

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



Fire This Time!

VANCOUVER & CANADA WELCOME CUBAN HERO

ONE OF THE CUBAN 5
POLITICAL PRISONERS HELD IN
U.S. JAIL FOR OVER 16 YEARS

GERARDO HERNÁNDEZ!



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U.S. WIDENING MILITARY INTERVENTION IN SYRIA

By Nita Palmer

For the past five years, the people of Syria have been battling for their country and for their lives. Since 2011, the country has been torn apart by a so-called ‘civil war’ between the Syrian government and opposition forces and terrorist organizations supported by the US and their allies. Four hundred and seventy thousand people have died (Syrian Centre for Policy Research), and nearly half the country’s citizens have been forced to flee their homes. Over six million are refugees within Syria, still facing the horrors of war, while more than three million others have fled to squalid refugee camps in neighbouring countries or have joined the exodus to Europe. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has called this “the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era”.

A Regressive Transformation

Just a few short years ago, Syria was one of the most developed countries the Middle East. Syrians had a life expectancy comparable with that of many developed countries, and health care and education systems which were some of the most advanced in the region. Today, life expectancy has plummeted from 76 to 56 years of age, according to the UN. More than 40% of the country’s hospitals have been destroyed or are inoperative, as has 90% of its pharmaceutical industry, which once provided many important medicines for Syrians (The Independent, 2013). Thousands of doctors have fled the country, and remaining hospitals and clinics are overburdened with war wounded. Thousands are now dying of treatable conditions due to the shortage

of doctors and medicines, with children and the elderly facing the highest risk. As well, the destruction of sanitation systems has caused an outbreak of diseases such as typhoid and hepatitis, which until now were things of the past.

Syria’s education system has been destroyed as well, with less than 50% of Syrian children able to attend school. Many have already missed several years of schooling. Save The Children reports that Syria now has the second worst rate of school attendance in the world – a drastic drop from an almost 100% enrollment rate before the war. This crisis will impact Syria for years to come, with future generations of doctors, teachers, engineers and other professionals set years behind in education, if they are even able to complete their schooling.

In addition to these horrors of war, many Syrians are living under the reign of terror of Daesh (ISIS/ISIL). Those living in Daesh-controlled areas of the country are in many cases not even receiving basic aid from international organizations, as groups such as Medcins Sans Frontieres have removed their staff over concerns for their safety.

Civil War or Proxy War?

The current crisis in Syria has been called a ‘civil war’. The West has blamed the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad for the crisis, labelling Assad as a brutal dictator who is trying to crush any opposition.

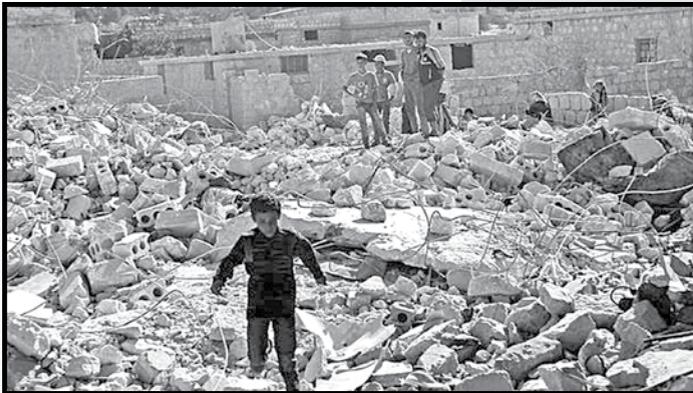
However, from the very beginning this was not simply an internal conflict within the country. The US has been creating and fuelling the war by arming and supporting factions in the country who are opposed to the Syrian government and President Assad.

Although the \$500 million Pentagon program to support and train the so-called ‘moderate rebels’ was cancelled last year, the New York Times reported in October 2015 that the CIA was still carrying out ‘significantly larger’ programs to arm anti-government forces, including supplying them with anti-tank missiles.

Of course, many of the ‘moderate rebels’ that the US supports are not moderate at all. US allies Turkey and Saudi Arabia have openly supported the al-Nusra front – a group with close ties to al-Qaeda. The Independent reported last year on French intelligence reports which revealed that the US had been deliberately avoiding carrying out air strikes against Daesh when they might endanger fighters from the al-Nusra Front.

The US policy of supporting any group which opposed President Assad regardless of their ideology resulted in the inevitable rise of Daesh, which currently controls nearly half the country. In fact, a leaked Pentagon document from 2012 reveals that the US ruling establishment was fully aware of the likelihood of an ultra-conservative Salafist terrorist organization such as Daesh coming to rise.

“If the situation unravels, there is a possibility of establishing a declared or undeclared Salafist principality in Eastern Syria... and this is exactly what the supporting powers to the opposition want in order to isolate the Syrian regime...” the document states. Of course, the US was at the time and continues to be one of the ‘supporting powers to the opposition’, along with Canada, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and other US allies.



Resulting wreckage following U.S. airstrike in Kfredrian. Idlib province, Syria

US Expands Direct Intervention

After five years of fomenting this war which allowed Daesh to gain strength, the US has now announced that they will be intervening directly to stop the monster which they have created. On April 25, US President Obama announced the deployment of an additional 250 US Special Forces troops to Syria, increasing the total official number of US soldiers in the country to 300. The announcement came despite earlier promises from Obama that there would be no US 'boots on the ground' in the fight against Daesh in Syria. The deployment of these troops comes in addition to airstrikes against Daesh targets which the US and their allies (including Canada) have been carrying out since 2014.

Officially, US forces will not be involved in direct combat against Daesh, but will be there to 'train, advise, and assist' rebel forces who are fighting the terrorist group as well as the Syrian government. However, many longtime US military veterans have pointed out that there is little practical difference between 'special forces' and 'combat forces'.

This deployment of troops was condemned by the Syrian government

as an act of aggression and 'a blatant violation of Syrian sovereignty'. Indeed, these troops are not there to defeat Daesh – that would be an impossible task for just 250 soldiers. The troops have been sent to Syria to lay the groundwork for further direct intervention by the US, and ultimately a full scale military intervention.

What is the US Goal in Syria if Not to Defeat Daesh?

The primary goal of the US government in Syria has never been to defeat Daesh. Before Daesh became established in Syria, the US had its sights set on getting rid of the independent Syrian government and President Assad, as well as to destabilize the country and allow for ongoing intervention. This pattern has been repeated throughout the Middle East and North Africa over the last decade – in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and beyond. US opposition to the Syrian government was never a question of 'defending human rights' – look at the human rights crisis which has been created by the US support for their 'moderate rebels'! The problem with the Syrian government for the US is its status as an independent government which has not allied itself with the United States. Their intervention in Syria – as well as in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the region – is part of their plan to regain control over important and profitable trade markets as well as get a strategic upper hand over rising economic powers such as Russia and China.

What is the Solution?

A resolution to the crisis and internal divisions in Syria cannot come without first defeating the brutal terrorists

like Daesh and al-Nusra Front. This can only be accomplished through a military campaign coordinated with the Syrian government. By aiding the 'rebels' and demanding the removal of President Assad, the US is destabilizing the country further and creating a vacuum of power which will allow even greater space for Daesh and al-Nusra to expand their influence. The US and their allies should remove all troops from the country immediately and cease air strikes. The people of Syria and the Syrian government must be allowed to determine their own future and with whom they will form an alliance to defeat the terrorists.

If we want to help the Syrian people and stop the expansion of these brutal terrorist groups, we must demand an end to imperialist interventions and US-backed terrorism in their country.

**No War on Syria!
US Out of Syria 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.

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Have you heard of



Attawapiskat?

By Tamara Hansen

If you are someone who has lived in Canada most of your life, or lived in Canada for the last two decades, I am curious to know when was the first time you heard of Attawapiskat? For those who might have never been to Canada or arrived here more recently, have you heard of a place called Attawapiskat?

I ask because I remember the first time I heard about Attawapiskat. I have lived in Canada all of my life, but it wasn't until I was taking a course on Aboriginal Education in University that I heard of the first nation community in Northern Ontario about 1,800 people called Attawapiskat. It was during a group presentation, they showed a short 10 minute youtube video about a community fighting for a new school for their young people. The video began with pictures of children from Attawapiskat whose elementary school had been contaminated since the 70s by a diesel tank spill. In 2000 parents, frustrated by the lack of government action, pulled their children from the school which was a toxic environment and causing many health problems. So began what would become a 14 year long fight to convince the government of Canada to build the community a new school. The video I was shown was not new, it had been on the web for months, but I had never heard of Attawapiskat or their fight for something as simple as an



From the youtube video about the fight for an elementary school for Attawapiskat

elementary school for their children. The video was really inspiring in terms of seeing a community coming together for a cause as just and important as education. It was also infuriating because of the government of Canada's attempts to shift the blame onto the shoulders of the community and justify the government's continued inaction.

Attawapiskat in the news

But the reason I ask if you have heard of Attawapiskat, is that in the last 10 years, this small community of around 1,800 people has made the national news for declaring 5 different states of emergency: the water crisis, the sewage crisis, the housing crisis, the flooding crisis, and now, most recently, the youth suicide crisis. Yet with all of this attention, many people in Canada have still never heard of Attawapiskat. While the government of Canada condemns other countries for 'human rights' violations,, and we hear about it in the news frequently, many people in Canada remain unaware of the violations of human rights taking place in our own backyard, here in Canada.

This April, Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day was featured on CBC news. The host began the interview by asking the chief, "This is a problem across this country, but Attawapiskat really made headlines about a week ago because it declared a state on emergency after 11 people attempted to take their own lives in one night. Twenty-eight people tried in the whole month of March, what do you make of that?"

Chief Isadore Day responded, "Well this is clearly the boiling up of colonialism like never before. What we are dealing with here are two main root causes. One is the Indian residential schools and multi-generational issues, and the other is the Indian Act."

On April 27, 2016 Canada's new Prime

Minister Justin Trudeau met with young aboriginal people in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and took their questions. He had a different perspective on the problems and the solutions. According to a CBC article on the visit a young woman asked, "How do you, Justin, with all your politicians and representatives plan to right the wrongs of the past 22 elected prime ministers?" Interestingly Trudeau responded with comments such as, "What we have to start doing is recognizing, first and foremost, that the federal government can't fix this," and "Yes, the federal government has a lot of work to do but Indigenous Canadians have a lot of work to do as well, and doing it together in the same direction is going to be how we get through it." According to the CBC article "Trudeau said that actions taken by successive Canadian governments went "horribly wrong in its consequences," despite some "very well meaning" intentions."

This is a departure from the campaigning Justin Trudeau who has said he wanted a "transformational change" in the way the government of Canada works with Aboriginal people and promised to work with Indigenous people on a "nation-to-nation" basis. Now he is telling Indigenous people that "Indigenous Canadians have a lot of work to do as well" What does that mean? Have they just been sitting on their hands this whole time? Have they been out to lunch while their communities slowly fall apart? These remarks might be more condescending to Indigenous people than the politicians that believed that all Indigenous people were "wards of the state". Indigenous people have been petitioning, letter writing, protesting, and moving and shaking their communities for their rights since the days of the Europeans' first arrival, to Tecumseh, Pitikwahanapiwiwin (Chief Poundmaker), Mistahi-maskwa (Chief Big Bear) and Louis Riel. Why does Trudeau say "Indigenous Canadians have a lot of work to do as well"? Because of the many challenges that have arisen because of the government of Canada's unjust and criminal policies? Or is Ontario Regional Chief Isadore more correct when he boiled down the surface problems to the roots: the Indian Residential schools and the Indian Act? What were some of the "very well meaning" decisions the government of Canada has made in terms of its policy with Indigenous people? The Residential schools which were designed to "kill the Indian in the child"? Or the Indian Act which made status Indians wards of the state?

We don't actually have to go decades back into history to find rampant inequality and racial bias by the government of Canada against Indigenous people. In fact this week on April 26, 2016 the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal demanded the Trudeau government's immediate action on the panel's landmark child welfare ruling. In January 2016, the tribunal ruled that the government discriminated against First Nations children on

racial grounds in its failure to provide the same level of welfare services on reserve, that exist in Canada for other communities. According to a Canadian Press article, “In the scathing order released Tuesday, the tribunal gave the Indigenous Affairs Department two weeks to confirm it has implemented Jordan’s Principle — a policy designed to ensure First Nations children can access services without getting caught in red tape.” So maybe Mr. Trudeau should work on fixing the government’s unjust and unequal policies before telling Indigenous people that they need to do their share. If equality doesn’t even exist on paper in Canada’s laws and budgets, how will it ever exist in reality?

Looking for Hope & Solutions

In an article for McLean’s magazine author Joseph Boyden wrote a moving piece dedicated to his friends and loved-ones in Attawapiskat during this current suicide crisis. He took the opportunity to ask many questions and also share his perspective, “So why the insanely high suicide rates among our Indigenous youth, especially in northern communities? Why are our Indigenous women four times more likely than any other female population in this country to be murdered? Why such high addiction and physical and mental health issues in so many of our communities? Is it because our Indigenous peoples are somehow lesser? Somehow not well enough equipped for contemporary life? Are our Indigenous people somehow less smart, less motivated, less well-equipped genetically or socially? Do we really need to move south to cities from our remote communities? Of course not. Intergenerational trauma is real and alive in communities deeply affected by residential schools. You can’t attempt cultural genocide for 140 years, for seven generations—the last of these schools closing their doors in 1996—and not expect some very real fallout from that. Attawapiskat is a brutal example.” This is an important statement because it reminds everyone that Residential Schools are not an old issue of past generations. This is not something people can just “get over”. This is an ongoing and building crisis that the government of Canada and non-Indigenous people in Canada have been avoiding in a real way. Not only that, but why do non-Indigenous people have unreasonable and unnatural expectations for Indigenous people, without ever trying to understand the core issues?

For example, one of the first things you hear from non-native people is, ‘if things are so bad they should just leave the reserve’. However, a February 2014 article from the Globe and Mail newspaper titled, “Attawapiskat: Four things to help understand the suicide crisis”



April 2016, Vigils for hope in Attawapiskat

explains the problem with urban resettlement schemes, explaining, “Indigenous suicide problems do not disappear in cities, however. A Statistics Canada report released in January found that more than one in five off-reserve First Nations, Métis and Inuit adults reported having suicidal thoughts at some point in their lives. Problems with suicide on reserve can be more acute, though, due to challenges of distance and availability of mental-health services. Charlie Angus, the MP for the Attawapiskat area and NDP indigenous affairs critic, said northern communities aren’t given the resources to deal with complicated grief. “When a young person tries to commit suicide in any suburban school, they send in the resources, they send in the emergency team. There’s a standard protocol for response. The northern communities are left on their own,” he said. “We don’t have the mental health service dollars. We don’t have the resources.” So again I ask Mr. Trudeau what exactly are you saying when you make statements like, “Indigenous Canadians have a lot of work to do as well”?

In the same CBC interview with Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day, the host also interviewed CAMH psychiatrist Cornelia Wieman. She was asked about some ways to address the current epidemic of suicides in Indigenous communities, like Attawapiskat. She explains, “There has already been a lot of work done in this field. The recommendations around First Nations suicide have been laid out in multiple reports. But the major areas are: increasing what we know about First Nations’ suicide, so that’s research and knowledge; but also includes sharing knowledge of what is going well in some communities with the communities that are in distress. The other ones are developing holistic mental health

services, supporting community development initiatives, and most importantly I think, fostering a strong sense of identity as an Indigenous young person in contemporary times.” The reports are written and the findings are in. Canada needs to invest more money for health services for Aboriginal communities on and off reserve. Canada needs to invest in properly trained and culturally understanding medical professionals who are willing to work in a challenging and stressful environment. Doesn’t seem like rocket science does it?

Government of Canada is the problem, the people are the solution

Trudeau has promised to work with Indigenous people in Canada on a “nation-to-nation” basis in a spirit of “respect, openness and collaboration.” What does this mean? That the government of Canada will treat First Nations as sovereign entities, and no longer as the children or “wards” of the government of Canada. But that seems like a bare minimum, not really ‘transformational’. What about the fact that they have not respected the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal’s ruling to provide equal funding for aboriginal youth living on reserves, doesn’t equal funding for programs for all children in Canada no matter their race or place of birth seem like a bare minimum, not a ‘transformational’ change? It seems the Trudeau government is headed for more of the same broken promises and same path of asking Indigenous people to do more for themselves, while not only continuing to treat Indigenous people as lesser than non-Indigenous people in Canada, but refusing to recognize their special status as the first peoples of this territory.

Now you know about Attawapiskat. Now you know about some of the deep rooted causes of these problems and the role the government has played until now and continues to play. In some ways Mr. Trudeau is right, “the federal government can’t fix this”, that is why the crisis has only gotten deeper over the years. It is only when Indigenous people have control over their own lands, resources and communities that they will be able to overcome this quagmire created by the government’s racist and unjust policies. Now is the time for the people of Canada, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, to stand together and demand the government respect the Indigenous people of this land and their right to self-determination.

