadora estadounidense Diana Nyad, logró cruzar a nado el estrecho de la Florida, sin jaula antitiburones.

Por esa hazaña de vencer la distancia que separa geográficamente a nuestros países, el 30 de agosto del 2014, bajo los acordes de los himnos nacionales de Cuba y Estados Unidos, fue condecorada con la Orden al Mérito Deportivo, otorgada por el Consejo de Estado cubano.

Esta proeza contiene un fuerte mensaje, debería servirnos de ejemplo para las relaciones bilaterales, ya que confirma que si ella pudo, entonces nosotros también podremos.

Le reitero al presidente Obama nuestro agradecimiento por su visita y la voluntad del Gobierno de Cuba de seguir avanzando en los próximos meses por el bien de nuestros pueblos y países.

Muchas gracias.

continued from page 25

rights are indivisible, interdependent and universal. Actually, we find it inconceivable that a government does not defend and insure the right to health care, education, Social Security with provision and development, equal pay and the rights of children. We oppose political manipulation and double standards in the approach to human rights.

Cuba has much to say and show on this issue. That is why I have reiterated to the president our willingness to continue moving forward with the dialogue on this matter that was already initiated.

On December 17th, 2014, as we announced the decision to re-establish diplomatic relations, I said that we should learn the art of co-existing with our difference in a civilized manner. In my remarks to Parliament on July 15, 2015, I said changing everything that needs to be changed is the sovereign and exclusive concern of Cubans. The revolutionary government is willing to advance to a normalization of relations, for it is convinced that both countries can co-exist and cooperate in a civilized manner and for the mutual benefit regardless of existing and future

differences and thus contribute to peace, security, stability, development and equity in our continent and around the world.

Today, I reaffirm that we should exercise the art of civilized co-existence, which involves accepting and respecting

differences and preventing these from becoming the center of our relationship.

We should instead promote links that can benefit both our countries and peoples while focusing on those things that bring us closer and not on those that pull us apart. We agree that a long and complex path still lies ahead. But what is most important is that we have started taking the first steps to build a new type of relationship, one that has never existed between Cuba and the United States.

Actually, destroying a bridge can be an easy and quick undertaking. However, its solid reconstruction can prove a lengthy and challenging endeavor. After four failed attempts and giving proof of the will and perseverance, on September 2, 2013, American swimmer Diane Nyad managed to cross the Florida Strait swimming without an anti-shark cage to protect her.

To that exploit of conquering the geographical differences between our two countries. It was for that exploit that on August 30th, 2013, as the national anthems of Cuba and the United States were played she was presented with the Order of Sport Merit, a declaration awarded by the State Counsel. Such feat carries a powerful message.

One that should serve as an example to honor bilateral relations. For it confirms that if she could do it, then we can do it too. President Obama, I reiterate our appreciation for his visit and the willingness of the government of Cuba to continue moving forward in the well being of our countries.

Thank you very much.



The kings of Spain brought us the conquistadores and masters, whose footprints remained in the circular land grants assigned to those searching for gold in the sands of rivers, an abusive and shameful form of exploitation, traces of which can be noted from the air in many places around the country.

Tourism today, in large part, consists of viewing the delights of our landscapes and tasting exquisite delicacies from our seas, and is always shared with the private capital of large foreign corporations, whose earnings, if they don't reach billions of dollars, are not worthy of any attention whatsoever.

Since I find myself obliged to mention the issue, I must add - principally for the youth - that few people are aware of the importance of such a condition, in this singular moment of human history. I would not say that time has been lost, but I do not hesitate to affirm that we are not adequately informed, not you, nor us, of the knowledge and conscience that we must have to confront the realities which challenge us. The first to be taken into consideration is that our lives are but a fraction of a historical second, which must also be devoted in part to the vital necessities of every human being. One of the characteristics of this condition is the tendency to overvalue its role, in contrast, on the other hand, with the extraordinary number of persons who embody the loftiest dreams.

Nevertheless, no one is good or bad entirely on their own. None of us is designed for the role we must assume in a revolutionary society, although Cubans had the privilege of José Martí's example. I even ask myself if he needed to die or not in Dos Ríos, when he said, "For me, it's time," and charged the Spanish forces entrenched in a solid line of firepower. He did not want to return to the United

States, and there was no one who could make him. Someone ripped some pages from his diary. Who bears this treacherous responsibility, undoubtedly the work of an unscrupulous conspirator? Differences between the leaders were well known, but never indiscipline. "Whoever attempts to appropriate Cuba will reap only the dust of its soil drenched in blood, if he does not perish in the struggle," stated the glorious Black leader Antonio Maceo. Máximo Gómez is likewise recognized as the most disciplined and discreet military chief in our history.

guest thinks today:

"I have come here to bury the last remnant of the Cold War in the Americas. I have come here to extend the hand of friendship to the Cuban people," followed by a deluge of concepts entirely novel for the majority of us:

"We both live in a new world, colonized by Europeans," the U.S. President continued, "Cuba, like the United States, was built in part by slaves brought here from Africa. Like the United States, the Cuban people can trace their heritage to both slaves and slave-owners."

Brother Obama



The native populations don't exist at all in Obama's mind. Nor does he say that the Revolution swept away racial discrimination, or that pensions and salaries for all Cubans were decreed by it before Mr. Barack Obama was 10 years old. The hateful, racist bourgeois custom of hiring strongmen to expel Black citizens from recreational

Looking at it from another angle, how can we not admire the indignation of Bonifacio Byrne when, from a distant boat returning him to Cuba, he saw another flag alongside that of the single star and declared, "My flag is that which has never been mercenary..." immediately adding one of the most beautiful phrases I have ever heard, "If it is torn to shreds, it will be my flag one day... our dead raising their arms will still be able to defend it!" Nor will I forget the blistering words of Camilo Cienfuegos that night, when, just some tens of meters away, bazookas and machine guns of U.S. origin in the hands of counterrevolutionaries were pointed toward that terrace on which we stood.

Obama was born in August of 1961, as he himself explained. More than half a century has transpired since that time.

Let us see, however, how our illustrious

centers was swept away by the Cuban Revolution - that which would go down in history for the battle against apartheid that liberated Angola, putting an end to the presence of nuclear weapons on a continent of more than a billion inhabitants. This was not the objective of our solidarity, but rather to help the peoples of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau and others under the fascist colonial domination of Portugal.

In 1961, just one year and three months after the triumph of the Revolution, a mercenary force with armored artillery and infantry, backed by aircraft, trained and accompanied by U.S. warships and aircraft carriers, attacked our country by surprise. Nothing can justify that perfidious attack which cost our country hundreds of losses, including deaths and injuries. As for the pro-yankee assault brigade,

no evidence exists anywhere that it was possible to evacuate a single mercenary. Yankee combat planes were presented before the United Nations as the equipment of a Cuban uprising.

The military experience and power of this country is very well known. In Africa, they likewise believed that revolutionary Cuba would be easily taken out of the fight. The invasion via southern Angola by racist South African motorized brigades got close to Luanda, the capital in the eastern part of the country. There a struggle began which went on for no less than 15 years. I wouldn't even talk about this, if I didn't have the elemental duty to respond to Obama's speech in Havana's Alicia Alonso Grand Theater.

Nor will I attempt to give details, only emphasize that an honorable chapter in the struggle for human liberation was written there. In a certain way, I hoped Obama's behavior would be correct. His humble origin and natural intelligence were evident. Mandela was imprisoned for life and had become a giant in the struggle for human dignity. One day, a copy of a book narrating part of Mandela's life reached my hands, and - surprise! - the prologue was by Barack Obama. I rapidly skimmed the pages. The miniscule size of Mandela's handwriting noting facts was incredible. Knowing men such as him was worthwhile.

Regarding the episode in South Africa I must point out another experience. I was really interested in learning more about how the South Africans had acquired nuclear weapons. I only had very precise information that there were no more than



10 or 12 bombs. A reliable source was the professor and researcher Piero Gleijeses, who had written the text *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976*, an excellent piece. I knew he was the most reliable source on what had happened and I told him so; he responded that he had not spoken more about the matter as in the text he had responded to questions from compañero Jorge Risquet, who had been Cuban ambassador and collaborator in Angola, a very good friend of his. I located Risquet; already undertaking other important tasks he was finishing a course which would last several weeks longer. That task coincided with a fairly recent visit by Piero to our country; I had warned him that Risquet was getting on and his health was not great. A few days later what I had feared occurred. Risquet deteriorated and died. When Piero arrived there was nothing to do except make promises, but

and does not attempt now to elaborate theories on Cuban policy.

There is an important issue:

Obama made a speech in which he uses the most sweetened words to express: "It is time, now, to forget the past, leave the past behind, let us look to the future together, a future of hope. And it won't be easy, there will be challenges and we must give it time; but my stay here gives me more hope in what we can do together as friends, as family, as neighbors, together." I suppose all of us were at risk of a heart attack upon hearing these words from the President of the United States. After a ruthless blockade that has lasted almost 60 years, and what about those who have died in the mercenary attacks on Cuban ships and ports, an airliner full of passengers blown up in midair, mercenary invasions, multiple acts of violence and coercion?



I had already received information related to the weapons and the assistance that racist South Africa had received from Reagan and Israel.

I do not know what Obama would have to say about this story now. I am unaware as to what he did or did not know, although it is very unlikely that he knew absolutely nothing. My modest suggestion is that he gives it thought

Nobody should be under the illusion that the people of this dignified and selfless country will renounce the glory, the rights, or the spiritual wealth they have gained with the development of education, science and culture.

I also warn that we are capable of producing the food and material riches we need with the efforts and intelligence of our people. We do not need the empire to give us anything. Our efforts will be legal and peaceful, as this is our commitment to peace and fraternity among all human beings who live on this planet.

Fidel Castro Ruz
March 27, 2016



Por Fidel Castro

Los reyes de España nos trajeron a los conquistadores y dueños, cuyas huellas quedaron en los hatos circulares de tierra asignados a los buscadores de oro en las arenas de los ríos, una forma abusiva y bochornosa de explotación cuyos vestigios se pueden divisar desde el aire en muchos lugares del país.

El turismo hoy, en gran parte, consiste en mostrar las delicias de los paisajes y saborear las exquisiteces alimentarias de nuestros mares, y siempre que se comparta con el capital privado de las grandes corporaciones extranjeras, cuyas ganancias si no alcanzan los miles de millones de dólares per cápita no son dignas de atención alguna.

Ya que me vi obligado a mencionar el tema, debo añadir, principalmente para los jóvenes, que pocas personas se percatan de la importancia de tal condición en este momento singular de la historia humana. No diré que el tiempo se ha perdido, pero no vacilo en afirmar que no estamos suficientemente informados, ni ustedes ni nosotros, de los conocimientos y las conciencias que debíamos tener para enfrentar las realidades que nos desafían. Lo primero a tomar en cuenta es que nuestras vidas son una fracción histórica de segundo, que hay que compartir además con las necesidades vitales de todo ser humano.

EL HERMANO OBAMA

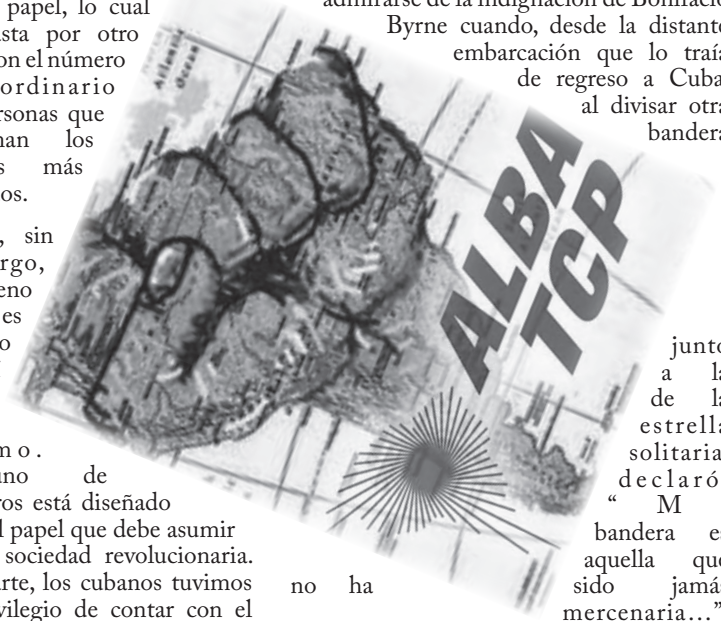
Una de las características de este es la tendencia a la sobrevaloración de su papel, lo cual contrasta por otro lado con el número extraordinario de personas que encarnan los sueños más elevados.

Nadie, sin embargo, es bueno o malo por sí

mismo. Ninguno de nosotros está diseñado para el papel que debe asumir en la sociedad revolucionaria. En parte, los cubanos tuvimos el privilegio de contar con el ejemplo de José Martí. Me pregunto incluso si tenía que caer o no en Dos Ríos, cuando dijo "para mí es hora", y cargó contra las fuerzas españolas atrincheradas en una sólida línea de fuego. No quería regresar a Estados Unidos y no había quién lo hiciera regresar. Alguien arrancó algunas hojas de su diario. ¿Quién cargó con esa pérfida culpa, que fue sin duda obra de algún intrigante inescrupuloso? Se conocen

historia.

Mirándolo desde otro ángulo, cómo no admirarse de la indignación de Bonifacio Byrne cuando, desde la distante embarcación que lo traía de regreso a Cuba, al divisar otra bandera



junto a la de la estrella solitaria, declaró: "Mi bandera es aquella que no ha sido jamás mercenaria...", para añadir de inmediato una de las más bellas frases que escuché nunca: "Si deshecha en menudos pedazos llega a ser mi bandera algún día... ¡nuestros



Intervenciones militares dos Estados Unidos na América Latina (séculos XIX e XX)



diferencias entre los Jefes, pero jamás indisciplinas. "Quien intente apropiarse de Cuba recogerá el polvo de su suelo anegado en sangre, si no perece en la lucha", declaró el glorioso líder negro Antonio Maceo. Se reconoce igualmente en Máximo Gómez, el jefe militar más disciplinado y discreto de nuestra

mueztos alzando los brazos la sabrán defender todavía!...". Tampoco olvidaré las encendidas palabras de Camilo Cienfuegos aquella noche, cuando a varias decenas de metros bazucas y ametralladoras de origen norteamericano, en manos contrarrevolucionarias, apuntaban hacia la terraza donde estábamos parados. Obama había nacido en agosto de 1961, como él mismo explicó. Más de medio siglo transcurriría desde aquel momento.

Veamos sin embargo cómo piensa hoy nuestro ilustre visitante:

"Vine aquí para dejar atrás los últimos vestigios de la guerra fría en las Américas.

PAÍSES AFRICANOS QUE CUENTAN CON COOPERACIÓN MÉDICA CUBANA



Fuente: Registros estadísticos de la Unidad Central de Cooperación Médica

Vine aquí extendiendo la mano de amistad al pueblo cubano”.

De inmediato un diluvio de conceptos, enteramente novedosos para la mayoría de nosotros:

“Ambos vivimos en un nuevo mundo colonizado por europeos”. Prosiguió el Presidente norteamericano. “Cuba, al igual que Estados Unidos, fue constituida por esclavos traídos de África; al igual que Estados Unidos, el pueblo cubano tiene herencias en esclavos y esclavistas”.