*Follow Tamara Hansen on Twitter:
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WHY FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE CAN'T 'JUST MOVE'

By Drew Hayden Taylor*

The northern Ontario community of Attawapiskat is only too familiar with its own unique brands of tragedy: flooding, chronic housing shortages, government disregard, flagrant misspelling of its name, and now a frighteningly high rate of suicide and suicide attempts amongst its youth. It would be enough to break their hearts, if their hearts weren't so strong. Next to follow: the barrage of unsympathetic questions that often attend these types of calamities, usually by puzzled southern non-native individuals — or as we like to call them in this politically correct age, people of pallor. *Why don't you just move?*

Native people get questions like this all the time. During the time of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, I can't tell you how often I heard people who've lived childhoods unencumbered by a steady diet of Manifest Destiny ask, in serious baffled frustration, "Why don't you people just get over it?" *Get over it?* It's not a wall, people!

Before those questions was the always-popular "What do you people really want?" I would answer with "Well, stop killing our women, and stealing our children and that would be a good beginning!"

Prior to that, it all started with "Would you mind signing here?"

Admit it: you yourself have likely wondered why the Attawapiskatians (or the Attawapiskatites) don't just roll up their blankets, hop a bus and fry their bannock somewhere else upriver. Scott Gilmore of Maclean's has thought about it. Walrus Magazine editor-in-chief Jonathan Kay has considered it. Even former Prime Minister Jean Chretien has suggested it.



Youth in Attawapiskat

Well, it's not that easy. It's a complex issue not solved by a simple change in geography. There's a certain connection to land and environment. A community like this has a little more heart and soul than an apartment.

Unlike most people who ask these unfortunate questions, I've been to Attawapiskat and it's actually a beautiful community. I've talked to their children. I've toured the neighbourhood. I have also been around the world and seen far worse places. I can't blame them for not necessarily wanting to move.

I'm sure you'll remember the famous story of Randall Truman, the man who lived at the foot of Mount St. Helens when he was told the mountain might just possibly blow up. Told this repeatedly, Truman refused to move, regardless of the threat. This was his home, and he died with it. Okay: maybe not the best example, but never underestimate a person's or people's connection to their home, regardless of the dangers. Consider that the Cree of Attawapiskat historically used to be nomadic, following caribou and other game, as the need arose.

That is, until they met other nomadic, non-native people who felt it their mission to travel the world telling people like the Cree they can no longer be nomadic,

under penalty of law. These same formerly nomadic people from across the ocean would later relocate the children of these Canadian people to other faraway places. Past experience has also taught Canada's Indigenous people that once they have been relocated, these same non-native people (we call them colour-challenged) usually find whacks of fur, gas, diamonds or Aeroplan miles buried somewhere in the vicinities they once called home. Five hundred years of colonization has given First Nations people a learned aversion to forced relocation.

As to the question of finding some place better: where is it better? I suppose they could go to Calgary — but that place

has a history of flooding. What about Vancouver? No, I've heard the housing situation there is almost as bad as in Attawapiskat. The grass may always be greener but it could be crabgrass and poison ivy, too. With ticks.

People need to understand that the problems in Attawapiskat and other northern communities run deeper than simply location. What needs to be dealt with first are the issues infecting these people's lives that spring from hundreds of years of colonization and the paternalistic treatment they've received from government. Social malaise doesn't come with a street address. It comes with history.

Why don't they move? Here's a counter question. Why don't you move? In case you weren't aware, there were quite probably suicides, drug issues, environmental problems and general matters of social unrest where you currently fry your eggs and practise your yoga. Cree communities are not RV parks, ready to uproot at a moment's notice.

**Drew Hayden Taylor is an award-winning playwright and novelist from the Curve Lake First Nation near Peterborough, Ont.*

Reprinted from: www.tvoo.org

PEOPLE IN CANADA WELCOME CUBAN 5 HERO GERARDO HERNÁNDEZ!

By Noah Fine

From April 3-April 15 2016, Hero of the Republic of Cuba and former Cuban 5 political prisoner, Gerardo Hernández made a tour to a number of cities in Canada including Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver and Nanaimo. His travel to Canada was initially upon invitation from the United Steel Workers (USW) union for their annual convention, which took place in Montreal. However Gerardo alongside the rest of the 5 Cuban Heroes knew very well that Canada has many important and long time defenders of freedom of the Cuban 5 especially in Vancouver where the Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver had organized 110 monthly protests in front of the U.S. Consulate demanding freedom for the Cuban 5. Gerardo knew that if he had the ability to travel to Canada it would be an important opportunity to meet with the friends of the Cuban 5 who during their 16 years of unjust imprisonment in the U.S. struggled in the international movement to achieve their freedom.

Who are Gerardo Hernández and the 5 Cuban Heroes?

Gerardo Hernández was a leader of the Cuban 5 sent to Miami, Florida to investigate terrorist activities against Cuba. In September 1998, Gerardo, René, Ramón, 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 false charges such as, 'conspiracy to commit espionage' and 'conspiracy to commit murder'. Gerardo was given the most severe sentence, double-life plus 15 years. The United States wanted Gerardo to live his life and eventually die in a 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 have been all living freely in Cuba for over a year. He is living happily with his wife, Adriana and their baby daughter, Gema.

The Presence of Gerardo is Our Continuity!

Gerardo's visit to Canada was of significant importance. Not only did he come here to meet and thank all of the long-time supporters of the Cuban 5 but he also came with a special message which you will notice as a theme in the follow-



ing reports about his trip here: The necessity to end the cruel and inhuman U.S. blockade against Cuba.

Although Cuba and the U.S. are moving forward in many aspects of the more than 50-year U.S. imposed freeze of relations between the two countries, the most important factors of the U.S. criminal policy against Cuba are still very much in place, the U.S. Blockade & the illegal occupation of Guantánamo Bay. Gerardo's message was simply that the job of Cuba's friends is not over, that now more than ever friendship with Cuba is critical and a strong, consistent and united campaign to lift the U.S. blockade and give Guantánamo back to Cuba are necessary.

The following section of this issue of Fire This Time Newspaper is an accumulation of reports from the very successful visit of revolutionary hero Gerardo Hernández to Canada concluding in the transcript of the entire speech made by Gerardo to more than 250 participants at the Vancouver Public Library made on April 12, 2016.



5 Cuban Heroes together in Cuba!



Gerardo & Family in Cuba

EVENTS ACROSS CANADA FEATURE GERARDO HERNÁNDEZ!



Gerardo Hernández meets the Mayor of Fort Erie



Toronto, April 3, 2016. The Hero of the Republic of Cuba, Gerardo Hernández visited the cities of Niagara Falls and Fort Erie as part of his tour in Canada, allowing him to thank the local solidarity movement for all the years of efforts as part of the international campaign for the release of the Cuban Five.

Accompanied by several executives of the Cuba - Canada Friendship Association in the region, Gerardo was received by Fort Erie Mayor, Wayne Redekop, whom he recognized the several years of support to the Cuba solidarity groups in the area. The meeting took place in a fraternal and informal atmosphere, where both parties were able to exchange on topics of interest.

Accompanied by the Consul General of Cuba in Toronto, Javier Dómkos Ruiz, Gerardo could update in the exchanges on the major challenges facing Cuba today, mainly regarding the need to lift the US blockade against Cuba and the return of the Guantanamo Naval Base.

Gerardo Hernandez participates today in the Convention of the United Steelworkers taking place in the city of Montreal. Then he will travel to Ottawa and Vancouver to participate in events organized by the movement of solidarity with Cuba in Canada.

Reprinted from: Consulate General of Cuba-Toronto



USW 2016 National Policy Conference Passes Resolution against U.S. Blockade on Cuba

Ottawa, April 12, 2016. Last week, Canada's United Steelworkers National Policy Conference passed a resolution condemning U.S. blockade against Cuba, with the presence of Cuban Hero Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, one of the Cuban 5 formerly held in U.S. prisons.

Hernández Nordelo, who had been invited to attend the 53rd USW National Policy Conference, addressed the delegates at the closing ceremony and thanked, on behalf of his comrades, Canadian steelworkers for their commitment and support to the international campaign to free the Cuban Five. Gerardo gave an account of the reasons leading these five Cuban young men to prevent Florida-based terrorist groups from carrying out other actions against their country which have caused so many deaths and suffering to the Cuban people for more than five decades.

The United Steelworkers is the largest private trade union in North America with more than 225,000 members in Canada. It had a very active participation in the international campaign to free the Cuban Five antiterrorists, which was one of its international policy priorities.

Besides attending the USW National Policy Conference, Gerardo Hernández is also visiting many Canadian cities as a way to show his gratitude to thousands of people in Canada who contributed to his freedom and that of his comrades.

Reprinted from: Embassy of Cuba in Canada



Montreal

Montreal, April 5. Gerardo Hernández Nordelo arrived in the city of Montreal yesterday night. Gerardo has been invited to attend working sessions of the Canadian Steel Workers Congress where he will hold several meetings with steel workers and union leaders.

The Cuban hero is expected to meet with some friends of Cuba, members of the Cuba Solidarity movement, as well as with a large number of Quebecers who added their voices to the fight for the freedom of the Cuban Five. Gerardo's visit also includes a keynote speech and some press interviews.

On the last day of his visit Gerardo will hold talks with officials of the Kahnawake First Nation Reserve, southwest of Montreal Island.

Gerardo Hernández was welcome at the Montreal airport by members of the Cuban state mission in this city. Reprinted from: Cuban Consul General-Montreal

EVENTS ACROSS CANADA FEATURE GERARDO HERNÁNDEZ!



Toronto

Toronto April 3rd, 2016. Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, one of the Cuban Five and Hero of the Republic of Cuba, arrived this Sunday to Canada as part of an invitation to participate in the Convention of the Steelworkers Union in Montreal. Solidarity groups, friends and Cubans living abroad welcomed Gerardo at Toronto airport with signs and Cuban flags.

In the afternoon the Cuban Hero participated in a public event at the historic Steelworkers Hall in Toronto. Jorge Garcia -Orgales, from United Steelworkers addressed the audience with the opening remarks. The labour activist Heide Trampus read a message sent to Gerardo from the US National Network on Cuba. Different speakers such as the lawyer Juan Carranza, who acted as MC, Pablo Godoy, national representative for the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), Miguel Figueroa, from the Communist Party of Canada, Liz Hill, President of the CCFA-Toronto, and Brian Gordon Sinclair, writer and actor, thanked Gerardo for being an example and for showing what convictions are about. Lisa Makarchuk recalled the beginning of the struggle for the Cuban Five and all those who are no longer with us. Councilor Joe Mihnev presented a Certificate to Gerardo on behalf of the city and stressed the values represented by the Cuban Five.

Consul General of Cuba, Javier Dómkos Ruiz, presented a message from the Cuban Ambassador Julio Garmendia Peña and introduced to Gerardo the diversity of the solidarity movement towards the freedom of the Cuban Five in Canada. The Cuban diplomat stressed the values of the Cuban Hero as a revolutionary, as a father, as a son and as a husband. In his speech, Gerardo Hernández on behalf of his four brothers and their families thanked the support and the hard work of the solidarity movement towards their release. He also explained that there are new battles concerning the lifting of the US blockade, the return of the territory illegally occupied by the Guantanamo Naval Base. The Cuban Hero stressed that the Cuban Revolution has not renounced to any of its principles and will continue with its longstanding solidarity with the just causes.

There were standing ovations during the speech and heartfelt messages of support and solidarity with the Cuban Revolution from an audience that surpassed the 300 people present.

Gerardo Hernandez Nordelo will also visit the cities of Montreal, Ottawa and Vancouver to participate in public events organized by the solidarity movement.

Reprinted from: Consulate General of Cuba-Toronto



Ottawa

Ottawa, April 11, 2016. Over one hundred people gathered at the Cuban Embassy in Canada last Saturday to welcome Cuban Hero Gerardo Hernández Nordelo. Gerardo is visiting many Canadian cities as a way to express, on behalf of the Cuban 5, his gratitude to thousands of Canadians for their solidarity and commitment to their cause.

Gerardo, who addressed a clearly moved audience, told some stories of the tough times he and his four brothers had to go through since the very moment they were caught, during their time in maximum security prisons —where they were sent to punishment cells for long periods of time despite no misconduct—, until the day they were released.

The mere fact that he knew they were not alone, that thousands of people from around the globe supported their cause —rallying in front of U.S. embassies and consulates regardless of the weather and writing letters to American officials calling for their liberation, among many other actions— gave them the strength not to break during such an unjust imprisonment.

Gerardo exchanged some ideas with the attendees for more than two hours and took all kinds of questions. He made reference to the terrorist actions that had been planned and conducted by Miami-based terrorist groups which they had infiltrated. He talked about absurd incidents of their trial and shared his views on the process of normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States. Likewise, the Cuban Hero reiterated his willingness to serve his homeland and its people wherever needed.

On behalf of Ottawa-Cuba Connection Solidarity Group, Linda Dams, Joan Bishop, Maricarmen Guevara, Pagi Taylor and Bill Ryan, with an active participation in the Cuban Five's freedom campaign, thanked Gerardo for having shared his experiences and also for his strength of spirit and determination throughout the long struggle to secure their return to their homeland.

Finally, the Hero of the Republic of Cuba firmly stated that all friends of Cuba can still rely on its unchanging support and solidarity to all just causes of developing countries.

Members of the Latin American Diplomatic Corps, Cuban residents in Canada, as well as all Cuban Embassy officials, staff and their relatives attended the celebration.

Reprinted from: Embassy of Cuba in Canada

VANCOUVER & B.C. WELCOME CUBAN 5 HERO GERARDO HERNÁNDEZ!



Cuban Anti-terrorist Gerardo Hernández arrives in Vancouver



Vancouver, April 12, 2016. Cuban decorated Hero and anti-terrorist fighter Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, arrived yesterday in this Western Canadian city where he was warmly welcomed at the airport by a large group of Cuba solidarity activists.

Starting on April 3, Gerardo's visit included a meeting with the Board of Directors of the Hospital Employee's Union—a major healthcare trade union in British Columbia. The Union extended a cordial welcome to the Cuban guest at its main headquarters. Gerardo's speech of gratitude for Canadian trade union's solidarity with Cuba received rounds of applause.

Later, the Cuban Hero paid a visit to prominent lawyer and civil rights activist Tim Louis whom he thanked on behalf of his four brothers for the strong support to the international campaign to free the Cuban Five. Gerardo shared personal experiences of the time he was serving unjust sentences in U.S. prisons.

The program foresees a meeting at the city's public library tomorrow with over a hundred participants, including Cuba friends from Seattle, United States. This event has been organized by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade, among other organizations.

Reprinted from: Consulate General of Cuba-Toronto



Gerardo Hernández appreciates support of unions in B.C.

Vancouver, April 12, 2016. During his stay in this western Canadian city, the Hero of the Republic of Cuba, Gerardo Hernandez, expressed his eternal gratitude to Canadian unions for their participation in the international campaign for the release of the Five.

In meetings held separately with leaders of trade unions including the British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF), the Post-Secondary Educators Federation and the Hospital Employees Union, the Cuban anti-terrorist fighter launched an appeal to continue supporting the causes of the Cuban Revolution, especially demand the US government to lift the criminal blockade, while thanked on behalf of his four brothers and relatives of the Five for all the support received during the time unjust imprisonment.

Gerardo was honoured by the warm welcome he received from Victor Elkins President of the Hospital Employees' Union; Jim Iker, President of the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF); Teri Mooring, 1st Vice-President of the BCTF; George Davison, President of Federation of Post-Secondary Educators of BC (FPSE) and Terri Van Steinburg, Secretary-Treasurer of FPSE.

Reprinted from: Consulate General of Cuba-Toronto with additions by Noah Fine



Nanaimo

By Noah Fine

On Wednesday April 13, after concluding the previous evening a very successful event in Vancouver with more than 250 participants, Cuban 5 Hero Gerardo Hernández with friends from Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Block-

ade-Vancouver travelled by ferry to Nanaimo, BC where Gerardo and the Cuban 5 have enjoyed the support of many great friends of Cuba. More than 70 people packed into the conference room of the Nanaimo Harbourfront Public Library for a beautiful and intimate event with Gerardo.

Barbara Biley, Regional Vice-President for Vancouver Island of the Hospital Employees' Union (HEU) and member of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) opened the event as MC and welcomed Gerardo to Vancouver Island. She then welcomed amazing friend, Cuban 5 activist, and Nanaimo resident, Ruth Caspell who read touching sections of her

letters from her years of personal correspondence with Gerardo Hernandez while he was held in U.S. prison.

Following Ruth, Tamara Hansen, coordinator of VCSC gave a short overview of the success of Gerardo's visit to the province of British Columbia so far. She was then followed by incredible guest of honor Cuban 5 hero Gerardo Hernandez. Gerardo spoke about his experience during his more than 16 years of unjust incarceration and thanked the people of Nanaimo for their solidarity.

Audience members asked many questions to Gerardo some hearing about the case for the first time. The event wrapped up with a loud applause for Gerardo as audience members were invited to get signed copies of Gerardo's cartoons.

250+ PEOPLE JOIN IN TO HEAR CUBAN 5 HERO GERARDO HERNÁNDEZ IN VANCOUVER!



By Noah Fine

When the decorations were set and doors opened to the conference hall of the Vancouver Public Library, more than two hundred and fifty people made their way in to hear from Cuban revolutionary hero and former Cuban 5 political prisoner Gerardo Hernández.

The packed room was filled with energy and anticipation as participants walked through an exhibit of artwork made by Cuban 5 hero Gerardo Hernández while he spent more than 16 years unjustly held in U.S. prison. So many people wanted signed copies of his artwork that the beginning of the event program had to be delayed to ensure people could get their opportunity and even at that some had to wait till after the event.

Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) opened the evening as the MC, welcoming everyone and explaining what an honour it is for Vancouver to receive a visit from Javier Domokos, Cuban Consul General in Toronto and one of our 5 Cuban heroes, Gerardo Hernández. She then got the program started by inviting to the stage Coast Salish indigenous elder, Kelly White who sang the Women's Warrior Song before performing an aboriginal blanketing ceremony to welcome Gerardo to the unceded Coast Salish Territory.

Bob Chamberlin, elected Chief Councillor of the Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxw'mis First Nation & Vice President of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) spoke next bringing warm greetings to the event and explained many of the struggles facing Indigenous people in BC and Canada today.

Following Chief Chamberlin there was a cultural interlude in the program as 3 Poets from

Proyecto Cultural Sur, Lucy Ortiz, Alejandro Mujica-Olea and Frida Marzolina read poems dedicated to the Cuban 5 and other social justice struggles.

Many organizations were involved in helping to organize and support Gerardo's talk in Vancouver. These groups were given the opportunity to give greetings ahead of the main event. Greetings were brought from: ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War & End Racism) – Seattle, Charles Boylan on behalf of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), Katy LeRougetel on behalf of the Communist League in Vancouver, Thomas Davies on behalf of Fire This Time Newspaper, Cindy Domingo on behalf U.S. Women & Cuba Collaboration in Seattle, Garry Owens on behalf of LELO - Legacy of Equality, Leadership & Organizing in Seattle, Colleen Glynn on behalf of Richmond-Centre Federal New Democratic Party (NDP), Azza Rojbi & Noah Fine on behalf of Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver.

A very special and warm greeting was given by long-time supporter of Cuba and the Cuban 5, lawyer and former Vancouver City Counsellor, Tim Louis. Tim spoke about the inspiration he felt from the 5 Cuban Heroes to fight on in the struggle for a better world. Wilfredo Perez Bianco, Venezuelan Consul General in Vancouver spoke about the importance of the Cuban 5 heroes for the people of Venezuela, Cuba's sister nation which since the beginning of its' revolution has defended Cuba against U.S. hostility especially in the case of the 5 Cuban Heroes. Consul General Bianco also took the opportunity to thank the 5 Cuban Heroes and the people of Cuba for their ongoing and unwavering support of the Venezuelan Bolivarian Revolution.

Gerardo's speech, which is printed in its entirety in this issue of Fire This Time, brought

all of the more than 250 participants to their feet with huge emotion, applause and chants of "Viva los 5!" and "Viva Cuba!" Gerardo told stories of his time in prison and told how he was encouraged daily to continue the struggle for his freedom as he surrounded himself with photos of the international campaign, especially in Vancouver, demanding his freedom. The ovation continued as Tamara invited to the stage Nino Pagliccia, editor of the book "Cuba Solidarity in Canada: 5 decades of people to people foreign relations" to give a gift to Gerardo, a sweatshirt of a photo of Gerardo and his baby daughter Gema.

Tamara closed the event inviting everyone to get involved in Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and the campaign to end the U.S. blockade against Cuba and return Guantanamo Bay to Cuba, two of the main highlights from Gerardo's talk to Vancouver participants.

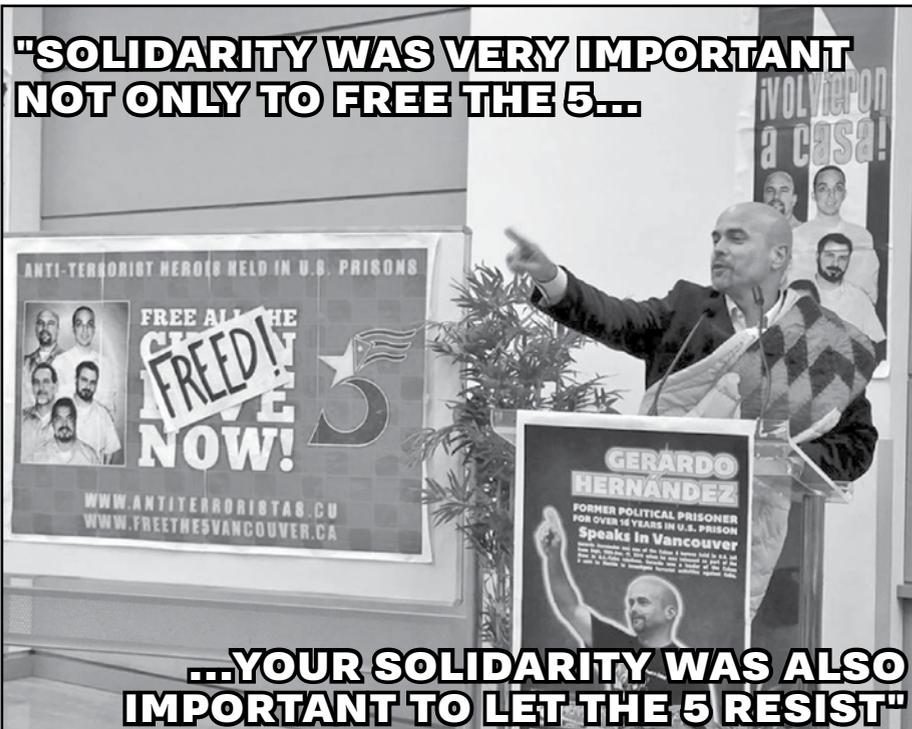
Gerardo made his difficult passage through the crowd at the event as supporters surrounded him trying to take photos and have their artwork signed. It was an emotional evening for all those who participated, especially after the great effort and campaign of many Vancouverites who joined some or all of the Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver's 110 monthly protests until the 5 Cuban Heroes were freed.

Organizers with Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba & Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB-Vancouver), thanked Gerardo for his amazing visit to BC with the gift of a one of a kind aboriginal wood carved eagle, which represents Honour, Friendship and Peace.

*Follow Noah Fine on Twitter:
@noahfine*



SPEECH BY CUBAN 5 HERO GERARDO HERNÁNDEZ IN VANCOUVER!



some of them came amazed and asked me:
- "hey, excuse me... I heard that you were in the war in Angola."

I said: "yeah."

- "It must have been difficult"

- I said "well, you know what, I have never seen people getting killed in Angola. I've seen so many people getting killed here in prison that it's unbelievable."

Of course we didn't talk about that with our families to not worry them. We didn't talk about that with anybody but people think because we were political prisoners, they put us in different places, not together with criminals. But, that's wrong. We had to share rooms with killers, and drug dealers and drug users, and we saw many people lose their lives. I remember one of the latest was when my young friend 32 years old. There are some comrades here from El Salvador, I remember Walter Hernandez, Salvadorian young guy, killed himself. I mention those names not only to remember them but also for you to know that I'm not creating stories when I tell you this. There was 16 years, and each year, 365 days by 24 hours that we had to resist inside there. And "how you did it?" People ask. Well, we did it because we were inspired and we drew strength from the example of the Cuban people, for the example of resistance and resilience of the Cuban people. But we also did it because of the example of friends and comrades like you that we knew were fighting out there for our freedom. And for that we thank you as well [applause].

The solidarity was very important not only to free the 5, your solidarity was also important to let the Five resist every single day and every single hour in prison. Thank you once again brothers and sisters.

Some people have said to me "well, we did what we could but at the end you're free, thanks to the negotiations." Don't make that mistake! There would have been no negotiation if we were 5 unknown people that nobody cared about. If there was a negotiation, it was because the US knew about Cuban 5, and we were getting uncomfortable for them. And it was because Cuba cares about the Cuban 5. And the Cuban people care about Cuban 5. And you, brothers and sisters, care about the Cuban 5. The empire knew that. Ask the people of the U.S. Consulate here if they knew about the Cuban 5. I guess when they heard we were released they're like "yay!" [crowd laughs] But guess what... the struggle goes on. And there's gonna be people there, because the same way I'm here tonight celebrating the freedom of Cuban 5 with you all, I

I feel so honored today because among the many things you could be doing tonight, you chose to be here with us. Thank you very much and thank you to those people that have been standing there for so long.

I was sitting there looking at this photo [points at photo of all the Cuban 5 together at concert in Havana], it was taken on December 20th, 2014. We had arrived to Cuba on the 17th, and Silvio Rodriguez had already planned a concert... big hand to Silvio [crowd applauds for Silvio]... Silvio already had planned a concert outside a Havana stadium, as part of a tour he was doing through the country, he didn't know, of course, that the 5 would be coming. When we found out about the concert, we said: "Let's go there!" so we were sitting there, and I can tell you, it was a very important and emotional moment for the Cuban people. You could feel the emotions there. We were sitting and then Silvio, called us up to be with him for a couple of songs. And if you see, I'm not looking down there, I'm looking way up because it was more than 50,000 people that day and many things crossed my mind in that moment. And you have to believe me if I tell you that in that moment you guys were in my mind as well [applause]. I knew that if I was living that beautiful moment, that happy moment it was thanks to the many efforts of friends like you that made it possible.

Remember, I was sitting in a maximum secu-

urity prison with 2 life sentences plus 15 years. And I only said that according to the word of the US government, I had to die twice and still have 15 years to go, but you changed those plans [crowd cheers]. You changed those plans. So thank you for being here tonight, It is a huge honor those wonderful words that I hear by the people who stood here before me, thank you all.

I know that being here tonight its not being with Gerardo Hernandez. I know that being here tonight is being with the Cuban people, being with the Cuban revolution and being with all the progressive forces in this world, they are the vanguards of this world and demonstrate, everyday, that a better world is possible. Thank you very much [cheers and applause].

I bring the message of gratitude and appreciation for my 4 brothers; Ramón, Antonio, René, Fernando. And I bring the gratitude of families. Many members of our families, or some of them came to Canada through the years. And all time they were here, they came back to Cuba very inspired and very hopeful because of the support that they received from you.

Now when you're sitting in a prison cell, serving 2 life sentences and you witness so many awful things as we saw in prison. I was telling a friend not long ago, that when the prisoners found out that I had been in the Angola war,

want to be one day here with you celebrating the end of the blockade against Cuba [cheers and applause]. I'm inviting myself! I'll be here on that day!

Remember what I told you, remember! And guess what... if one day, the blockade is lifted, we're going to have to continue the fight, so they won't put in place, any time, for no body, no more blockades! We cannot rest.

They've been talking about normalization now of the relation between Cuba and the US. But it's a long way to go. We cannot talk about normalization while the blockade is still in place [applause]. We cannot talk of normalization if Guantanamo is still illegally occupied by the US [applause]. We cannot talk about normalization if the US continues to spend millions of dollars in regime change plans or whatever they call it to subvert the Cuban government and the Cuban order [applause]. We cannot talk about normalization when the US doesn't compensate Cuba for the loss of lives and for all the economic damage of more than 50 years of blockade [applause].

So, there's a long way to go. But we are, of course, on the right path, because remember, some people have dared to say, our enemies of course, that Cuba is giving up because we are talking with the US. But you guys have good memories and I'm sure you remember the time when the US presidents, and Vice Presidents and Senators and congress people and candidates and many others, everybody used to say we have nothing to negotiate with Cuba if the Castro's are in power. We have nothing to talk to Cuba if the revolution is still in place. We have nothing to talk to Cuba if they don't renounce this and that, if they have only one party, if they don't make free elections with out our receipts and so on and so on. But guess what... none of that has happened! And they negotiated with Cuba! Whose victory is that!?! [cheers and applause]. Last time I checked, the president of Cuba is Raul Castro, and the leader of the Cuban revolution is still alive, Fidel Castro, so the Castro's are in power! [crowd shouts "Viva Fidel!", Viva Raul!].

And on the other hand, Cuba has been saying the same for more than 50 years; "we're willing to talk to anybody, we're willing to negotiate with anybody, but on the basis of mutual respect, from equal to equal. We're not second to anybody. We're a small country, but we are as sovereign and as independent as any country in the world. And you have to respect

that [applause]. And that's exactly what happened; we have not renounced one single of our principles. Of course we know there are dangers involved in all these processes and you can be sure that we Cubans are not naive. We know of all those dangers. There are risks involved. We believed that we are prepared to take those risks and you can be sure that we, Cubans, know very well who our real friends are! [cheers and applause]

We know very well how we like the Cuba of the future to be and not to be! We know where we want to get at. So you don't have to worry

a little more packed if the Americans go there, but there's room for everybody, so don't worry about it [crowd laughs].

We will never forget that when bombs were exploding in hotels, Canadians were there. They were not scared. When they were threatening people, with this and with that and wanted to depreciate the Cuban economy, Canadian people were there. When the US back in 1962 basically blackmailed the whole region and forced the whole region to break relations with Cuba, only Mexico and Canada where there. And Cubans never forget that.



Coast Salish elder Kelly White performs song and blanketing ceremony for Gerardo. April 12, 2016

about that. You can keep counting on the solidarity of the Cubans. You can keep counting on the revolutionaries in Cuba. We will never let our friends down. You can be sure of that, because of course, I don't have a crystal ball to tell you how the Cuba of the future will look, but I can assure you the 5 are not 5 people created in a laboratory, the 5 are not an experiment. There are many people in Cuba like the 5. And there are millions of people in Cuba willing to do whatever it takes so the Cuba of the future won't be like what many people in the US want. Maybe I shouldn't say many. They're not that many but they are the powerful ones because I know that the minority of their own people are aware that most Americans would like to have a normal relations with our country. And that applies to the minority of the Cubans living in that country. But there's a saying that the people who got the power, got the resources, that had all plans in mind. And they might see an opportunity to achieve through this new relationship what they haven't been able to achieve through 50 years of aggression and terrorism and blockade and so on. We know that. We are taken those risks because we trust in the Cuban people. And we ask you to trust in the Cuban people and the Cuban revolution. We know what we are doing. You don't have to worry. And that's right, maybe Havana will be

So, I thank you for this extraordinary opportunity you gave me tonight. I remember when I was sitting in prison that I received many, many letters from Canada, from Vancouver. I was telling some of you last night that I knew many of your faces that's why many friends sent me photos in the letters because I knew how encouraging it was for the 5 to see people picketing outside, to see people struggling outside for our freedom. So I hung those letters, right there on the wall of my cell. The

guards painted a square like this [Gerardo opens his hands 1 meter afar moving them to form a square] with different columns, just to teach us that there was the only place that we could post cards. And prisoners put the photos of their families, half naked women, all that you could imagine, but what I did was to fill that place with photos of friends around the world doing something for the 5. I got photos from London, from California, Seattle, Washington, and I certainly had photos from Vancouver there [crowd cheers and applause]. And I saw your faces everyday, that's why I remembered. And I tell you, every morning, when I woke up, some times I use to dream that I was in Cuba, and it was very hard to wake up and open my eyes, I was like: "shit, I'm in prison." But when I looked to my left, to those photos, and I said to myself, come on, get up, you cannot let those people down. They won't let you down, but you Gerardo, you can't let them down. Wake up and face the next 24 hours with the same spirit of the Cuban revolution and with the spirit of those friends out there, who strongly are fighting for you! [crowd cheers and applause]

That's how much you helped the Cuban 5! I know you have an idea of how much you helped the Cuban 5, but believe me, you still

continued on page 38



By Manuel Yepe*

It has been repeatedly said that the American people are the only ones who could perform the Herculean task of bringing down the most powerful and bloodthirsty empire ever known to humankind. Humanity anxiously hopes to see the US people act, and will provide the solidarity they would have earned.

The frequent US asymmetric wars against countries incomparably poorer and militarily weaker than the only superpower have awakened the humanitarian consciousness of many Americans who have strongly demonstrated solidarity with these abused peoples.

The continuous embarrassing exposure of prisoners' human rights violations – including torture and serious indignities – in US public or secret prisons scattered around the world, have awakened the awareness of millions of Americans who condemn such injustice.