Las poblaciones nativas no existen para nada en la mente de Obama. Tampoco dice que la discriminación racial fue barrida por la Revolución; que el retiro y el salario de todos los cubanos fueron decretados por esta antes de que el señor Barack Obama cumpliera 10 años. La odiosa costumbre burguesa y racista de contratar esbirros para que los ciudadanos negros fuesen expulsados de centros de recreación fue barrida por la Revolución Cubana. Esta pasaría a la historia por la batalla que libró en Angola contra el apartheid, poniendo fin a la presencia de armas nucleares en un continente de más de mil millones de habitantes. No era ese el objetivo de nuestra solidaridad, sino ayudar a los pueblos de Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau y otros del dominio colonial fascista de Portugal.

En 1961, apenas dos años y tres meses después del Triunfo de la Revolución, una fuerza mercenaria con cañones e infantería

blindada, equipada con aviones, fue entrenada y acompañada por buques de guerra y portaviones de Estados Unidos, atacando por sorpresa a nuestro país. Nada podrá justificar aquel aleve ataque que costó a nuestro país cientos de bajas entre muertos y heridos. De la brigada de asalto proyanki, en ninguna parte consta que se hubiese podido evacuar un solo mercenario. Aviones yanquis de combate fueron presentados ante Naciones Unidas como equipos cubanos sublevados.

Es de sobra conocida la experiencia militar y el poderío de ese país. En África creyeron igualmente que la Cuba revolucionaria sería puesta fácilmente fuera de combate. El ataque por el Sur de Angola por parte de las brigadas motorizadas de Sudafrica racista los lleva hasta las proximidades de Luanda, la capital de este país. Ahí se inicia una lucha

que se prolongó no menos de 15 años. No hablaría siquiera de esto, a menos que tuviera el deber elemental de responder al discurso de Obama en el Gran Teatro de La Habana Alicia Alonso.

No intentaré tampoco dar detalles, solo enfatizar que allí se escribió una página honrosa de la lucha por la liberación del ser humano. De cierta forma yo deseaba que la conducta de Obama fuese correcta. Su origen humilde y su inteligencia natural eran evidentes. Mandela estaba preso de por vida y se había convertido en un gigante de la lucha por la dignidad humana. Un día llegó a mis manos una copia del libro en que se narra parte de la vida de Mandela y joh, sorpresa!: estaba prologado por Barack Obama. Lo ojeé rápidamente. Era increíble el tamaño de la minúscula letra de Mandela precisando datos. Vale la pena haber conocido hombres como aquel.

Sobre el episodio de Sudafrica debo señalar otra experiencia. Yo estaba realmente interesado en conocer más detalles sobre la forma en que los sudafricanos habían adquirido las armas nucleares. Solo tenía la información muy precisa de que no pasaban de 10 o 12 bombas. Una fuente segura sería el profesor e investigador Piero Gleijeses, quien había redactado el texto de “Misiones en conflicto: La Habana, Washington y África 1959-1976”; un trabajo excelente. Yo sabía que él era la fuente más segura de lo ocurrido y así se lo comuniqué; me respondió que él no había hablado más del

asunto, porque en el texto había respondido a las preguntas del compañero Jorge Risquet, quien había sido embajador o colaborador cubano en Angola, muy amigo suyo. Localicé a Risquet; ya en otras importantes ocupaciones estaba terminando un curso del que le faltaban varias semanas. Esa tarea coincidió con un viaje bastante reciente de Piero a nuestro país; le había advertido a este que Risquet tenía ya algunos años y su salud no era óptima. A los pocos días ocurrió lo que yo temía. Risquet empeoró y falleció. Cuando Piero llegó no había nada que hacer excepto promesas, pero ya yo había logrado información sobre lo que se relacionaba con esa arma y la ayuda que Sudafrica racista había recibido de Reagan e Israel.

No sé qué tendrá que decir ahora Obama sobre esta historia. Ignoro qué sabía o no, aunque es muy dudoso que no supiera absolutamente nada. Mi modesta sugerencia es que reflexione y no trate ahora de elaborar teorías sobre la política cubana.

Hay una cuestión importante:

Obama pronunció un discurso en el que utiliza las palabras más almibaradas para expresar: “Es hora ya de olvidarnos del pasado, dejemos el pasado, miremos el futuro, mirémoslo juntos, un futuro de esperanza. Y no va a ser fácil, va a haber retos, y a esos vamos a darle tiempo; pero mi estadía aquí me da más esperanzas de lo que podemos hacer juntos como amigos, como familia, como vecinos, juntos”.

Se supone que cada uno de nosotros corría el riesgo de un infarto al escuchar estas palabras del Presidente de Estados Unidos. Tras un bloqueo despiadado que ha durado ya casi 60 años, y los que han muerto en los ataques mercenarios a barcos y puertos cubanos, un avión de línea repleto de pasajeros hecho estallar en pleno vuelo, invasiones mercenarias, múltiples actos de violencia y de fuerza?

Nadie se haga la ilusión de que el pueblo de este noble y abnegado país renunciará a la gloria y los derechos, y a la riqueza espiritual que ha ganado con el desarrollo de la educación, la ciencia y la cultura.

Advierto además que somos capaces de producir los alimentos y las riquezas materiales que necesitamos con el esfuerzo y la inteligencia de nuestro pueblo. No necesitamos que el imperio nos regale nada. Nuestros esfuerzos serán legales y pacíficos, porque es nuestro compromiso con la paz y la fraternidad de todos los seres humanos que vivimos en este planeta.

Fidel Castro Ruz

Marzo 27 de 2016

Obama in Cuba: How “Political Prisoners” Made the Media Headlines

*By Arnold August**

In the course of President Obama’s visit to Cuba on March 20–22, 2016, the issue of supposed Cuban “political prisoners” took centre stage in Cuba–US relations for at least 24 hours in much of the international mainstream media.

The sets of international foreign television outlets were situated on a floor of the emblematic Lonja del Comercio (the fully renovated former Stock Exchange in pre-revolutionary Cuba) overlooking Old Havana.

A cacophony of phrases from the reporters about political prisoners emanated from the sets. It seemed that “Obama in Cuba” had become equated with “political prisoners.” The only exception appeared to be TeleSUR, based in Caracas, Venezuela.

How did this come about? In the joint press conference offered by Presidents Raúl Castro and Barack Obama on March 21, Obama stated in reference to the discussions with the Cuban government:

“...as we do wherever we go around the world, I made it clear that the United States will continue to speak up on behalf of democracy, including the right of the Cuban people to decide their own future. We’ll speak out on behalf of universal human rights, including freedom of speech, and assembly, and religion.”

The tone of the US President’s remarks, couched in a very diplomatic speech, was not overtly hostile and did not contain accusations as such against the Cuban government. There was no mention of political prisoners.



One can say, as indeed Obama himself stated, that this is the basic narrative of the US when dealing with some countries. However, the haughty White House-lecture to Cuba on democracy and human rights, as many Cuban colleagues justifiably consider it to be, are based on the exclusive notions held by the US of democracy and human rights. They are often directed to some Third World countries on a very arbitrary basis with varying emphasis and priority depending on the affinity of these countries to US foreign policy.

After the presentations by the two heads of state in the joint press conference, the floor was opened to questions from the large number of international and Cuban journalists. Obama immediately recognized the source of the first query: Jim Acosta, the Senior White House Correspondent for CNN. As Acosta indicated in his introduction to his question directed to Raúl Castro, he is a Cuban-American whose parents left Cuba.