However, as a result of the manipulation and deceit they are subjected to in their religious faith, or the naiveté that for years has been instilled by the media dominated by corporate and banking elites, Americans have been impregnated –for more than a century– with the influence of a neo-conservative policy with fundamentalist traits that today some consider their national feature.

After the collapse of the USSR and the European socialist bloc –which meant the end of the Cold War– the US government intensified its economic war against Cuba, a country that had remained as a thorn in the throat of imperialism.

With new laws, there was a better definition of the set of tools aimed at the economic and financial drowning of the island. There were also other measures whose goal was to “cause shortages, suffering, and the overthrow of the Cuban government” –as originally defined, more than half a century ago, by the objec-

tives of the US blockade, euphemistically called an “embargo”.

Fidel Castro, called on the Cuban people to “tighten their belts” and prepare for shortages and greater sacrifices. Cubans responded by closing ranks around the leader of the Revolution.

The results of their heroic resistance can be seen today. Reason, justice, and patriotism were victorious. The internationalist solidarity of countless people around the world who stimulated the success of the Cubans with their sincere help has also been victorious.

A uni-polar world followed the end of the Cold War. A single superpower tries to impose its selfish interests on the rest of the



for competition, selfishness and the law of the richest.

With Bernie Sanders' campaign for nomination as Democratic Party candidate in the United States presidential election, Americans have begun to hear about many things that were not mentioned in the recent past.

Sanders offers to end nearly four decades of neo-liberal policies. He condemns Wall Street greed, the corruption of the electoral and political systems, and the stealing of the futures of young people and American workers. He recalls the glorious struggles for equality, civil and labor rights, and the rights of immigrants.

These are things not heard in the United States for a long time.

Let's hope they are a prelude to a change that only the US people can promote.

April 26, 2016.

* 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.

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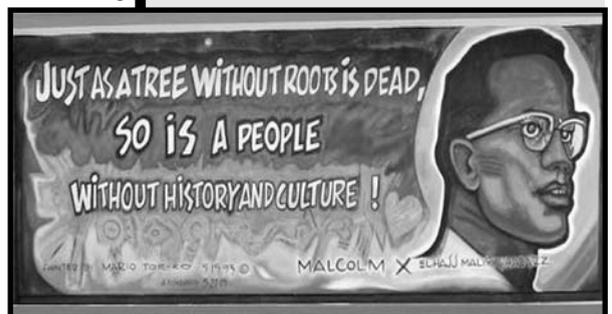
THE PEOPLE OF USA WILL HAVE THE FINAL WORD

planet. The neoliberal globalization imposed on the world's peoples, with its consequences of hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, discrimination, and many other ills of humanity. This proves that it is not geographical fatalism, or an alleged racial inferiority, but the very essence of the bourgeois order that determines these evils in human societies.

Neo-liberalism, the order which the North spreads, imposes on the South, and recommends itself as a panacea for all the misfortunes of humankind which is precisely the basic cause of the great evil and cruel abandonment suffered by the peoples living in the poor countries, and the poor who live in the rich countries.

Neoliberal capitalism, with its praise and proclamation of the market –not the human being– as the absolute axis for the functioning of society, has increased poverty and expanded inequalities on a universal scale. Constantly generating crises, the capitalist order tries to ignore the asymmetries it causes, and always manages to unload its effects on the humble people of the planet.

The capitalist system of relations, instead of calling for co-operation and solidarity, calls



LOS PROPIOS ESTADOUNIDENSES TENDRÁN LA PALABRA

* EN ESPAÑOL *

Por Manuel Yepe*

El pueblo de Estados Unidos -se ha dicho muchas veces- es el único que podría llevar a cabo la titánica hazaña de hacer caer al imperio más poderoso y sanguinario que haya conocido la humanidad, que espera ansiosa ver a ese pueblo actuar para ofrecerle la solidaridad a que se hará acreedor.

Las frecuentes guerras asimétricas de Estados Unidos contra países incomparablemente mucho más pobres y militarmente débiles que la superpotencia única, despertaron la conciencia humanitaria de muchos estadounidenses que se ha manifestado enérgicamente en solidaridad con estos pueblos abusados.

La continuada exposición de vergonzosas violaciones de los derechos humanos de prisioneros, incluyendo torturas y gravísimos vejámenes en cárceles públicas o clandestinas estadounidenses diseminadas por el mundo, despertaron la conciencia de millones de estadounidenses que condenaron tales injusticias.

Sin embargo, como resultado de la manipulación y el engaño a que han estado sometidos en su fe religiosa o por la ingenuidad que durante años han inculcado en el ciudadano común de ese país los medios de publicidad y de prensa dominados por la élite corporativa y bancaria, los estadounidenses han sido sometidos durante más de un siglo al influjo de una orientación política neoconservadora con proyecciones fundamentalistas, que algunos consideran hoy su característica nacional.

Tras el derrumbe de la URSS y el bloque socialista europeo, que significó el fin de la Guerra Fría, el gobierno de Estados Unidos intensificó su guerra económica contra Cuba, que quedó como una espina en la garganta del imperialismo. Con nuevas leyes, la codificación del conjunto de instrumentos destinados a ahogar

económicamente a la isla y otras medidas dirigidas a “provocar escaseces, sufrimientos y el derrocamiento del gobierno cubano” según fueron definidos originalmente, más de medio siglo antes, los objetivos del bloqueo que Estados Unidos eufemísticamente llama “embargo”

Fidel Castro, llamó al pueblo a “apretarse los cinturones” y prepararse para carencias y sacrificios mayores. Los cubanos respondieron cerrando filas en torno al líder de la Revolución y ya se han podido ver los resultados de la heroica resistencia. Triunfó la razón, la justicia, el patriotismo. Venció también la solidaridad internacionalista de innumerables personas en todo el mundo que han estimulado la proeza de los cubanos con su ayuda sincera y, por ello, son también dueños del éxito.

El mundo unipolar que siguió al fin de la Guerra Fría, con una única superpotencia que imponiendo sus egoístas intereses al resto del planeta y la globalización neoliberal impuesta a los pueblos, con su secuela de hambre, enfermedades, analfabetismo, degradación ambiental, discriminación, y tantos otros males que sufre la humanidad, puso de manifiesto que no es el fatalismo geográfico, ni una supuesta inferioridad racial, sino la esencia misma del orden burgués lo que determina estos males en las sociedades humanas.

El neoliberalismo, ordenamiento que el Norte disemina, impone en el Sur y recomienda como panacea para todas las desventuras de la humanidad, es precisamente la causa fundamental de los grandes males y los crueles desamparos en que viven los pueblos de los países pobres y los pobres en los países ricos.



El capitalismo neoliberal, con su proclamación del mercado y no del ser humano como eje absoluto del funcionamiento de la sociedad, ha multiplicado la miseria y ampliado las desigualdades a escala universal. Generador constante de crisis, el orden capitalista pretende ignorar que son las asimetrías las que las provocan y se las arregla siempre para descargar sus efectos en las personas humildes del planeta. El sistema capitalista de relaciones, en vez de convocar a la cooperación y la solidaridad, llama a la competencia, el egoísmo y la ley del más rico. Con la campaña de Bernie Sanders por lograr incluirse como candidato del partido demócrata en las elecciones presidenciales de Estados Unidos, los estadounidenses han comenzado a oír hablar de muchas cosas que no se mencionaban en el pasado reciente.

Sanders ofrece poner fin a casi cuatro décadas de políticas neoliberales. Condena la avaricia de Wall Street, la corrupción del sistema electoral y político, y el robo del futuro de los jóvenes y de los trabajadores estadounidenses. Recuerda las gloriosas luchas por la igualdad, los derechos civiles y por los derechos laborales y de los inmigrantes.

Son cosas que no se escuchaban hace mucho tiempo en Estados Unidos y que ojalá fueran la antesala de un cambio que solo a los estadounidenses corresponde promover.

Abril 28 de 2016.

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FIRE THIS TIME NEWSPAPER CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF PUBLICATION!

“PUBLISHING FIRE THIS TIME WAS A NECESSITY NOT AN OPTION”

-ALI YEREVANI, POLITICAL EDITOR OF FIRE THIS TIME NEWSPAPER



Mr. Julio Garmendía Peña, Cuban Ambassador to Canada, speaks to large crowd

By Thomas Davies

On Saturday April 2, 2016, Fire This Time celebrated one decade of publishing its monthly newspaper. It was an important opportunity to reflect on the origins of the Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice and the lessons learned in publishing an independent newspaper reflecting the struggles of oppressed people for building a new world.

Over 130 people came to the Central Branch of the Vancouver Public Library to join in the celebration, including many members of different political organizations and tendencies. The event was also themed, “Socialist Cuba, How Far We have Come” and featured Mr. Julio Garmendía Peña, Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba to Canada who traveled from Ottawa to participate with Miraly González González, First Secretary and Political Attache of the Cuban Embassy.

Fire This Time Editorial Board member Tamara Hansen welcomed everyone to the celebration before introducing Coast Salish elder Kelly White, who was joined by other members of the

indigenous community in leading the celebration through a welcoming ceremony to unceded Coast Salish territory.

After Kelly, Latin American troubadour Beto Fuentes sang energetic songs inspired by the Cuban Revolution, with participants in the crowd joining in singing the classic ‘Guantanamera’.

Charles Boylan brought greetings from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), and the celebration was also joined by Garry Owens via video conference. Garry was a founder and leading organizer of the Black Panther Party in Seattle, and has remained active in many social justice struggles up until today. As part of his greetings he made an appeal for people to subscribe to Fire This Time, which was actually very successful in prompting half a dozen people to fill out a yearly subscription card!

The celebration was also honoured by the participation of Wilfredo J. Perez Bianco, the Venezuelan Consul General in Vancouver. He brought greetings on behalf of the Consulate, and also gave an excellent speech in defense of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. Fire This Time has continually advocated for solidarity and defense of the Bolivarian

Revolution, especially in the current context of increasing imperialist attacks.

Mr. Julio Garmendía Peña, Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba to Canada and guest of honor to the celebration spoke next. He began by saying, “I would like to congratulate the Editorial Board of Fire This Time for the 10th anniversary of this publication that that together with others in Canada reflect the reality of Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia and other countries of our region - opposing the lies and the cliches that the big press delivers about us, Happy Birthday!”

The Ambassador then outlined some of the important developments and analysis of the new era of US-Cuba relations. He emphasized that Cuba has not renounced or compromised any of its guiding socialist principles in negotiations, and that it is the US which has been forced to change and compromise in its relations with Cuba.

Fire This Time Political Editor, Ali Yerevani brought the political program of the evening to a close. He emphasized the objective political conditions which led to the creation of Fire This Time: a

continued on page 39

CELEBRATING ONE DECADE OF THE FIRE THIS TIME NEWSPAPER

SOLIDARITY AS A CONSTITUTIONAL & STRATEGIC ASPECT IN VENEZUELA

Speech by Wilfredo J. Perez Bianco, Venezuelan Consul General in Vancouver at Fire This Time Newspaper 10 Year Anniversary Celebration. April 2, 2016

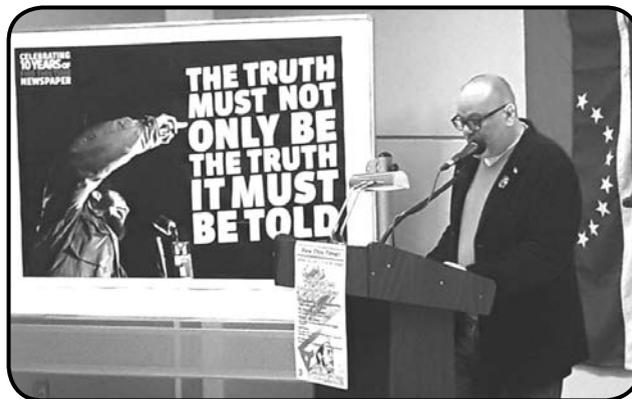
In light of the recent events in Venezuela and throughout our America it is imperative to redefine or re contextualize the word Solidarity. And it's not just a new conceptualization that is merely semantic or only for discussion. It is about taking theory into practice, because in addition to speeches we need actions. It means concrete actions to influence and prevent the abrupt interruption of the progressive processes that have given great hope to a big part of the planet and that show us that "another world" is possible. A fairer, more equitable, more habitable world.

This will be possible if we understand the new role of solidarity.

Eternal Commander Hugo Chavez insisted on reviving the ideas of our Liberator Simon Bolivar regarding the unity of the peoples to defend their sovereignty, self-determination and independence. But that this was only possible if they worked together, together in a just and necessary solidarity.

Solidarity with the peoples of the world, in Venezuela, is enshrined in our Constitution. In other words, it is an essential part of our culture, our politics and our conception as a nation – being in the solidarity with the world.

Article 152 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela says: "The international relations of the Republic serve the ends of the State as a function of the exercise of sovereignty and the interests of the people; they are governed by the principles of independence, equality between States, free self-determination and nonintervention in their internal affairs, the peaceful resolution of international conflicts, cooperation, respect of human rights and solidarity among peoples in the struggle for their liberation and the welfare of humanity. The Republic



shall maintain the finest and most resolute defense of these principles and democratic practices in all international organs and institutions."

There we see the essence of the Homeland as per the legacy of Chavez. With respect for the principles of independence, equality between States, self-determination and, importantly, non-intervention in internal affairs. We advocate for human rights and solidarity between peoples in the struggle for their emancipation and the well-being of humanity.

Our singer of the people Ali Primera told us that, "Homeland is the man" (and the woman), meaning that Humanity, in a clear allusion to the Cuban liberation fighter José Martí, who had already proclaimed "Humanity is homeland"; that is, we must feel and encourage the natural bonds we share with our brothers and sisters around the world: we are all humanity, that is the only way we can understand true solidarity. Solidarity becomes imperative, necessary and urgent to face the dangers threatening not only our progressive process which, incidentally guarantees the continuity of humanity, but also to struggle against the rapid development and uncontrolled savagery capitalism exercises on our countries, on our people and on progressive governments that have taken charge of their own destiny.

In the political will and testament of Hugo Chavez, called "Plan for the Homeland", solidarity is also enshrined as

a fundamental axis. Among its historical objectives the Plan for the Homeland states that, while continuing with the defence, expansion and consolidation of our national independence and strengthening the foundations of the irreversibility of national sovereignty, the plan drawn up by Chavez indicates that we should all of us "ensure the continuity of progressive processes" and "strengthen national identity and our culture", thereby contributing to the development of a new international geopolitics which embody a multicenter and multipolar world that would achieve the balance of the universe and ensure world peace ". A peace that undoubtedly also ensures the perpetuity of the species. Chavez speaks of a multipolar world, "without imperial domination and with full respect for self-determination."

For this reason, it is essential to have solidarity between individuals, between peoples, between nations. In addition, to achieve that goal, we must maintain the coordination and strengthening of social movements to reinforce the integration among people; and actively involve groups and organizations. It is essential, in this new stage, as Hugo Chavez said, "You recover, regroup, re-articulate the scattered forces, demobilized, demoralized or confused by the adversary or by our mistakes. Our enemies prefer us scattered, disjointed and locked in sterile arenas, because they know that this is the way to stop the progress of revolutionary democratic forces."

As President Nicolas Maduro ratified in January this year during the Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), "I welcome all the solidarity that has been received by the people of

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Bolivar and Chavez to the adversities which we have lived in in recent years. We are a popular, Bolivarian and socialist Revolution hounded by the imperial power” ... therefore, “We protect in a jealous manner the respect between our governments between our countries so that the union of of our community continues to reign.”

So this is where the importance of local, regional and global alternative media comes in. Only alternative medias, such as the one of my friends, colleagues and comrades, “Fire This Time” with whom we celebrate today its 10th anniversary, can show these fundamental aspects for the meaning of solidarity (as a word, as speech, but as well in action), and it is imperative to recognize and retake our humanity and make a commitment to defend the whole planet as Hugo Chavez taught us.

As authentic, accurate and timely independent information sources that do not follow the imperial and

hegemonic line of international news agencies and the mass media allied with transnational corporations and therefore subject to its capitalist, neoliberal interests and exploitation, alternative media is a fundamental tool for solidarity, for the defense of the planet and for the preservation of humanity. An example of this is Fire This Time, those whose efforts and gallantry contribute to the fight against the Media Dictatorship (in Venezuela), as Professor Luis Britto García mentioned in his work that bears the same name.