Such a prelude may serve as credentials, in the eyes of a reporter, to ask any question. This would allow for the ensuing interrogation to be carried out despite the reporter’s virtually non-existent knowledge about Cuba, which has been circumscribed by his deeply ingrained preconceived US views of Cuba.

Obama completed his remarks in this way, according to the official White House transcript:

“Muchas gracias. Thank you very much.

First question, Jim Acosta.”

Acosta addressed his first question to Barack Obama, and then asked Raúl Castro:

“And, President Castro, my father is Cuban. He left for the United States when he was young. Do you see a new and democratic direction for your country? And why [do] you

have Cuban political prisoners? And why don’t you release them?”

Response by President Castro:
“Give me the list of political prisoners and I



will release them immediately. Just mention a list. What political prisoners? Give me a name or names. After this meeting is over, you can give me a list of political prisoners. And if we have those political prisoners, they will be released before tonight ends.”

This question and response then immediately travelled virtually around the globe as headline news, but centred mainly on the US as the protagonist of Cuba. The airwaves were jammed with this controversy. The issue of political prisoners completely dominated international conglomerate news on Cuba for at least 24 hours.

Obama did not have to mention political prisoners, which would have been considered by both the White House and the Cuban government a breach of protocol and diplomatic behind-closed-doors negotiations and exchanges – which is a positive feature of the new Cuba–US relations. Conveniently for the President, the CNN Senior White House Correspondent raised the question for him. However, by Obama’s body language and the look on his face, he seemed to be very satisfied with the question.

Does this mean that it took place as a result of collaboration between the White House and Acosta? Obama and Acosta know each other very well. The CNN correspondent’s role not only brings him regularly to the White House, but has also called for him to travel with the President on many occasions

around the globe. Despite this intimate relationship, however, there is no need for them to carry out any conspiratorial agreement.

Noam Chomsky analyzed this dynamic many years ago in his groundbreaking book *Manufacturing Consent*, based mainly on the study of the US media. He pointed out that mainstream monopoly media are guided by:

“...the selection of right-thinking personnel and by the editors’ and working journalists’ internalization of priorities and definitions of news-worthiness that conform to the institution’s policy.”

These journalists know exactly what to ask in press conferences, what to write and what to broadcast in order to not only maintain their jobs as correspondents, but also to climb the ladder toward ever more lucrative income and prestigious positions. For example, had Acosta asked the US President – in the multitude of news conferences at the White House touching on a wide variety of issues – about the hundreds of political prisoners in the US, would he have even been around to travel to Havana with the President? If Acosta had had this gumption and interest in human rights as practised in the US, he would not even have been “selected” – in Chomsky’s words – in the first place.

In an earlier article, I wrote about Secretary of State John Kerry’s visit to Cuba on August 14, 2015 to officially hoist the US flag in front of the reopened US Embassy as part of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the US and Cuba. One of CNN’s most prestigious anchors, Jake Tapper, was sent to Cuba to cover the event. The article exposes how virtually all the television reports consisted of little more than a litany of buzzwords about Cuba being a “dictatorship” and the “Castro brothers’ tyranny.” This was, of course, amplified and repeated by other anchors in the US-based CNN headquarters in their treatment of this event.

In all fairness, however, one has to admit that not all CNN reporters deal with Cuba

with such flagrant media disinformation that borders on hysteria. For example, Chris Cuomo, a high-ranking CNN anchor, is the brother of the current Governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo. Governor Cuomo recently visited Cuba as the head of a high-ranking political and business delegation. He thus has good and respectful relations with the Cuban government. When CNN’s Chris Cuomo covered Pope Francis’s visit to Cuba in February 2016, the rants by his CNN colleagues against the Cuba government and “the Castros” were not at all present. Cuomo was also part of the large delegation of CNN reporters covering the Obama visit. We can perhaps examine his reporting on another occasion. However, suffice it to write for the moment that he wore a traditional Cuban guayabera shirt, given to his father by Fidel Castro.

As for Acosta’s role in Havana in March 2016 and other similar situations that



unfortunately seem to be a main feature of CNN, what can one conclude? Primarily the relationship between CNN and the White House can be thought of as not that CNN has a senior correspondent in the White House, but rather that the White House has a trusted correspondent at CNN. This is a very strange situation for a country that lectures others about the need for “independent press and journalists.”

With regard to political prisoners, it seems that no journalist – to the knowledge of this writer – has yet taken up Raúl Castro’s challenge to furnish facts to back up Acosta’s accusations. Given that the media war being waged by the US against the Cuban people is an ongoing news story, we can expect there will be more to say on the matter.

*Originally published in The Citizen, India.
www.thecitizen.in*

**Arnold August, a Canadian journalist and lecturer, is the author of Democracy in Cuba and the 1997–98 Elections and, more recently, Cuba and Its Neighbours: Democracy in Motion.*

*Follow Arnold August on Twitter:
@Arnold_August*

The Newspaper of
FIRE THIS TIME
MOVEMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
www.firethistime.net
Volume 10 Issue 4
April 2016
Published Monthly

Political Editor:

Ali Yerevani - editorftt@mail.com @aliyerevani

Editorial Board:

Tamara Hansen, Aaron Mercredi, Alison Bodine, Nita Palmer, Janine Solanki, Thomas Davies, Ali Yerevani

Layout & Design:

Azza Rojbi, Noah Fine, Tamara Hansen, Ali Yerevani, Max Tennant, Sarah Alwell, Lien Gange, Thomas Davies

Copy Editors:

Tamara Hansen, Nita Palmer

Publicity & Distribution Coordinator:

Thomas Davies

Production Manager:

Azza Rojbi

Contributors to this Issue:

Macarena Cataldo, Sanam Soltanzadeh, Manuel Yepe Arnold August, Noah Fine

Contact:

Phone - (778) 938-1557

Email - firethistimecanada@yandex.com

Mail - PO Box 21607 Vancouver BC, V5L 5G3

Subscriptions

For a one year subscription outside the lower mainland, make cheques payable to “Nita Palmer” (Canada \$15, USA \$20, International \$30) Send to: PO Box 21607 Vancouver BC, V5L 5G3

Distribution

For Fire This Time in your area across BC, Canada, and Internationally contact Publicity and Distribution Coordinator *Thomas Davies*
Phone : (778) 889-7664

Submissions & Suggestions

We welcome articles, letters, unsolicited submissions, and suggestions. However, we cannot promise publication. Submissions and suggestions can be made by email by contacting firethistimecanada@yandex.com fax, or regular mail. Submissions will not be returned.

The opinions expressed in the newspaper are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent those of Fire This Time.

Donations

If you find Fire This Time to be an effective tool in the struggle of oppressed people for justice, more than ever, we need your support. On top of our regular costs of production, we regularly send members of our editorial board on assignment throughout North America, the Caribbean and beyond in order to make Fire This Time a better resource. These efforts have strained our finances.

If you would like to help with a donation, please make cheques payable to “Nita Palmer”.

Fire This Time is an independent newspaper and publishing Fire This Time could not be possible without the generous contributions from our supporters.

Reprint Policy

Reprinting of articles from Fire This Time by progressive media is welcomed, with source credit to the author and Fire This Time Newspaper. All other media or institutions must request permission

Advertisement Policy

Fire This Time does not accept commercial ads. Ads in this paper are political ads and Fire This Time makes no profit off of these ads. The presence of ads are solely for political purposes.

Fire This Time Newspaper is written, produced and distributed entirely by volunteer labour

-ISSN-1712-1817-

Seattle Cuba Solidarity Conference a Great Success!

Miguel Fraga, First Secretary of the Cuban Embassy in Washington D.C. tours the U.S. West Coast



Miguel Fraga speaks at El Centro de la Raza in Seattle. Photo: Bill Hackwell

by Azza Rojbi



Seattle School of Law. Photo: Bill Hackwell



Vancouver VCSC Coordinator Tamara Hansen speaks at Seattle School of Law.