This work is a reflection of the role of social media in recent years, while a tribute to the journalists, owners of media companies and alternative media who have defended freedom of expression and information despite all pressures from the economically powerful sectors. And analyzes the role of social media in recent years, specifically with regard to creating a variety of opinions aimed at destabilizing the legal, political and economic order in Venezuela replacing

the work of traditional political parties. Projects like Telesur, which currently is under threat, demonstrate how alternative media is established as a different source of information beyond the information imposed by mainstream media. This kind of alternative media can influence and contribute directly to the defence of movements and progressive governments that today are under threat worldwide. Finally,

Solidarity between peoples and the defence of alternative medias, represents the defence of the future of our planet and ensure the integration between our people and the continuation of the progressive processes worldwide, so we can ensure the preservation of our humanity, making each of us “more human towards humanity”. “ (Ali Primera). Many thanks comrades. Viva FIRE THIS TIME!

Viva la Solidaridad entre los Pueblos!

Follow the Venezuelan Consulate in Vancouver on Twitter: @ConsuladoVenVan

LA SOLIDARIDAD COMO UN ASPETO CONSTITUCIONAL Y ESTRATEGICO EN VENEZUELA

Discurso por Wilfredo J. Perez Bianco, Consul General de Primera de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela en Vancouver al Celebración de 10 años del periódico Fire This Time. 2 de abril, 2016

* EN ESPAÑOL *

La solidaridad como un aspecto constitucional y estratégico en Venezuela

A la luz de los últimos acontecimientos en Venezuela y en toda la región nuestro americana es imperativo re-significar o re contextualizar la palabra Solidaridad. Y no se trata sólo de una nueva conceptualización meramente semántica o discursiva. Se trata de salir del “tema” e irnos a la “acción”, porque además de discursos necesitamos acciones, es decir, incidencias reales

en el mundo material que impidan la interrupción abrupta de los procesos progresistas que han dado tanta esperanza a una gran parte del planeta y que nos indica que sí es posible “otro mundo”, más justo, más equitativo, más habitable.

Esto será posible si entendemos el nuevo papel de la solidaridad.

El Comandante Eterno Hugo Chávez, insistió en el rescate del pensamiento de nuestro Libertador Simón Bolívar respecto a la integración de los pueblos para la defensa de su soberanía, autodeterminación e

independencia. Pero que ello sólo era posible si se trabajaba unidos, juntos, en una solidaridad justa y necesaria.

La solidaridad con los pueblos del Mundo, en Venezuela, está consagrada en nuestra Constitución Nacional. En otra palabras, es parte esencial de nuestra cultura, nuestra política y en nuestra concepción como Nación, el ser solidarios con el mundo.

Dice el artículo Artículo 152 de la CNRBV dice: “Las relaciones internacionales de la República responden a los fines del Estado en función del ejercicio de la soberanía y de los intereses del pueblo; ellas se rigen por los principios de independencia, igualdad entre los Estados, libre determinación y no intervención en sus



De izquierda a derecha: Tamara Hansen, miembro del consejo editorial de Fire This Time; Miraly Gonzalez Gonzalez, Secretaria Primera de Cuba en la Embajada en Canadá; Julio Garmendía Peña, Embajador de Cuba en Canadá, Wilfredo J. Perez Bianco, Cónsul General de Primera del Consulado de Venezuela en Vancouver

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asuntos internos, solución pacífica de los conflictos internacionales, cooperación, respeto de los derechos humanos y solidaridad entre los pueblos en la lucha por su emancipación y el bienestar de la humanidad. La República mantendrá la más firme y decidida defensa de estos principios y de la práctica democrática en todos los organismos e instituciones internacionales”.

Allí vemos la esencia de la Patria que nos legó Chávez. Con respeto a los principios de independencia, igualdad entre los Estados, libre determinación y, muy importante, la no intervención en los asuntos internos, abogamos por los derechos y humanos y la solidaridad ente los pueblos en la lucha por su emancipación y el bienestar de la humanidad.

Ya nuestro cantor del pueblo Alí Primera nos decía que la “Patria es el Hombre” (y la mujer), es decir, La Humanidad, en una clara alusión al apóstol cubano José Martí, quien ya había proclamado “La Patria es Humanidad”; es decir, debemos sentir y fomentar esa filiación absoluta que poseemos por naturaleza con nuestros hermanos y nuestras hermanas de todo el mundo: somos Humanidad, sólo así podremos entender la verdadera solidaridad. Una solidaridad que se hace imperativa, necesaria y urgente, para enfrentar los peligros que se ciernen no sólo sobre nuestros procesos progresistas que, por cierto garantizan la continuidad de esa Humanidad, sino también el desarrollo vertiginoso y descontrolado que el capitalismo salvaje ejerce sobre nuestros países, sobre nuestros pueblos y sobre los gobierno progresistas que han asumido las riendas de su propio destino.

En el testamento político de Hugo Chávez, llamado Plan de la Patria, también se consagra la solidaridad como un eje fundamental. Entre sus objetivos históricos el Plan de la Patria establece que, además de seguir en la defensa, expansión y consolidación de nuestras independencias nacionales y sentar las bases de la irreversibilidad de la soberanía nacional, el plan trazado por Chávez indica que debemos todas y todos “garantizar la continuidad de los procesos progresistas”, “afianzar la identidad nacional y nuestro americana”, para así contribuir al “desarrollo de una nueva geopolítica internacional en la cual tome cuerpo un mundo multicéntrico y pluripolar que permita lograr el equilibrio del universo y garantizar la paz planetaria”. Una paz que, sin duda, garantice también la perpetuidad

de la especie.

Habla Chávez de un mundo multicéntrico y pluripolar, “sin dominación imperial y con respeto irrestricto a la autodeterminación de los pueblos”.

Por tal razón, es imprescindible ser solidarios entre los individuos, entre los pueblos, entre las naciones.

Asimismo, para alcanzar ese objetivo, debemos mantener la articulación y fortalecimiento de los movimientos sociales para consolidar la integración entre los pueblos; e incorporar activamente a los colectivos y organizaciones

Es fundamental, en esta nueva etapa, como decía Hugo Chávez, “recuperar, reagrupar, rearticular las fuerzas dispersas, desmovilizadas, desmoralizadas o confundidas por el adversario o por nuestros errores. Nuestros adversarios nos prefieren dispersos, desunidos y enfrentados en diatribas estériles, porque saben que ése es el camino más expedito para intentar poner freno al avance de las fuerzas democráticas revolucionarias”.

Como ratificó el presidente Nicolás Maduro en enero de este año durante el IV Cumbre de jefes de Estado y de Gobierno de la Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (CELAC), “celebro toda la solidaridad que ha recibido el pueblo de Bolívar y Chávez ante las adversidades que “nos ha tocado vivir en los últimos años, somos una Revolución popular, bolivariana y socialista acosada por el poder imperial”...por ello, “cuidemos de manera celosa el respeto entre nuestros gobiernos entre nuestros países para que siga reinando la unión de nuestra comunidad”.

Entonces, es Aquí donde entra la importancia de los medios alternativos de comunicación, locales, regionales y globales.

Sólo los medios alternativos, como el de mis amigos, compañeros, camaradas, hermanas de “FIRE THIS TIME”, con quienes celebramos hoy su 10º Aniversario, puede mostrarnos esos aspectos fundamentales para la resignificación de la solidaridad (como palabra, como discurso, pero también como acción), y esa imperativa necesidad de re-conocer y re-tomar nuestra filiación natural como Humanidad para asumir así el compromiso de defender, como nos enseñó Hugo Chávez, al planeta entero como nuestro hábitat.

Como fuentes auténticas, veraces y oportunas de información independiente, que no sigan la imposición imperial y hegemónica

de las agencias de noticias internacionales ni de los medios masivos de comunicación aliados a empresas transnacionales y, por tanto, supeditadas a sus intereses capitalistas, neoliberales y de explotación, los medios alternativos son una herramienta fundamental para la solidaridad, para la defensa del planeta y para la preservación de la Humanidad. Ejemplo de ello, es FIRE THIS TIME!, quienes que con su esfuerzo y gallardía contribuyen a la lucha contra la Dictadura Mediática (en Venezuela), como la ha denominado el profesor Luis Britto García en su obra que lleva este mismo nombre. Trabajo que constituye una reflexión sobre el papel de los medios de comunicación social en los últimos años, al tiempo que constituye un homenaje a los comunicadores, dueños de empresas de comunicación y medios alternativos que han defendido la libertad de expresión e información a pesar de todas las presiones provenientes de los sectores económicamente más poderosos. Y analiza el papel de los medios de comunicación social en los últimos años, específicamente en lo que concierne a la creación de matrices de opinión dirigidas a desestabilizar el orden jurídico, político y económico en Venezuela sustituyendo a los partidos políticos tradicionales.

Experiencias como teleSUR, la cual en este momento se encuentra bajo amenaza, demuestran como un medio alternativo, se constituye como una fuente alterna de información más allá de la información impuesta por los medios imperiales transnacionales, puede incidir y contribuir directamente en la defensa de los movimientos o gobiernos progresistas que hoy también se encuentran bajo amenaza en todo el planeta.

Finalmente, La solidaridad entre los pueblos y la defensa de los medios alternativos, es por tanto, defender el futuro de nuestro planeta y garantizar que los procesos progresistas y de integración entre nuestros pueblos continúen, y así podamos asegurar la preservación de nuestra Humanidad, haciendo cada uno de nosotros “más humana a la humanidad” (Alí Primera).

Muchas gracias compañeras y compañeros.

Viva “FIRE THIS TIME”

Viva la Solidaridad entre los Pueblos!

Sigue al Consulado de Venezuela en Vancouver en Twitter: @ConsuladoVenVan

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!



7TH CONGRESS OF THE CUBAN COMMUNIST PARTY



In the lead up to the 7th Party Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, Granma International offers readers four articles tracing the creation, history and impact of the Communist Party of Cuba on the island.

Part 1: Our Party was born during the historic days of Girón...

No other date is more symbolic than April 16, that of our party's founding.

On the eve of the mercenary invasion at Playa Girón, after honoring the victims of the previous day's aerial attacks on our airports, combatants of the Rebel Army, the National Police, and militias swore to defend at any cost the socialist character of the Revolution, proclaimed on this unforgettable day.

The historic roots of Cuba's political vanguard lie in the Cuban Revolutionary Party founded by José Martí to organize and conduct the Necessary War; in the profusion of Marxist-Leninist ideas expressed in the first Communist Party of Cuba created by Carlos Baliño and Julio Antonio Mella in 1925; in the development of mass anti-imperialist consciousness in the first half of the 20th century; and, as the culmination, in the shock wave produced across the nation by the heroic actions of July 26, 1953, and the initiation of the war for the country's definitive independence, conquered January 1, 1959. At that time, for the first time,

the people achieved their legitimate aspirations, and took their rightful place as protagonists following the triumph of the Revolution.

The destruction of the old bourgeois apparatus, and the formation of the nascent state, the radical steps taken

by the Revolution, and the creation of genuine, fighting organizations of the masses, confirmed the Revolution's unmistakable trajectory. On October 15, 1960, during a television appearance, Comandante en Jefe Fidel stated that the democratic, popular, agrarian, anti-imperialist stage of the Cuban Revolution had been completed, and with it, the essence of the Moncada Program, outlined in Fidel's History Will Absolve Me. The economic and political power of the privileged in Cuba had been eliminated, he said, and announced the beginning of a new stage, one in which methods directed toward economic and social transformation would be different. It would be the beginning of the socialist period in Cuban conditions, although its essence had already been expressed in action, and in the content of the Declaration of Havana on September 2.

The big changes in all aspects of the country's life, the need to face relentless imperialist aggression, and the strategic goals of the Revolution made the creation of a political vanguard imperative, to forge and consolidate the necessary unity – a party which would be a faithful representation of Cuban society and the people's deepest desires.

At that moment, the principal forces participating in the armed struggle and in the period immediately following the rebel victory (the July 26th Movement, the March 13 Revolutionary Directorate, and the Popular Socialist Party) all had their own areas of influence, tactics and leadership bodies.

The evolution of the process, and the Revolution's objectives, contributed to the creation of conditions for more frequent discussion and interaction between the principal organizations carrying out the Revolution, and steps were taken by their leaders to work jointly at the grassroots and leadership levels.

Thus, when the socialist character of the Revolution was declared, that historic April 16, unification of these three organizations was already underway, even though a single party did not yet exist.

Referring to this important process, Fidel stated in the main report to the First Party Congress, "The conditions were present for the convergence of all revolutionaries in a single Party. A process of integration at the grassroots and leadership levels had already begun earlier, but after the definitions of April 16, and the glorious victory of Girón, our Party was in fact born in the firm unity of all revolutionaries and working people, cemented by the heroism of our working class, which fought and shed its blood generously in the defense of the homeland and of socialism. From now on, we act as a single organization and under a cohesive leadership."

Unlike the party founded by Martí to win independence, or that created by Lenin to lead Russia to the victory of October, 1917, and other examples within the revolutionary movement, our Party emerged in the heat of battles to defend the Revolution.

In the days following the resounding defeat of the mercenary invasion, the definitive steps were taken to create a new political organization, under a collective leadership. Interests and barriers, which divided, distanced, impeded and weakened the necessary unity, were left behind. From this moment forward, the Party followed an unprecedented path of

creation and authenticity, closely tied to the people.

This is how our Party was born, under the unquestionable leadership of Fidel.



Part 2: A Party of the masses and for the masses

Fidel was the unquestionable driving force and constructor of unity among revolutionary forces. Since the liberation war's earliest days, the maximum leader of the Revolution facilitated contact, reached compromises and accords with organizations participating in the struggle. After the January 1, 1959, victory, the

Comandante en Jefe promoted meetings of the principal leaders of these forces, including some which required absolute discretion, and little by little made these encounters more regular and significant, in an effort to create a context for unity.

Just two months after the historic victory at Playa Girón, June 24, 1961, an important leadership plenum of the Popular Socialist Party (PSP) took place, with the maximum leaders of the July 26th Movement and the March 13 Revolutionary Directorate in attendance. At this meeting, a unanimous decision was made to unite the three forces, to undertake the most imperative tasks of the transition to and construction of socialism.

During the memorable meeting, Fidel was recognized as the nation's principal leader. Once the unity resolution was approved, the PSP was dissolved, and, immediately thereafter, the July 26th Movement and the March 13 Revolutionary Directorate proceeded to do the same. These decisions led to the establishment of the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (ORI), to coordinate joint-work prior to the formation of a new single party.

Following the event, the intense process of creating provincial and grassroots structures began. Thus, on March 8, 1962, the new party's National Directorate was constituted, and on the 22nd, this body designated Fidel and Raúl as first and second Party secretaries, respectively, while Blas Roca was chosen as editor of the newspaper Hoy.

The birth of a single political organization, with a single leadership, meant an extraordinary strengthening of the Revolution. A few days

earlier, March 13, Fidel had warned of and publicly denounced the emergence of certain sectarian attitudes, a lack of confidence in those who had not previously been members of the PSP, and discrimination regarding membership in the new party. Sectarianism in the process of constituting the new organization was cut short in time.

In virtue of this criticism, work was done to ensure that grassroots units of the ORI undertaking the formation of new party structures were strictly complying with the requirement that the population be consulted regarding members to be chosen.

Fidel made an extraordinary contribution, in theory and practice, to the construction of the Party. He was the architect of its constitution, based on the creative application of the ideas of Martí and Lenin, given the specific conditions of the Cuban Revolution, which were practically expressed in norms, procedures, leadership methods, principles, discipline, mass consultation, internal democracy and collective leadership.

Under these precepts, a political vanguard has been forged with the careful selection of members, closely tied to the masses, which has gained the prestige and authority so necessary to effective political work.

Referring to this conception, in April of 1962,

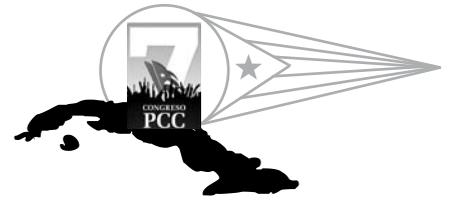


Fidel speaking to millions of Cubans at the Plaza of the Revolution in Havana

Fidel commented, "The Revolution is made by the masses and for the masses. This is the Party's reason for being, and all its prestige and all of its authority will be based on the real ties it has with the masses."



Part 3: The Communist Party of Cuba



The result of the process undertaken in the previous two years, in May 1963 the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (ORI) came to be called the United Party of the Socialist Revolution of Cuba (PURSC). This was not a simple name change, but the establishment of a rigorous democratic system for entry into its ranks, on the basis of consultation with workers about who could be considered and elected as model workers, and the selection by relevant bodies, from among these workers, of those who should be selected for entry into its ranks.

Based on these principles, intense activity unfolded in workplaces and in other collectives. Based on the first experiences, this task extended to other sectors of Cuban society. Under the guidance and direction of Raúl, for example, in the eastern mountains, the work of building the Party began following socio-political studies, taking advantage of the structure of the mountain companies, which due to their composition had become effective political-military organizations in these territories.