On the morning of December 17, 2014 the governments of Cuba and the United States announced the re-establishing of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Since then a number of steps have been taken towards “normalizing” relations. The Cuban flag flies proudly at the newly re-opened Cuban Embassy in Washington, D.C. and we witnessed the loosening of some trade and travel restrictions between the two countries.

Miguel Fraga, the First Secretary of the newly re-established Cuban Embassy in Washington, D.C. has been traveling throughout the U.S. Speaking about Cuba’s achievements and the future of U.S./Cuba relations. From March 2nd to 6th, 2016, Miguel Fraga spoke at nine different events during his four-day visit in Seattle. This was the first time a Cuban diplomat visited Seattle since the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial meeting in 1999. The Seattle tour was organized by the Seattle Cuba Friendship

Committee.

Secretary Fraga’s began his tour on Thursday March 3rd with a community reception and presentation at Pinchot University on the topic of business and trade with Cuba. The following day he spoke at a packed room of 200 students and staff at the Seattle Central College.

Later that evening 120 people joined together in El Centro de la Raza for the opening of the photographic exhibit entitled, “The Cuban 5 Return: An Entire Country Celebrates.” Organizers with Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade-Vancouver (FCAB-Van) drove across the border earlier that day to join friends and co-fighters in Seattle on this important celebration of the freedom of the Cuban Five. Participants heard moving words from first Secretary Fraga and exhibition curator Bill Hackwell about the importance of

this historic victory and the return of the Cuban Five Heroes to Cuba. The Cuban five were anti-terrorists fighters sent to Florida to investigate terrorist activities against Cuba and unjustly held in U.S. jails for 16 years. They were released on December 17th, 2014 as part of the thaw in U.S./Cuba relations. The exhibition showcased a compilation of 53 photographs of the Cuban Five with the people of Cuba and their families upon their return to the island. The beautiful evening ended with people gathering for a potluck and enjoying informal conversations while viewing the photos.

An all day conference on Cuba in Seattle University

The VCSC and FCAB-Vancouver delegation to Seattle grow strong when two car loads of Cuba supporters from Vancouver drove up to Seattle on the following day to participate in the all day conference titled, “Imagining New Paths for U.S. Cuba Relations”.

The conference took place at the Seattle University Law School and was sponsored by the Seattle/Cuba Friendship Committee, US Women and Cuba Collaboration, National Lawyers Guild, Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, Legacy of Equality, Leadership and Organizing, and the Seattle University departments of Latin American Studies, Global African Studies, School of Law, Center for Global Justice, Women and Gender Studies, and Center for the Study of Justice in Society.

The conference was opened and welcomed by Dr. Victoria Kill, a faculty member at Seattle University. Soon after, panelists took to the front of the room for the first workshop of the day titled, “A Taste of What the Cuban Revolution can Offer the U.S.” Presenters included Tamara Hansen – Coordinator of VCSC and author of the book, “5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution: The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership” and editor of the book “Cuba’s Health Care System. Where Humanity Comes First” published by Battle of Ideas Press, Carlos Dominguez – International Community Health Services Holly Park Medical & Dental Clinic Manager, and Angela Gilliam – professor emeritus at Evergreen State College.

Following the first workshop participants were treated to beautiful poetry by Seattle University professor and poet Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs. The energetic crowd soon joined Gabriella in singing the chorus of the famous Cuban song,

“Guantanamo”.

It is with this powerful and passionate poetry and words that the crowd welcomed to the stage Miguel Fraga, the First Secretary of the Cuban Embassy, for the keynote address of the day.

Miguel gave a very comprehensive presentation on the history of Cuba/U.S. relations and the amazing gains and achievements of Cuba despite the 55-years-long unjust U.S. blockade on the island.

Fraga spoke on the importance of the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the U.S. and how both nations would benefit from normalizing relations and restoring trade between the two countries.

He emphasized that in order to move forward with normalization it is essential that the U.S. lift its blockade on Cuba, return the territory of Guantanamo Bay to Cuba and stop intervening in the internal affairs of Cuba. Miguel said that between 1996 and 2014, the U.S. spent \$264 million to fund “democracy efforts,” in Cuba. These programs continues today as \$20 million is allocated for “democracy planning for Cuba” in the Department of State and USAID 2016 Budget.

Miguel also spoke about Cuba’s friendly relationships with other countries around the world. He referred to the United Nations General Assembly vote on October 27, 2015 condemning the U.S. blockade on Cuba, where 192 countries voted in favour and only 2 opposed (the U.S. and Israel).

“We are proud of our foreign policy.” Miguel said. He also added that today Cuba has more than 50,000 health-care workers completing missions in 68 countries, half of whom are doctors. Over the years, more than 325,000 healthcare workers have completed 580,000 international missions including in Africa, Haiti, Pakistan and other Latin American countries.

At the end of his presentation, Miguel Fraga received a standing ovation. Before breaking for lunch, attendees had the opportunity to participate in a discussion period with Miguel moderated by Garry Owens of LELO.

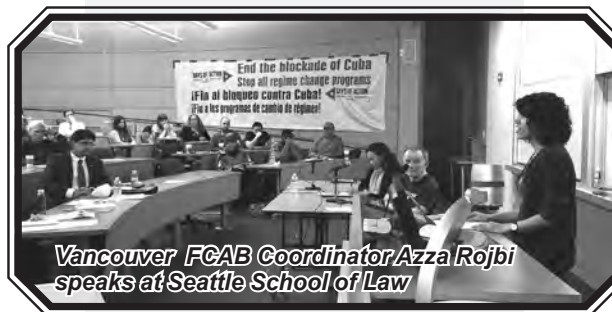
The next workshop was, “The Law of the US Embargo of Cuba, and the Potential for Changing it”. The workshop

was presented by 3 panelists; Martha Schmidt from the National Lawyers Guild, Bill Hackwell from the International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity, and 7th District Congressman Jim McDermott.

The final workshop of the day was, “Building Local Links and Solidarity with Cuba”. Participants had the opportunity to hear from John Waller – Secretary of the Seattle/Cuba Friendship Committee, Cindy Domingo – Chair of U.S. Women and Cuba Collaboration and Azza Rojbi – young Tunisian social justice activist and coordinator of Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade-Vancouver, Canada. Panelists



*San Francisco State University
Photo: Bill Hackwell*



*Vancouver FCAB Coordinator Azza Rojbi
speaks at Seattle School of Law*

spoke on their experiences working in the Cuba solidarity movement in the U.S. and Canada and the importance to build on Miguel’s visit to continue educating and organising against the U.S. blockade and for the return of Guantanamo Bay. Azza also emphasized on the importance of working in unity to build a strong U.S./Canada cross border solidarity campaign with Cuba.

Throughout the day, more than 100 people participated in the conference, with diversity of ages and ethnic background. Some came to learn about Cuba for the first time, while others were long time supporters of Cuba.

On Sunday March 6th, Miguel wrapped up his successful Seattle speaking tour with an event at the New Hope Missionary Baptist Church where he spoke on the new U.S./Cuba relations and the possibilities of agriculture trade and cooperation between the two countries.

First Secretary of the Cuban Embassy in D.C. visits Northern California

Miguel Fraga carried his positive message about revolutionary Cuba to a speaking tour in Northern California. Throughout his tour Miguel spoke about U.S./Cuba relations to eager audiences at different community and university events. He also visited the California State Senate in Sacramento and met State lawmakers as well as other elected officials.

This represented the first time in more than 50 years that a Cuban diplomat visited the California State Senate. The San Francisco Bay Area tour was organised by the International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity.

Before heading back to Washington D.C., First Secretary Fraga spoke on March 12th, at a packed room in San Francisco’s Mission District. The event was organized by ANSWER Coalition, Cuba and Venezuela Solidarity Committee and Bay Area Latin American Solidarity Coalition. At the event San Francisco Board of Supervisors representative John Avalos presented Secretary Fraga with a Proclamation signed by all 11 Supervisors in support of normalizing relations with Cuba, an end to the U.S. blockade, and lifting the ban on U.S. citizens traveling to Cuba.

This successful West Coast tour by Miguel Fraga brought together community organizations, colleges, university, labour organizations and elected officials to learn more about Cuba and unite in demanding an end to the unjust U.S. blockade on Cuba! Let’s make these connections a bridge to building a strong West Coast solidarity campaign with Cuba between the U.S. and Canada. We are fighting alongside our Cuban co-fighters and the Cuban 5 heroes in our new battle to defend Cuba’s right for self determination and sovereignty.

*Follow Azza Rojbi on Twitter:
@Azza_R14*

Declaración de la Federación de Mujeres Cubanas por visita de Obama a Cuba

Con la hospitalidad y dignidad que nos caracteriza, las cubanas, como parte de todo nuestro pueblo, recibiremos al presidente de Estados Unidos Barack Obama y a su esposa Michelle. Estamos conscientes de que esta visita forma parte del complejo proceso para alcanzar la normalización de las relaciones entre nuestros dos gobiernos. Será, por tanto, una oportunidad para mostrarles lo que hemos logrado en cuanto a igualdad de género y el protagonismo que tenemos las mujeres en la vida política, económica, cultural y social en nuestro país.

En su visita podrán constatar que percibimos igual salario por trabajo de igual valor, que nueve de las quince provincias cubanas tienen al frente del gobierno a una mujer, que la administración de justicia está también mayoritariamente en manos femeninas. En cada lugar que recorran se encontrarán con el trabajo abnegado de mujeres de todas las generaciones.

Constatarán cómo amamos a nuestra patria libre e independiente, a la que hemos defendido de agresiones de todo tipo. Con creatividad y consagración hemos resistido más de medio siglo de bloqueo económico, financiero y comercial, y hemos construido una sociedad donde los seres humanos son lo más importante. En esos valores de solidaridad, antimperialismo y soberanía nacional hemos educado a nuestros hijos e hijas. A ello no renunciaremos jamás.

Agrupadas en la Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, una organización no gubernamental de la sociedad civil —con estatus consultivo ante el Consejo Económico y Social de Naciones Unidas (ECOSOC)—, y de la que hoy forman parte más de 4 millones de cubanas, alrededor del 90 % de las mujeres mayores de 14 años, llevamos adelante programas específicos para desarrollar en nuestro país una plena cultura de la igualdad y la inclusión social. Muchas de las metas del objetivo 5, de la recién aprobada Agenda para el Desarrollo Sostenible 2030, consagrado a lograr la igualdad entre los géneros y empoderar a todas las mujeres y las niñas, son una realidad en nuestro país.

Conocemos que la señora Michelle Obama lleva adelante una importante iniciativa llamada “Let Girls Learn” con el objetivo de dar acceso a la educación a 62 millones de niñas en todo el mundo. Le ofrecemos nuestra humilde experiencia en este campo pues el 100 por ciento de nuestras niñas asisten a la escuela independientemente del lugar donde vivan, el color de su piel, si tienen alguna discapacidad o están hospitalizadas. Una cubana, Leonela Relys Díaz creó el método “Yo sí puedo” con el que se han alfabetizado millones de personas en el mundo.

De igual manera, será también una oportunidad para reiterar nuestra demanda de cesar con la inhumana política del Bloqueo contra nuestro país, que ha provocado múltiples privaciones, y nos ha impedido desarrollarnos aún más.

La Federación de Mujeres Cubanas apoya, además, las declaraciones de nuestro gobierno donde reclama el cese de la ocupación del territorio de la base naval de Guantánamo, de la Ley de Ajuste Cubano y la política de pies secos, pies mojados y la eliminación de los programas injerencistas dirigidos a provocar la desestabilización interna. Estas políticas atentan contra la seguridad y tranquilidad de nuestras familias.

En estos días cobran más vigencia que nunca para todas las federadas, las palabras de la Presidenta por siempre de nuestra organización, Vilma Espín: “Socialismo para las mujeres cubanas significa libertad, independencia, soberanía, dignidad, justicia social, seguridad para la formación y desarrollo de los hijos, derecho a la igualdad, a la vida, a decidir el propio destino, a trabajar por el porvenir soñado y defenderlo con todas las fuerzas”.

15 marzo 2016

Statement by the Federation of Cuban Women on Obama's Visit to Cuba

With the hospitality and dignity that characterizes us Cuban women, just as all of our people, we will receive the President of the United States, Barack Obama, and his wife Michelle. We are aware that this visit is part of the complex process to normalize relations between our two governments. It will, therefore, be an opportunity to demonstrate what we have achieved in terms of gender equality and the leading role that women occupy in the political, economic, cultural and social life of our country.

During their visit, they will note that we receive equal pay for equal work, that local governments in nine of the fifteen Cuban provinces are headed by women, that the administration of justice is also mostly in female hands. In each place they tour they will discover the selfless efforts of women of all generations.

They will witness just how much we love our free and independent country, which we have defended from attacks of all kinds. With creativity and dedication, we have resisted more than half a century of economic, financial and commercial blockade, and we have built a society where human beings are the most important factor. We have educated our children in these values of solidarity, anti-imperialism and national sovereignty. We will never renounce such values.

Gathered together in the Federation of Cuban Women, a non-governmental civil society organization - with consultative status with the

United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) -, which today brings together more than 4 million Cuban women, about 90% of women over 14 years of age, we carry out specific programs to develop an entire culture of equality and social inclusion in our country. Many of the objectives outlined in Goal 5 of the recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, dedicated to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, are a reality in our country.

We know that Michelle Obama is carrying out a major initiative called “Let Girls Learn”, with the aim of providing access to education to 62 million girls around the world. We offer our humble experience in this field, since one hundred percent of our girls attend school regardless of where they live, the color of their skin, whether they have a disability or are hospitalized. A Cuban, Leonela Relys Díaz, created the “Yes, I Can” method, with which millions of people worldwide have learned to read and write.

Similarly, it will also be an opportunity to reiterate our demand to cease the inhuman policy of blockade against our country, which has led to multiple deprivations, and prevented us from further development.

The Federation of Cuban Women also supports the statements of our government, which demands an end to the occupation of the territory of the Guantánamo naval base, the Cuban Adjustment Act and the “wet-foot-dry-foot” policy, and the elimination of interventionist programs aimed at provoking internal destabilization. These policies threaten the security and tranquility of our families.

During the coming days, the words of the eternal President of our organization, Vilma Espín, are more relevant than ever for all FMC members: “Socialism for Cuban women means freedom, independence, sovereignty, dignity, social justice, security for the education and development of their children, the right to equality, to life, to decide their own destiny, to work for the future dreamed of and defended with all forces.”

March 15, 2016



Vancouver Protest Calls for an End to the U.S. Blockade on Cuba!

By Alison Bodine

On the eve of U.S. President Barack Obama's visit to Cuba, March 17, 2015 Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB-Vancouver) held their 7th consecutive monthly action to demand an immediate end to the U.S. blockade on Cuba and the return of Guantanamo. Loud chanting of “End the Blockade on Cuba Now!” and “Abajo el Bloqueo!” could be heard all along the busy street, as supporters of Cuba raised Cuban flags and their voices for an end to the over 55 year-old U.S. policy that has cost the Cuban economy over 1.1 trillion dollars since it was first implemented.