This first experience in the military structures served as the model to initiate this process in the rest of the armed institutions. Thus, on December 2, 1963, the process began in the Eastern Army. It was demonstrated that the existence of the Party, far from clashing with the principle of unity of command, increased the authority of commanders, raised the combat effectiveness of troops, improved technique, strengthened military discipline, and significantly developed the knowledge and the level of political training of officers and soldiers.

Three years later, the political vanguard had essentially been constituted in all sectors of the country.

Between September 30 and October 1, 1965, the first important meetings of the Party's top leadership took place, attended by members of the provincial bureaus of the Party, the general secretaries of regional committees and leaders of provincial state administrations.

On the conclusion of these meetings, October 3, Fidel reported the decisions of the national leadership of the PURSC, ratified on October 2 at the first meeting of its Central Committee, on the election of the Political Bureau, the Secretariat and the Work Commissions; the union of the newspapers Hoy and Revolución into one: Granma, which henceforth would be the official voice of the Party; and the agreement to rename the PURSC as the

Communist Party of Cuba was ratified, an unequivocal expression of a new stage, and the highest goals and aspirations of the Cuban people.

With these steps, the formation was essentially concluded of the Communist Party of Cuba, whose principles and methods have proven effective through today.



Part 4: Without the Party the Revolution could not exist

For more than five decades, the Party has continued along a path of constant learning and experience, seeking and perfecting its own, more effective methods and work style, invariably alongside the masses in the most difficult and complex moments of the economic, political and social battle; leading the development of the consciousness of the people, of their general and political education; at the forefront of the defense of the Revolution.

With its vigilant action, the Party overcame the ambitious and opportunistic trends of the “microfracción” (sectarianism) of the years 1967 and 1968; actively participated in the institutionalization process of the country in the seventies, and created its central support structure in May 1973, as part of measures aimed at its strengthening and development.

An expression of the maturity achieved and the growing role of the Party was its First Congress held in December 1975, and those held subsequently. Each has been at the center of the main tasks and challenges of their time.

The Party has led all the battles of the country throughout its existence. Its ceaseless activity and authority have allowed it to forge ahead in the face of the difficult challenge of the special period, and in the resolute struggle today to confront weaknesses, overcome difficulties and continue perfecting our socialism, always connected with the people. The Party has never been indifferent, and its political action has been fitting at every moment.

With its own rules and procedures, the Party has been consistent with its responsibility for the destiny of the country; aware that without it, the Revolution could not exist, because as Fidel noted on March 14, 1974: “(...) The vanguard organization is fundamental. Do you know what gives security to the Revolution? The Party. Do you know what provides continuity to the Revolution? The

Party. Do you know what ensures the future of the Revolution, what provides the Revolution with life, what provides for the future of the Revolution? The Party. Without the Party the Revolution could not exist (...).”

In Cuba, we know the recipe of the multi-party system that divided and weakened Cuban society before the triumph of January 1959. And its actions in other countries demonstrate that it is a fallacy, because in essence the majority of countries where this “multi-party democracy” is exercised, particularly in electoral processes, it aims to maintain the status quo, with the uncompromising defense of capitalism.

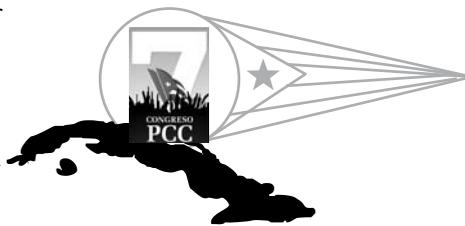


Millions of Cubans march on International Workers Day behind a banner that reads “United in the Construction of Socialism” - May 1st 2015

We also witnessed what happened in the former European socialist countries. Today the diversity of parties within these has not freed them from the unfortunate political, economic and social consequences of the collapse.

Our history confirms and persuades regarding the appropriateness of the existence of a single party, which has made us stronger in the face of aggression and the genocidal blockade, as well as in the battle for the economic and social development of the nation, the formation of revolutionary consciousness, the preservation of independence, sovereignty and socialism.

The campaigns, programs and activities of political-ideological subversion of the enemy are not random events; their purpose is to undermine the authority of the Party, earned through its connection with the masses, and the unity which has been built, essential pillars of the continuity of the Revolution.



The new stage and the challenges we face reconfirm the Party’s role in Cuban society, and in the preservation of the Revolution’s accomplishments. In these new circumstances, the Party continues at the forefront of the people.

In the same way the Party cemented the unity of the entire people and led the resistance against aggressions of all kinds by successive U.S. administrations, now it does so in a new setting.

The current government of the United States acknowledged (reluctantly) the failure of the policy of open hostility toward the Revolution. This administration has proclaimed that it aims to achieve the same result it was pursuing, but by other methods; it offers peaceful relations, of friendship, but rigorously maintains and enforces the blockade; it ignores that it must return the territory illegally occupied in Guantánamo to Cuba; it continues the illegal broadcasts that violate our airwaves; it persists with its counterrevolutionary interventionist and subversive programs; and maintains differentiated and politically manipulated immigration policies for Cubans. The struggle for truly normal relations between Cuba and the United States will be long and this normalization unavoidably involves the rectification of these aggressive policies and measures, harmful to our sovereignty.

In these circumstances, the Party’s role is indispensable to continue on the socialist path, consolidating our essence, promoting revolutionary ideas, patriotism, solidarity and anti-imperialism, the sense of social justice, equal rights and opportunities, human values, a democratic spirit, participation and confidence in the socialist future.

As the editorial of the official voice of the Central Committee, published last March 9 noted: “...the Cuban people will continue to move forward. With our own efforts and proven capacity and creativity, we will continue to work for the country’s development and the wellbeing of Cubans (...). We will persevere in the process of updating the socio-economic model we have chosen, and the construction of a prosperous, sustainable socialism to consolidate the gains to the Revolution. A path sovereignly chosen, which will surely be reaffirmed by the 7th Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, with Fidel and Raúl victorious.”



The construction of a prosperous, sustainable socialism in Cuba demands that the principles of justice and equality, which have served as the Revolution's foundation, be preserved



Full text of speech given by First Party Secretary Raúl Castro, closing the 7th Congress, April 19, 2016

Dear compañero Fidel;

Compañeras and compañeros:

We have had intense days of work in this 7th Congress, drawing to a close, during which we have adopted agreements of strategic importance for the present and future of the nation.

The Congress approved the Central Report and several resolutions on the principal subjects analyzed, the implementation of the Economic and Social Policy Guidelines of the Party and the Revolution, and their updating was agreed upon, expressed in 274 guidelines.

Likewise, a report on the fulfillment of the First Party Conference Objectives

was discussed, and decisions were made to continue strengthening the Party's role as the principal leading force in society and the state, as established in the Constitution of the Republic.

At the same time, the Congress favorably received the proposals presented on the Conceptualization of the Economic and Social Model, and the foundations for the Economic and Social Development Plan through 2030, and, considering their importance, approved was the initiation of a broad, democratic debate on these programmatic documents, with the membership of the Party, the UJC, representatives of mass organizations, and different sectors of society. We hope to conclude this process before the end of the



current year, so that the Central Committee, in accordance with the authority granted by the Congress, can definitively approve them.

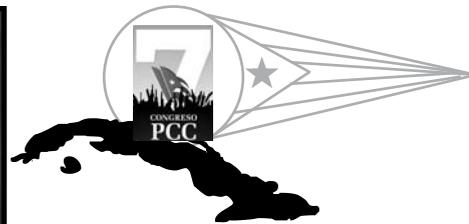
Given the great complexity of these proposals, it is imperative to adopt all of the required measures in the interest of assuring, in the first place, that they are understood, which implies carrying out rigorous training beforehand of those who will conduct the discussion.

On a subject of this nature, it is essential to achieve the conscious support of the great majority; it is therefore imperative to listen, to reason, and take into consideration the opinions of members and the people in general.

I believe it is appropriate to recall that the process of updating our economic model, which we initiated at the 6th Congress, is not a task of one or two five-year periods. The course has been charted. We will move forward with firm steps, without haste, but without pause, keeping in mind that the pace will depend on the consensus which we are capable of forging within our society, and the organizational capacity we achieve to introduce the necessary changes, without precipitation, or much less improvisation, which only lead to failure.

Progress toward the updating of our model, and the construction of a prosperous, sustainable, and irrevocable socialism in Cuba, demand that the principles of justice and equality, which have served as the Revolution's foundation, be preserved and strengthened.

A Revolution of the humble, by the humble and for the humble, as Fidel defined it, with undeniable social works constructed, will never find solutions to its problems behind the backs of the people, or with the restoration of capitalism, which would imply the application



of shock therapies to layers of the population with the least resources, and destroy the unity and confidence of the majority of our citizens in the Revolution and the Party. In Cuba, I reiterate once again, no one will be left to their fate.

Nor will the agreements of this historic Congress be filed away. On the contrary, we must ensure their fulfillment with order, discipline and high expectations, with a vision of the future, and a great deal of intentionality. Contributing to this is the decision, reaffirmed here, that Central Committee plenums will verify progress being made in the updating of the economic model and the economic plan, at least twice a year, for the number of days, and also the number of times, that may be necessary.

We likewise propose proceeding with the analysis of these issues in sessions of the National Assembly, whose role in the approval of the legislative framework associated with this process continues to be decisive.

Today, this morning, presented were the new Central Committee, Secretariat and Political Bureau, making evident the continuation of the gradual process of renovation and rejuvenation begun at the 6th Congress.

Given the implacable laws of nature, this 7th Congress will be the last led by the historic generation, which will pass on the banners of the Revolution and Socialism to new leaders (Applause), without the slightest trace of sadness or pessimism, with the pride of having fulfilled one's duty, convinced that they will be able to continue and magnify the Revolution's work, to which great effort was devoted, and life itself for many generations of compatriots, as we said in the Central Report, since 1868.

The Central Committee is composed of 142 members, of which a bit more than two thirds were born after the triumph of the Revolution, and the average age was reduced to 54.5 years, younger than in 2011.

At the same time, the Congress agreed to maintain within the leadership of the Party a smaller group of veterans of advanced age from the historic generation, who enjoy authority with the people, given their long revolutionary careers.

As we explained in the Central Report, the next five years will be decisive to guaranteeing the gradual, well-ordered transfer of the principal responsibility for the country to younger generations, a process of special importance which we hope to carry out and conclude with the holding of the 8th Congress in 2021.

The fact that more than 98% of Central Committee members are university graduates is impressive.

The representation of women increased, and has now reached 44.37%, as well as that of Blacks and mixed race Cubans, with 35.92%. These figures are higher than those of the previous Congress, but we are not satisfied. It is imperative that all Party, state and government leaders work systematically on the creation of a reserve of mature and experienced replacements to assume the principal responsibilities for the nation, in a just relation to the composition of the Cuban population in terms of skin color and gender.

The 55 new members of the Central Committee are all under 60 years of age, meeting the maximum age limit established by this Congress for joining this Party leadership body, as we have said, always in the spirit of guaranteeing the ongoing rejuvenation of the leadership.

The maximum of 60 years of age implied the exclusion from the candidature of valuable cadres who occupy positions of great responsibility in the Party, state, and government with the proven records and ability to be members of this leadership body.

The norms setting age limits must be reasonably established in guiding documents of the Party, mass organizations, and, by decision of the National Assembly, also in state and government bodies, in such a way that the positions which should not be assumed by persons over the age of 70 are defined precisely.

The Congress, meanwhile, approved the use of more flexible regulations which will allow for the development of reserves for

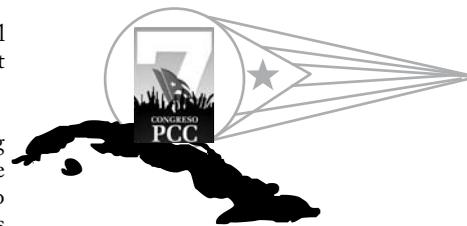
the subsequent renovation of the Central Committee during this period, without having to wait for the 8th Congress.

I also consider necessary that the functioning of the many associated bodies we have in the Party, state, and government, continues to be strengthened, so that important decisions are always the product of collective analysis, so that honest disagreements and different opinions are not excluded.

The Political Bureau is composed of 17 members. Five new members joined the body, compañeras Miriam Nicado García, Teresa Amarelle Boué and Marta Ayala Ávila; and compañeros Ulises Guilarte de Nacimiento and Roberto Morales Ojeda.

These promotions are not fortuitous or improvised.

In the case of compañera Miriam Nicado, she is Mathematical Sciences PhD, and has for several years served as rector of the Computer Sciences University (UCI). Previously, at the Marta Abreu Central University in Las Villas,



she was gradually promoted in the Party in the same municipality, and held the position of first secretary, after which she was elected to the same responsibility at the provincial level in Las Tunas.

The Doctor of Biological Sciences Marta Ayala - I think she is the youngest, although among women these things should not be mentioned (Laughter) - has had an ascending career at the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, which has led her from the role of aspiring researcher, to head of laboratory, to deputy director, until being recently promoted to deputy general director of this important scientific center, where she has conducted research aimed at creating vaccines for the treatment of cancer. She is currently a member of the Party Provincial Committee in Havana.



Meanwhile, compañero Ulises Guilarte has been general secretary of the Cuban Workers' Federation since 2013. He has held various responsibilities as a union leader in Cienfuegos and secretary general of the Construction Workers Union in Havana. He later went on to work as a Party professional, and was deputy head of the Central Committee Department of

she was a professor and gradually assumed greater responsibilities, before becoming the deputy rector for teaching. She studied in the Soviet Union for five years, and later another year of specialization.

Compañera Teresa Amarelle has been the general secretary of the national leadership of the Federation of Cuban Women since 2012. She was a middle school teacher and went on to undertake professional duties in the UJC, where she served as second and first secretary of the municipal committee of the organization in Amancio Rodríguez. Later

Industry and Construction, and was promoted to first secretary of the Provincial Committee in Havana, and later in the nascent, experimental province of Artemisa.

Finally, compañero Roberto Morales has been Public Health Minister for the past six years. Upon graduating, he worked as a polyclinic doctor in the municipality of Rodas, director of Public Health at that level and later in the province of Cienfuegos. In the Party he was a professional official at the municipal and provincial level and first secretary in Cienfuegos, until his appointment to join the

Central Committee Secretariat.

The five new members of the Political Bureau are also under 60 years of age, a sign of what could be across our entire leadership, of humble backgrounds, who worked from the grassroots, were political leaders at different levels until reaching the top leadership of the Party with exquisite and profound experience (Applause). Naturally, these same conditions are present in much or the majority of the rest of the Political Bureau, although they have not had the same methodical transition as those noted above. Some of us develop without a university degree, but at full speed (Applause), and, as you can appreciate, they have accumulated a rich service record from the grassroots, exercising the professions they studied at university, not as has occurred many times, that on obtaining a university degree, we place it on the wall of our front room to display it, but we never work in the specialty.

We already corrected this at the past Congress, and I think there have been good results. Work should be done at the grassroots, there can be no preconceived leaders, everyone who graduates must work five years at least at the basic level in the specialty which they studied at the university, and gradually, according to their ability, be promoted, without ever ceasing to study, as Fidel always taught us, especially the military; a military man must study his entire life, just as a professional cadre of the Party, a leader of our state, for one reason or another, in one place or another, and not live off the title hanging on the wall of the front room of our homes.

In my own case, I thank you for the honor of being elected, for the second time, as first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, in the knowledge that my main mission is to defend, preserve, and continue perfecting Cuban socialism and never allow for a return to capitalism (Applause).

Among the set of major tasks in my role, I will devote the necessary time to the process of reforming the Constitution of the Republic – on which, with a group of compañeros, we have advanced somewhat, or at the very least exchanged opinions – to introduce the relevant adjustments, after 40 years in effect, in line with the changes that have occurred on

the international level, and the modifications resulting from the process of updating the economic and social model that, naturally, need to be defined before proposing to add them for the new Constitution.

The development of the national economy, along with the struggle for peace, unity and our ideological resolve, constitute the principal missions of the Party.

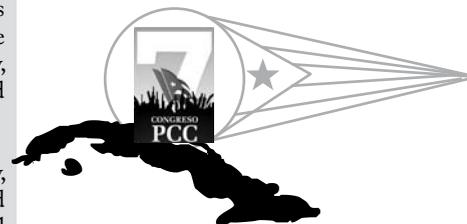
This concept can not remain a simple phrase, it must be filled with concrete content in action and measures to enable us to make the vision of a sovereign, independent, socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable nation a reality (Applause).



Before concluding, on behalf of the participants in this Congress and of all Cubans, I wish to convey our support for the sister peoples of the Third World, especially those of Latin America and the Caribbean, which face the ambitions of the right wing and transnational capital to bury the social achievements reached over decades of struggle.

We reiterate Cuba's solidarity with the Brazilian people and the constitutional President Dilma Rousseff, who faces a parliamentary coup organized by the oligarchic, neoliberal right wing, encouraged by imperialist forces, against the political and economic progress and the social gains achieved during the governments of the Workers' Party.