The protest, held at the base of the U.S. Consulate in Downtown Vancouver, was emceed by Azza Rojbi, co-coordinator of FCAB-Vancouver. Throughout the protest, the significance of the visit of President Obama, the first U.S. President to

travel to Cuba in 88 years, was reflected in the speeches that were given by solidarity activists at the protest, each of whom focused on a different aspect of the record of U.S. attacks on the Cuban Revolution. Speakers at the picket included, Nino Pagliccia, editor of the book “Cuba Solidarity in Canada: Five Decades of People-to-People Foreign Relations,” Alison Bodine, from the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign and Tamara Hansen, the Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). There was also a special guest joining this month's protest, a long-time social justice activist and organizer with the Seattle/Cuba Friendship Association, Jim McMahan. The Vancouver protest also received a message of solidarity from organizers with Ottawa Cuba Connections, which organizes a protest at the U.S. Embassy, also on the 17th of each month in coordination with Vancouver.

During U.S. President Obama's time in Cuba, Cuban President Raul Castro made it very clear when he said, “The blockade is the most significant impediment for the development of the Cuban people, that is why its elimination is essential for the normalization of relations.” Today, relations between the U.S. and Cuba are still anything but “normal.” Cuba supporters around the world must use this occasion to increase our campaign in solidarity with Cuba and unite around the world to make our demand clear that we want an immediate end to the cruel U.S. Blockade and the immediate return of Guantánamo Bay to Cuba!

For photos of this protest, and other FCAB-Vancouver actions, as well as updates and analysis on U.S./Cuba relations visit their website at www.vancouverblockade.org.

Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver invites you to join them for the next monthly picket action, on Sunday April 17th 4pm at the U.S. Consulate in downtown Vancouver to demand:

- End the Blockade on Cuba Now!
- Return Guantanamo to Cuba Now!
- U.S. Government Stop the Campaign of ‘Regime Change’ in Cuba and Immediately Stop Interfering in Cuba’s Sovereignty Self-Determination!

By Alison Bodine

On Friday March 11, 2016 peace-loving people came out into the streets of Vancouver, Canada to demand “U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!” at a protest organized by the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign. Supporters of Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution marched and chanted loudly in front of the U.S. Consulate in solidarity with the people of Venezuela.

This protest was organized in response to escalating U.S. attacks on Venezuela, including U.S. President Obama's renewal of the Executive Order declaring Venezuela to be an “extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.” As the MC of the protest, Alison Bodine also explained, the Vancouver action was also organized in solidarity with the people of Venezuela who held powerful mass mobilizations on Saturday March 12th against escalating right-wing attacks and U.S. intervention in Venezuela.

Also participating in the program of the protest was Gloria La Riva, Coordinator of the Cuba and Venezuela Solidarity Committee, based in San Francisco, the United States. She phoned in to the protest with words of solidarity with Venezuela and a strong condemnation of the record of the U.S. government's attacks on Venezuelan people

Vancouver Echoes the Call of Venezuela: Obama Repeal the Executive Order Now! U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!

and other Latin American countries.

To close the protest at the U.S. Consulate, Azza Rojbi, the co-coordinator of Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver read a statement from the revolutionary government of Cuba in support of Venezuela against the Executive Order and U.S. sanctions.

Supporters of Venezuela continued with chanting “Obama, Obama repeal the Decree Now! Obama, Obama End the Sanctions Now!” as they headed up to the busy downtown Vancouver Art Gallery for a public outreach and petitioning event for Venezuela. After



decorating the square in front of the Art Gallery with Venezuelan flags and banners, activists began asking people to sign a new petition demanding “U.S. Hands Off Venezuela.” People passing by also got information about Venezuela and the gains of the Bolivarian Revolution, including the important social missions and gains made for poor and working people, women and youth in Venezuela since 1999 under the leadership of late Comandante Chavez and now continued with President Maduro.

Since December, 2015 the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign has organized four protest events and days of public outreach for Venezuela. The next action is taking place on Tuesday, April 19, which is an international day of action in solidarity with Venezuela with coordinated actions in over 40 countries around the world. On this day, April 19, 2016, people in Vancouver will once again be rallying at the U.S. Consulate at 4pm and then heading to the Vancouver Art Gallery for petitioning and handing out information about U.S. intervention in Venezuela and the gains of the Bolivarian Revolution from 5:30-7pm.

- Obama Repeal the Decree Now!
- U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!
- Long Live the Bolivarian Revolution!

¡Venceremos!

We Will Win!



Ecuador Makes Important Strides for LGBTI People

March 27, 2016 (teleSUR English)

Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa highlighted Saturday the many strides made in favor of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) peoples in the country and said his government was ready to fulfill many more commitments.

Over the recent period the government approved same-sex unions and a gender identity law that allows Ecuadoreans to state their gender identity instead of the sex assigned at birth.

A recent labor reform also made it illegal for employers to discriminate against people due to their sexual orientation. The government has also been cracking down on illegal “gay treatment centers” where LGBTI people undergo, against their will, “treatments” meant to change their sexual orientation.

These changes came as a result of high-level meetings between government officials and representatives of LGBTI communities.

The Correa government has held five such meetings since 2013, the most recent having taken place last Monday, which have translated into a series of changes benefiting these communities.

Correa himself participated in Monday’s meeting, which also included several government ministers, such as the Coordinating Minister for Social Development Gabriela Rosero, Health Minister Margarita Guervara, Justice Minister Ledy Zuñiga, and the head of the political secretariat, Paola Pabon.

President Correa announced that the government had made a series of new commitments as a result of the most recent meeting.

Specifically he said the government would seek to change regulation for elections in 2017 so that people may line-up to vote according to the gender they identify with, instead of the sex assigned at birth.

The government will also further promote anti-bullying programs inside schools and work so to promote education in LGBTI communities to ensure the participation rate is consistent with figures nation-wide.

Hundreds of educational institutions in the country already count on student counseling on LGBTI-related issues. The government will also provide trainings for public officials on the human rights of LGBTI people.

Correa said that an inter-institutional working group would be created to address hate crimes against LGBTI people. Ecuador already has a specialized team for investigating crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Half a million infants to receive polio vaccine in upcoming campaign

March 24, 2016 (Cubadebate)

Since February 26, 1962, to date, 85 million doses of polio vaccine have been administered in Cuba, making the country the first in Latin America to eradicate this devastating childhood disease

The entire population under 68 years of age has been protected, according to Dr. Marlén Valcárcel, director of the Ministry of Public Health's (Minsap) National Immunization Program, reported ACN, with children under three years of age being immunized initially as infants, plus a subsequent booster.

The doctor reported that during the second stage of the 55th national campaign, March 28 through April 3, a second dose of the vaccine will be administered orally to almost half a million children, 372,856 under the age of three.

Cuba Awards Venezuela’s Nicolas Maduro Maximum National Order

March 18, 2016 (teleSUR English)

Cuba has awarded Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro one of the Caribbean country’s highest honors, the Maximum National Order.

Maduro was in Cuba on Friday to accept the award, named after Cuban revolutionary Jose Marti.

“Our union comes from love, brotherhood, identity, from two peoples with heroic histories,” Maduro said on receiving the award.

“This award is truly for the heroic people of Venezuela, who have battled, and who do not give in.”

Cuba and Venezuela have a long history of solidarity, with joint projects like Miracle Mission, to cure blindness, and Mission Barrio Adentro, bringing thousands of Cuban doctors to Venezuela.

Vancouver Prepares for the 2016 Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade to Cuba!

By Alison Bodine

On Saturday March 19th a piece of the spirit of Cuba came to Vancouver with an event promoting the 24th Ernesto Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade. The evening, co-organized by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB – Vancouver) invited people in the Lower Mainland to come and hear about the annual work brigade, which is a project of the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC).