We also send our fraternal greetings to the Communist parties and other forces and political parties, social movements and working classes of the planet, fighting against imperialist hegemony, determined to achieve inclusive social justice and convinced that a better world is possible.



I reaffirm our total support to the Ecuadoran people, President Rafael Correa and the government of the Citizens' Revolution in these painful circumstances. Our team of rescuers and the medical personnel reinforcements, sent on Sunday itself, have already joined the more than 700 collaborators working in this sister nation to provide care to the affected population.

We will remain in communication with Ecuadoran authorities, willing to increase our support in every possible way.

Let us not forget that today, April 19, the 55th anniversary of the victory over the mercenary invasion at Playa Girón is celebrated, under the direct leadership in the theater of operations of the leader of the Cuban Revolution, compañero Fidel Castro Ruz

(Prolonged applause), who has been kept abreast of all the developments of this event.

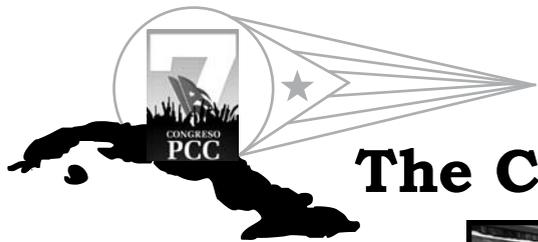
We pay tribute to those fallen in this historic feat, as well as to all those who gave their lives in defense of the Homeland, the Revolution and Socialism.

We are just a few days from May Day, International Workers' Day, an occasion that will serve to show the world, with the enthusiastic and massive participation of compatriots throughout the entire country, the unity and support for the resolutions adopted by this Congress and the socialist and independent path of the Homeland.

Finally, we wish to wholeheartedly thank compañero Fidel for the efforts he has made and the satisfaction with which he read his brilliant words before us.

Many thanks to you all. (Ovation)





Fidel Castro: The Cuban people will overcome

Remarks by the leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, during the closing of the 7th Party Congress, April 19, 2016

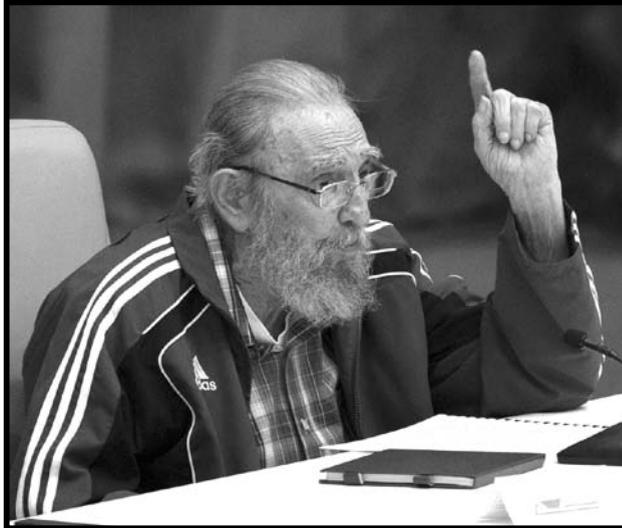
It constitutes a superhuman effort to lead any people in times of crisis. Without them, the changes would be impossible. In a meeting such as this, which brings together more than a thousand representatives chosen by the revolutionary people themselves, who delegated their authority to them, for all it represents the greatest honor they have received in their lives, to which is added the privilege of being a revolutionary which is the product of our own consciousness

Why did I become a socialist, or more plainly, why did I become a communist? That

word that expresses the most distorted and maligned concept in history by those who have the privilege of exploiting the poor, dispossessed ever since they were deprived of all the material wealth that work, talent and human energy provide. Since when does man live in this dilemma, throughout time without limit. I know you do not need this explanation but perhaps some listeners do.

I speak simply so it is better understood that I am not ignorant, extremist, or blind, nor did I acquire my ideology of my own accord studying economics.

I did not have a tutor when I was a law and political sciences student, subjects in which they have a great influence. Of course then I was around 20 years old and was fond of sports and mountain climbing. Without a tutor to help me in the study of Marxism-Leninism; I was no more than a theorist and, of course, had total confidence in the Soviet Union. Lenin's work violated after 70 years of Revolution. What a history lesson! It can be affirmed that it should not take another 70 years before another event like the Russian Revolution occurs, in order that humanity have another example of a magnificent social revolution that marked a huge step



in the struggle against colonialism and its inseparable companion, imperialism.

Perhaps, however, the greatest danger hanging over the earth today derives from the destructive power of modern weaponry which could undermine the peace of the planet and make human life on earth's surface impossible.

The species would disappear like the dinosaurs disappeared, perhaps there will be time for new forms of intelligent life or maybe the sun's heat will grow until it melts all the planets of the solar system and its satellites, as a large number of scientists recognize. If the theories of several of them are true, which we laypeople are not unaware of, the practical man must learn more and adapt to reality. If the species survives a much longer space of time the future generations will know much more than we do, but first they will have to solve a huge problem. How to feed the billions of human beings whose realities are inevitably at odds with the limited drinking water and natural resources they need?

Some or perhaps many of you are wondering where are the politics in this speech. Believe me I am sad to say it, but the politics are here in these moderate words. If only numerous human beings would concern ourselves with

these realities and not continue as in the times of Adam and Eve eating forbidden apples. Who will feed the thirsty people of Africa with no technology at their disposal, no rain, no reservoirs, no more underground aquifers than those covered by sands? We will see what the governments, which almost all signed the climate commitments, say.

We must constantly hammer away at these issues and I do not want to elaborate beyond the essentials.

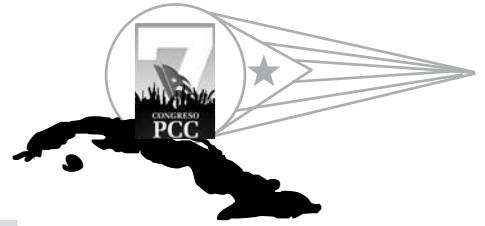
I shall soon turn 90, such an idea would never have occurred to me and it was never the result of an effort, it was sheer chance. I will soon be like everyone else. We all reach our turn, but the ideas of the Cuban communists will remain as proof that on this planet, working with fervor and dignity, can produce the material and cultural wealth that humans need, and we must fight relentlessly to obtain these. To our brothers in Latin America and the world we must convey that the Cuban people will overcome.

This may be one of the last times that I speak in this room. I voted for all the candidates submitted for election by Congress and I appreciate the invitation and the honor of your listening to me. I congratulate you all, and firstly, compañero Raúl Castro for his magnificent effort.

We will set forth on the march forward and we will perfect what we should perfect, with the utmost loyalty and united force, just as Martí, Maceo and Gómez, in an unstoppable march.



Fidel is an example for entire generations of Latin Americans, Caribbeans and fighters across the world - Maduro



A letter by Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Caracas, April 16, 2016

To the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba
Dear compañeras, dear compañeros:

Please accept from the homeland of Simón Bolívar and Hugo Chávez an embrace full of admiration, solidarity and affection, reaffirming, once again, the brotherhood between our two Revolutions, between our two peoples.

Historically, April is, for the Great Homeland, a stellar month. More than two centuries have passed since the April 19th of Caracas, 1810; fifty-five years since the April of Playa Girón; fourteen years since April 2002. Aprils marked by struggles, the definition of paths forward, sacrifices, victories that impacted the destiny of our peoples and left their marks, so visible that we continue following them today.

After more than forty years since the First PCC Congress held in 1975, this Seventh Congress is a brilliant demonstration of the strength of the Cuban Revolution, and constitutes a sort of compass pointing toward the future of justice and dignity outlined by José Martí at the end of the 19th century and which has had in Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro its greatest laborer and its most consistent leader. Today, the Army General, President of Cuba and First Secretary of the PCC, Raúl Castro, is providing perfect continuity to such a vast and luminous legacy.

Fidel, Fidel, Fidel. Today I endorse, I endorse entirely, the words of our Supreme Comandante Hugo Chávez, to salute his beloved presence in this Congress.

“I want to pay tribute to Fidel and his long travels among our peoples, awakening us. Fidel is a soldier, dreamer, undoubtedly an example for us all and for entire generations of Latin Americans, Caribbeans and fighters across the world.”

Five years ago, on the occasion of the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, our Comandante Hugo Chávez celebrated its transcendental importance: a thousand delegates from all over Cuba, after months of deliberation and debates in popular assemblies, outlined their findings to build new paths, faced with the demands and challenges that marked the course of history.

Each Party Congress has reaffirmed Cuba's path: to build socialism based on People's Power. This was and is a lesson for us, for all the peoples who truly want to make their own destinies, to build their history.

This Seventh Congress continues along

the lines of the previous: to overcome the economic crisis and achieve growth with dignity, devotion to revolutionary principles, and the defense of socialism. However, in these five years the threats and challenges have grown, and the economic, social, political and environmental situation in our region and the world has become even more complex.

Our America faces a new colonial offensive, characterized by multidimensional harassment of popular and progressive governments of the region, which have as a common denominator the plan of neoliberal restoration, by different means.

This Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, is a moral, political, ideological, cultural and social bastion for the forces across the region that confront such disintegrative attempts against the project of independence and unity of Latin America and the Caribbean, in particular those of us who have chosen the revolutionary path and the road to socialism.

Comandante Fidel told us in Caracas, when he came to the inauguration of our Supreme Comandante in February 1999, referring to the time before the special period:

“Without those years we had to educate, sow ideas, build awareness, instill feelings of solidarity and a generous internationalist spirit, our people would not have had the strength to resist.”

Something similar could be said about these difficult times of destabilization and the relentless economic and media war against Venezuela. Cuba is for us all an unequivocal symbol of resistance against the empire. Rest assured that Venezuela will not yield an inch of ground: we are resisting and we will overcome with the strength of our Chavista and Bolivarian dignity.

If any nation has faced threats and challenges, it is precisely Cuba.

Cuba is a consistent and superb artisan of resistance. We have drawn from this example in Our America. From Cuba we have learned not to hesitate, not to give up, because we are assisted by reason, the love of the homeland, the continuity of the historic battle of our liberators for independence. How many hard times has Cuba suffered? And there she stands firm in the battle of ideas, of organization, of debate.

Compañeras, compañeros:

Many eyes and ears across the world are focused on this Seventh Party Congress, despite the concealment, misrepresentation and contempt of the great media monopolies.

We are confident that with your political maturity, courage and conscience, the people



Nicolás Maduro and Fidel Castro meet in Havana

of Martí will victoriously face the storms, as not in vain have they always faced and overcome them.

We endorse the words of Raúl Castro at the opening of this splendid Congress:

“The worst thing a revolutionary, communist or not, can do is stand idly by when faced with problems... We do not have that right and less so in the current times.”

Once again history places before us great challenges, and union being the key to our victories, the Bolivarian Revolution ratifies its deepest and most productive union with the Cuban Revolution, to continue driving forward the transformations that lead to the happiness of our peoples.

The union that has allowed us to be driving forces of Alba, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, which since its founding by the two great comandantes Chávez and Fidel, has been strengthened, marking a course of solidarity and justice, sowing numerous social gains across the region and bringing the world a message of dignity and hope.

The union that marked the birth of CELAC, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, making our region a zone of peace.

United we will defend our independence, our Revolutions, our path to socialism. United we will build the Great Homeland dreamed of by our liberators.

Cuba is not alone; Cuba will never again be alone. And the Homeland of Bolívar and Chávez is unassailably united with the Homeland of Martí and Fidel.

¡Que Viva Cuba, Martí y Fidel!

¡Que Viva la Patria Grande!

¡Chávez Vive, la Patria Sigue!

¡Hasta la Victoria Siempre!

¡Independencia y Patria Socialista!

¡Viviremos y Venceremos!

Fidel es un ejemplo para generaciones enteras de latinoamericanos, caribeños y de luchadores del mundo

*** EN ESPAÑOL ***

Una carta por Nicolás Maduro Moros, presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela

Caracas, 16 de abril de 2016

Al Séptimo Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba

Queridas compañeras, queridos compañeros:

Reciban desde la Patria de Simón Bolívar y Hugo Chávez un abrazo pleno de admiración, solidaridad y afecto, reafirmando, una vez más, la hermandad entre nuestras dos Revoluciones, entre nuestros dos Pueblos.

Históricamente, abril es para la Patria Grande un mes estelar. Han pasado más de dos siglos desde el 19 de abril caraqueño de 1810; cincuenta y cinco años desde el abril de Playa Girón; catorce años desde el abril de 2002. Abriles marcados por luchas, por definiciones de rumbos, por sacrificios, por victorias que impactaron el destino de nuestros Pueblos y dejaron sus huellas tan visibles que sobre ellas seguimos caminando.

Después de más de cuarenta años del Primer Congreso del PCC realizado en 1975, este Séptimo Congreso es luminosa demostración de la solidez de la Revolución Cubana, y constituye una suerte de bitácora hacia el porvenir de justicia y dignidad que trazó el Apóstol José Martí a fines del siglo XIX y que ha tenido en el Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro a su mayor obrador y su más consecuente adalid. Hoy el General de Ejército, Presidente de Cuba y Secretario General del PCC, Raúl Castro, le está dando perfecta continuidad a tan inmenso y luminoso legado.

Fidel, Fidel, Fidel. Hoy hago mías, enteramente mías, las palabras de nuestro Comandante Supremo Hugo Chávez, para saludar su entrañable presencia en este Congreso.

“Quiero rendirle tributo a Fidel y a su largo andar por nuestros pueblos, despertándonos. Fidel es un soldado, soñador, ejemplo sin duda para todos nosotros y para generaciones enteras de latinoamericanos, caribeños y de luchadores del mundo”.

Hace cinco años, con ocasión del Sexto Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba, nuestro Comandante Hugo Chávez celebraba su trascendental importancia: un millar de delegados de toda Cuba, después de meses de deliberación y debates en asambleas populares exponían sus conclusiones para construir los



nuevos rumbos ante las exigencias y los desafíos que marcaba el devenir histórico.

Cada Congreso del Partido ha reafirmado el camino de Cuba: construir el socialismo desde el Poder Popular. Esta ha sido y es una enseñanza para nosotros, para todos los Pueblos que de verdad quieren conducir sus destinos, construir su historia.

Este Séptimo Congreso continúa sobre los lineamientos del anterior: superar la crisis económica y lograr crecimiento con dignidad, apego a los principios revolucionarios y defensa del socialismo. Sin embargo, en estos cinco años los retos y los desafíos han crecido, y se ha hecho aún más compleja la situación económica, social, política y ambiental en nuestra región y en el mundo.

Nuestra América enfrenta una nueva ofensiva recolonizadora, caracterizada por el acoso multidimensional a los gobiernos populares y progresistas de la región, que tienen como denominador común el plan de reinstauración neoliberal, por distintos medios.

Este Séptimo Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba, constituye un baluarte moral, político, ideológico, cultural y social para las fuerzas que en toda la región hacen frente a tales intentos desintegradores del proyecto de independencia y unión de América Latina y el Caribe, en particular de quienes hemos elegido el camino revolucionario y la vía del socialismo.

Nos dijo el Comandante Fidel en Caracas, cuando vino a la toma de posesión de nuestro Comandante Supremo en febrero de 1999, refiriéndose al tiempo anterior al período especial:

“Sin esos años que dispusimos para educar, sembrar ideas, conciencia, sentimientos de profunda solidaridad en el seno del pueblo y un generoso espíritu internacionalista, nuestro pueblo no habría tenido fuerzas para resistir”.

Algo similar podríamos decir sobre los tiempos difíciles de desestabilización y de guerra económica y mediática sin tregua contra Venezuela. Cuba es para nosotras y nosotros símbolo inequívoco de la resistencia contra el imperio. Tengan la certeza de que Venezuela no va a ceder ni un palmo de terreno: estamos resistiendo y vamos a vencer con la fuerza de nuestra dignidad bolivariana y chavista.

Si alguna nación ha enfrentado retos y desafíos es, precisamente, Cuba.

Cuba es una consecuente y magnífica artesana de la Resistencia. De ese ejemplo hemos bebido en Nuestra América. De Cuba hemos aprendido a no vacilar, a no rendirnos porque nos asiste la razón, el amor a la Patria, la continuidad de la batalla histórica de nuestras Libertadoras y Libertadores por la Independencia. ¿Cuántos tiempos duros no ha sufrido Cuba? Y ahí está firme en la batalla de las ideas, de la organización, del debate. Compañeras, compañeros:

A este Séptimo Congreso del Partido están atentos muchos ojos y oídos en el mundo, a pesar del ocultamiento, la tergiversación o el menosprecio de los grandes monopolios de la información.