Through music, photos and stories from past 'Brigadistas' participants got a great idea of what the Che Brigade is all about - travel, volunteering as well as a great opportunity to learn about Cuban society and the dynamics of the Cuban revolution. Musical performances at the event included the folk musician and peace activist Thomas P Radcliffe and the soulful duo Sangre Morena. After hearing people's favorite experiences and memories from the Brigade, nearly every hand in the room went up when the MC of the event, coordinator of VCSC Tamara Hansen, asked "Who wants to go to Cuba?!"

Although some people in the audience registered that night, the best part is that it is still not too late to join this unique trip! For two full weeks in Cuba, from April 28th – May 11th, 2016 the volunteer work brigade combines volunteer work with cultural, social, economic and political encounters visiting different cities across the island. As well, the Brigade will participate in Havana's powerful May Day parade. For more information about joining this year, contact the BC Coordinators, Tamara Hansen at (778) 882-5223 or Thomas Davies at (778) 889-7664 and visit the website: www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/brigade

GERARDO HERNANDEZ FORMER POLITICAL PRISONER FOR OVER 16 YEARS IN U.S. PRISON Speaks in Vancouver



On Tuesday April 12, 2016 Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and other organizations from across the city are proud to welcome **Gerardo Hernández**, one of the Cuban 5 formerly held in U.S. prisons to Vancouver!

Gerardo Hernández was a leader of the Cuban 5 sent to Miami, Florida to investigate terrorist activities against Cuba. In September 1998, Gerardo, Rene, Ramon, Antonio and Fernando, also known as the Cuban 5, were arrested and held for 18 months in solitary confinement in the United States. Eventually they were charged and found guilty of trumped up charges such as, conspiracy to commit espionage and conspiracy to commit murder. Gerardo was given the most sever sentence, double-life. The United States wanted Gerardo live his life and eventually die in U.S. prison.

Meanwhile in Cuba and around the world people rose up to demand the freedom of these political prisoners held in U.S. jails. Gerardo was finally released and returned to Cuba on December 17, 2014 as part of the thaw in U.S./Cuba relations. He spent over 16 years unjustly held in United States jail.

During those 16 years Gerardo was also prevented from seeing his wife, Adriana Perez, who was repeatedly denied a visa to visit the United States. Today Gerardo and the Cuban 5 are all living freely in Cuba for just over a year. He is living happily with his wife, Adriana and their baby daughter, Gema.

Join us Tuesday April 12, 2016 at the Main Branch of the Vancouver Public Library at 6pm for an exhibit of Gerardo's cartoons and other artwork dedicated to the Cuban 5. Then at 7pm Gerardo Hernández will speak, along with Javier Domokos, the Cuban Consul General of Toronto and Wilfredo Pérez, the Venezuelan Consul General of Vancouver. It will be a beautiful evening of art, poetry, solidarity and celebration as we welcome Gerardo to our city!

Want to Travel to CUBA!?

JOIN THE 2016 CHE GUEVARA VOLUNTEER WORK BRIGADE TO CUBA!

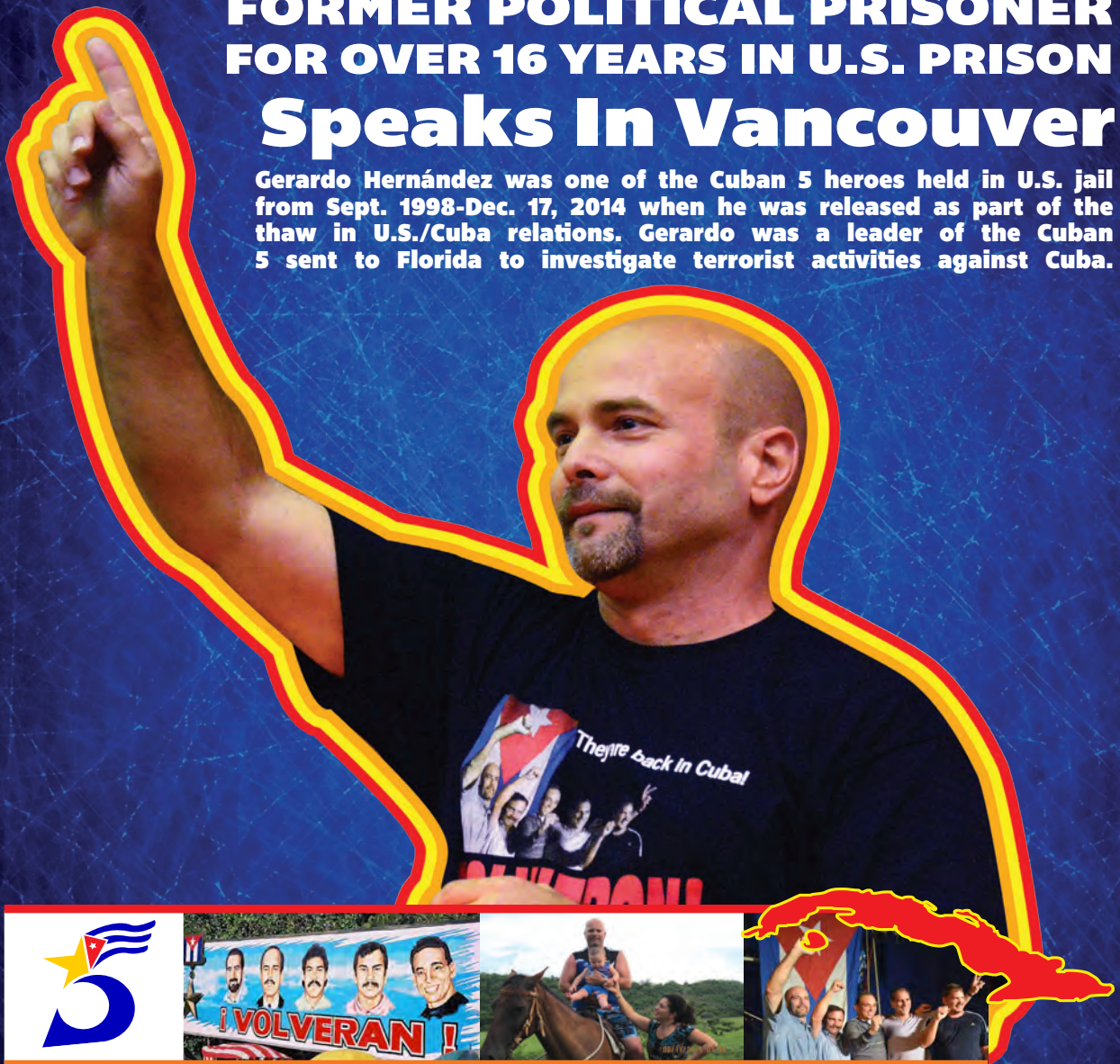
Adventure • Volunteering • Fun
(& a whole lot of dancing!)

To register contact BC Brigade Coordinators
Tamara Hansen 778-882-5223 and
Thomas Davies 778-889-7664
www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/brigade

GERARDO HERNÁNDEZ

**FORMER POLITICAL PRISONER
FOR OVER 16 YEARS IN U.S. PRISON
Speaks In Vancouver**

Gerardo Hernández was one of the Cuban 5 heroes held in U.S. jail from Sept. 1998-Dec. 17, 2014 when he was released as part of the thaw in U.S./Cuba relations. Gerardo was a leader of the Cuban 5 sent to Florida to investigate terrorist activities against Cuba.



TUESDAY APRIL 12
VANCOUVER PUBLIC LIBRARY
350 W. GEORGIA ST

6 PM photo & art exhibit
7 PM speaking event

WWW.VANCUBASOLIDARITY.COM