Nosotros estamos seguros de que con su madurez política, su valentía y su conciencia, el Pueblo de Martí va a enfrentar victoriosamente las tormentas, pues no en vano las ha enfrentado y vencido siempre.

Hacemos nuestras las palabras de Raúl Castro en la inauguración de este espléndido Congreso: **“Lo peor que puede hacer un revolucionario, sea comunista o no, es quedarse cruzado de brazos ante los problemas... No tenemos ese derecho y menos en los tiempos que corren”.**

Una vez más la historia nos pone frente a grandes desafíos y siendo la unión la clave de nuestras victorias, la Revolución Bolivariana ratifica su más profunda y fecunda unión con la Revolución Cubana, para seguir impulsando las transformaciones que lleven felicidad a nuestros pueblos.

La unión que nos ha permitido ser motores del Alba, la Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América, que desde su fundación por los dos grandes comandantes Chávez y Fidel, se ha fortalecido marcando un rumbo de solidaridad y justicia, sembrando la región de numerosas conquistas sociales y llevando al mundo un mensaje de dignidad y esperanza.

La unión que marcó el nacimiento de la CELAC, Comunidad de Estados de Latinoamérica y el Caribe, que hace de nuestra región una zona de Paz. Unidos defenderemos nuestra independencia, nuestras Revoluciones, nuestro camino al socialismo. Unidos construiremos la Patria Grande que soñaron nuestros Libertadores.

Cuba no está sola; Cuba nunca más estará ya sola. Y la Patria de Bolívar y Chávez está irrenunciablemente hermanada con la Patria de Martí y Fidel.

¡Que Viva Cuba, Martí y Fidel! ¡Que Viva la Patria Grande!

¡Chávez Vive, la Patria Sigue!,

¡Hasta la Victoria Siempre!,

¡Independencia y Patria Socialista!,

¡Viviremos y Venceremos!



Lift the Blockade on Cuba! & Return Guantanamo Bay!

By Alison Bodine

On May 2, 2016 the daily news in Canada was filled with images of a cruise ship docking in the Havana Harbour. Lines of passengers crowded on the ship decks to catch a glimpse of Cuba, a country they had never seen before, although it is only 90 miles from the United States. Due to the cruel and illegal U.S. blockade on Cuba, and the U.S. travel ban that prevents its citizens from travelling to Cuba as tourists, this cruise ship is the first from the United States to dock in Cuba in over five decades.

Despite the step forward in U.S./Cuba relations that this cruise ship represents, the U.S. travel ban on Cuba, as well as the most damaging aspects of the blockade on Cuba, both remain fully in place. For example, not a single one the nearly 700 passengers on the cruise ship travelled to Cuba as a tourist, an act which remains illegal under U.S. law. There is also the fact that most of the inhuman economic, commercial and financial blockade on Cuba is still in place, including the ability of the U.S. government to impose severe fines on U.S. and foreign companies for trading with Cuba. Relations between the U.S. and Cuba are still anything but "normal."

In order to protest against this continued injustice, on April 17, 2016 Friends of Cuba Against the Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB-Vancouver) held their 8th consecutive picket action to demand that the United States lift the blockade on Cuba and return the territory occupied by U.S. Naval Base in Guantanamo. With Cuban flags and picket signs held high, activists and supporters protested and marched in front of the U.S. Consulate in downtown Vancouver.

Following the first chants of "Hey Obama, Lift the Blockade!" led by the co-coordinator of FCAB-Vancouver, a diverse program of speakers brought to light the current state of U.S./Cuba relations. Speakers included Tamara Hansen, the Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and author of the book "5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution: The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership," David Whittlesey, a long time civil-rights and social justice

activists as well as Nino Pagliccia, the editor of "Cuba Solidarity in Canada: Five Decades of People to People Foreign Relations."

Each month the Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver protest is organized in coordination with a protest organized by Ottawa Cuba Connections at the U.S. Embassy.

Each day that the U.S. blockade against Cuba persists and Guantanamo remains in the hands of the U.S. government is a rallying cry to supporters Cuba's right to sovereignty and self-determination to re-double our united



efforts!

Join FCAB-Vancouver at the next picket action, Tuesday, May 17th, 4-5pm at the U.S. Consulate in downtown Vancouver, 1075 W. Pender Street.

To get involved visit:
www.vancubaVSblockade.org

> END THE BLOCKADE ON CUBA NOW!

> RETURN GUANTANAMO TO CUBA NOW!

> US GOVERNMENT STOP THE CAMPAIGN OF 'REGIME CHANGE' IN CUBA

> STOP INTERFERING IN CUBA'S SOVEREIGNTY AND SELF-DETERMINATION!

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SYSTEM CHANGE NOT CLIMATE CHANGE!

WHY THE THE COP21 AGREEMENT AND JUSTIN TRUDEAU WILL NOT SAVE THE PLANET

By Thomas Davies

A few recent developments to consider before we begin to discuss the current state of the environment:

- A new NASA report found that a massive melting of polar ice sheets attributed to human caused global warming has led to a “dramatic” shift in the way Earth rotates on its axis

- “The combined average temperature over global land and ocean surfaces for March 2016 was the highest for this month in the 1880–2016 record, at 1.22°C (2.20°F) above the 20th century average of 12.7°C (54.9°F)... Overall, the nine highest monthly temperature departures in the record have all occurred in the past nine months.” - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

- The Associated Press reported that 300 people died recently in South Asia due to an extreme heat wave, and the hottest months are still to come

Those reports, and many more, highlight the increasingly dangerous state the planet we all live on is currently undergoing. It was under this context that Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau recently travelled to New York to sign the COP21 United Nations Agreement on Climate Change, along with 174 other countries and the European Union. The assembled diplomats congratulated themselves for the largest signing of an international agreement in one day, and Trudeau also had proud words for those attending, “Today, with my signature, I give you our word that Canada’s efforts will not cease....Climate change will test our intelligence, our compassion and our will. But we are equal to that challenge. I encourage other signatories to move swiftly to follow through on their commitments.”

But do the COP21 Agreement and Justin Trudeau’s climate plans really live up to their own hype?

We detailed the COP21 Paris Agreement when it was first presented last year in *Fire This Time* Volume 10, Issue 2. We pointed out the obvious: it looks great that so many countries are signing on to an international agreement whose goal is to limit greenhouse gas emissions to keep global temperatures from rising more than 2°C by 2100 (with an ideal target of keeping temperature rise below 1.5°C). However, there is absolutely nothing binding in the agreement, and many scientists have pointed out that even if all the countries fulfilled their voluntary targets global temperatures would still rise over 2°C.

The significance of 2°C is a broad scientific consensus that any warming beyond this would trigger imbalances in the planet so severe that the possibility of supporting life becomes improbable. That means if we go there, humanity is likely not going to survive. Even a 1.5°C increase would cause massive and unpredictable damage.

What about Canada and the New Prime Minister?

First, the new Liberal majority government did not change the emissions target set by the previous Conservative government. It’s exactly the same!

Second, the government’s own recently released data shows that if we continue at current levels of activity, it will be impossible to meet that meagre goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030. In fact, emissions will jump to 815 megatons - much higher than the goal of 524 megatons.

No wonder a new report from the Conference Board of Canada ranks Canada 14th among 16 peer countries when it comes to environmental performance, with only the United States and Australia doing worse.

Pipeline Contradictions

“I have been crystal clear for years now on pipelines. One of the fundamental responsibilities of any Canadian prime minister — and this goes back centuries, from grain on railroads to fish and fur — is to get Canadian resources to international markets,

“But what the Conservatives still refuse to understand

is that in order to get our resources to market in the 21st century, we have to be responsible around the environment. We have to respect concerns that communities have and we have to build partnerships with indigenous peoples.” - Justin Trudeau

Trudeau has been promising it all – to build the pipelines, create the jobs, respect indigenous rights and save the environment. Sounds nice, but it’s not possible to do all of those things at once. John Stone, a former climatologist with Environment Canada, and vice-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Working Group II laid out the facts simply, “If you build a pipeline, you’re going to fill it with tar sands that’s going to increase our emissions and that’s not going to allow us to meet our climate change commitments.”

Union of BC Indian Chiefs Grand Chief Stewart Phillip had this to say about the government’s supposed new relationship with indigenous nations and pipelines, “Like everyone else, we’re monitoring these touchy-feely public statements [from governments] that are floating around. But to my knowledge, there isn’t an emerging groundswell of support in First Nations communities, or anything of that nature. Premier Clark and Premier Notley are talking to each other and [Prime Minister Justin] Trudeau is talking to Notley, but they don’t want to talk to the indigenous people who are standing in opposition to these projects. They want to dismiss and ignore the opposition and the concerns that underline that opposition”

So how does Trudeau plan to “respect the concerns” of indigenous nations about the pipelines when so many echo the sentiments of Serge Simon, Grand Chief of the Mohawk Nation in Kanasatake, “I would rather starve before I took any money [for allowing pipelines]. My grandchildren would curse me for leaving them with that legacy.”

Keep Your Promises

Some people’s grandkids are already old enough to figure out the flaws in Trudeau’s promises. On the same New York trip he was



questioned by students a New York University as to how it's possible to support, "still putting money into dirty oil sands" and claiming to be working towards a sustainable environment. Trudeau completed his answer with, "Do I agree that in the future we're going to have to get off fossil fuels? Absolutely. Is that future tomorrow? No, it's not."

He's deliberately avoiding the question though. You don't build a pipeline across the country and use it for one day. Building pipelines from the oil sands in Alberta involves a decades long commitment to a resources extraction and energy utilization process which guarantees that Canada continues along the unsustainable path which is putting the planet and life in such a dangerous position in the first place.

Nobody is blaming Trudeau for creating the problem, but when you campaign on a slogan of "Real Change Now" and you start making promises left right and centre – it's fair to question how you uphold those commitments.

System Change, Not Climate Change! Learn from Cuba!

A research paper published by Oxfam, shows that the richest 1 percent have seen their share of global wealth increase from 44 percent in 2009 to 48 percent in 2014 and at this rate will be more than 50 percent in 2016. So let's not get confused and start fighting amongst ourselves for where the responsibility for our current environmental and financial crisis comes from.

In her remarks on the signing of the COP21 agreement, Cuba's Minister of Science, Technology and Environment, Mrs. Elba Rosa Perez Montoya quoted Cuban President Raul Castro on the broader forces of economy and inequality at play when it comes to discussing the environment, "... We believe that the cooperation framework agreed upon after the Paris Summit on climate change remains limited by the persistence and imposition of irrational production and consumption patterns, inconsistent with the preservation of the human species."

In other words, as long as we prioritize corporate profits above the lives of over 7 billion people and the planet we live in on, any agreement no matter how many important people sign it will fall short. We don't need any more hot air, either in the atmosphere or coming out of the Prime Minister of Canada's mouth. We cannot wait for Trudeau to save us from an environmental or economic catastrophe. Capitalism is the problem. Poor and working people need to work together to expose these false promises and propose real solutions based on dignity, sustainability and social justice. We must demand, "System Change Not Climate Change!"

*Follow Thomas Davies on Twitter:
@thomasdavies59*

CUBA WARNS ABOUT GLOBAL CHALLENGES DESPITE PARIS AGREEMENT



Statement by the minister of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba, Mrs. Elba Rosa Pérez Montoya to the special signature ceremony of the Paris Agreement on climate change. New York, April 22, 2016.

H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations,

Distinguished Heads of States, Ministers and Delegates,

Today, a date of such importance for the preservation of our planet and the human species inhabiting it, it is worth mentioned the words of the historical leader of the Cuba Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz, who, during the first Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island States, in Barbados, stated, and I quote:

"Poor and small countries in the world try to know how we will survive in the coming decades. As we are islands..., we wonder what will happen when the water levels up, and whether we will be able to cope with drought, cyclones and other climate catastrophes that await us."

Science and the current climate behavior corroborate the validity of these concerns. According to the IPCC, sea level has risen about 20 centimeters from 1901 to 2010. According to predictions, it could be worse in the coming decades, reaching one meter by the year 2100. Extreme weather events and floods are ever more frequent, as well as heat waves and droughts.

Year 2015 was the warmest for Earth in the recent 136 years, marking 0.9 degrees centigrade above the average temperature in the twentieth century.

Not surprisingly, the Global Risk Report of the 2015 World Economic Forum placed the lack of mitigation and adaptation to climate change as the most powerful risk for the coming years. The effect of climate change is also present in other identified risks, such as the water crisis, migrations, major natural disasters, and food security.

If we fail to reverse this situation, what will happen to coastal cities worldwide and small islands whose main major cities will not be the only land submerged?

What will happen to food production, particularly for the more than 800 million people suffering from chronic hunger?

How could the world population order and balance be maintained if emigration continues in search of better living conditions, including environment as the natural milieu of the mankind?

Cuba has decided to sign the Paris Agreement and hopes that it is enforced in a near future, certain that it will really contribute to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gasses worldwide. We attained important results in Paris, but equal big challenges are still pending.

It is known that the voluntarily-determined contributions submitted by the countries in

the process towards COP 21 are not enough to keep temperature increase below 2 degrees centigrade, regarding the pre-industrial levels and, let alone, limit that temperature increase to 1.5 degrees, which is a vital goal for island developing States.

Therefore, the permanent increasing ambition to reduce emissions is essential. For developing countries, these reductions will depend on the implementation means, namely financing and technology transfer, whose level of completion reflected in the Agreement was below the expectations and needs.

In this regard, just few days ago, Raul Castro Ruz, President of the Council of State and Minister of the Republic of Cuba expressed and I quote:

"... We believe that the cooperation framework agreed upon after the Paris Summit on climate change remains limited by the persistence and imposition of irrational production and consumption patterns, inconsistent with the preservation of the human species. The lack of political will of industrialized nations prevents the establishment of effective commitments in terms of financing and technology transfer, in keeping with the concept of common but differentiated responsibilities."

Other important issues like that referring to "loss and damage" had also limited progress in Paris and they require greater attention in the progress of the legal regime of this Agreement.

We hope that the contributions of developed countries to the Green Climate Fund contribute to the effective implementation of the Agreement, so that we can define a transparent, just and balanced roadmap for the financial support to developing countries.

Only the progress in these aspects will ensure that the Agreement and the Decisions arising from it do not impose undue burdens on developing countries.

In the context of our national circumstances and priorities for economic and social development, Cuba will continue to work and cooperate firmly in the common struggle to face climate change and build a cleaner and fairer world.

We are confident that the efforts we have undertaken to date in the establishment of new international commitments to stop and cope with climate change, let us save the world.

We have no alternative but to comply with the agreement, in order to survive the current century.

As Fidel once expressed in 2004, I quote: "Dreaming of impossible things is called utopia; fight for goals, not only attainable but also essential for the survival of the species, is called realism".

I thank you very much.

VENEZUELAN REVOLUTION MOVES FORWARD! STOP U.S. INTERVENTION! ★★★★★★



U.S. HANDS OFF VENEZUELA! U.S. Intervention & the Organization of American States (OAS)



Venezuelan workers rally for International Workers Day in Venezuela. May 1, 2016

By Alison Bodine

“Venezuela is desperately in need of political intervention by its neighbors,” begins the final paragraph of the April 12, 2016 Editorial in the Washington Post. The final words of the Editorial read: “An explosion is probably not far off.”

Since the late President Hugo Chavez took power in Venezuela in 1999, the Western mainstream media apparatus has been running a fierce campaign to demonize the government of the Bolivarian Revolution and its leaders. With each new wave of foreign meddling, imperialist governments like the United States and their violent and counter-revolutionary allies in Venezuela work hand-in-hand with mainstream media to create the climate of confusion and fear that they need to carry out their intervention.

What is the OAS?

The Washington Post Editorial goes on to explain itself when it suggests that these “neighbors” of Venezuela “have a ready mechanism in the Organization of American States’ Inter-American Democratic Charter, a treaty that provides for collective action when a regime violates constitutional norms.”

But before we get into why the OAS is being called upon to act, there are two questions that need to be asked, first, what is the OAS? And secondly, what is the Inter-American Democratic Charter?

The Organization of American States (OAS) is an organization made up of 35 member-

states in the Western hemisphere, including Venezuela, as well as the United States and Canada. Since its formation in 1948, it has become known across Latin America for its support of policies in favor of U.S. government’s interests and against the interests of the vast majority of poor and working people in Latin America. This conclusion is no wonder, given that, in 2014, the OAS received over 59% of its funding from the United States (and a further 10% from Canada).

Venezuela’s Counter-Revolutionary Opposition Receives a Nod of Approval from the U.S. Government

Discussion about the intervention of OAS in Venezuela is not new; in fact, the current president of the OAS, Luis Almagro has already threatened to invoke the charter, publishing a letter on the OAS website in January, 2016. However, Venezuela’s violent counter-revolutionary opposition is now beginning to take more action on their demands.

In the last week of April, 2016 a delegation made up of right-wing members of the National Assembly went to Washington, DC to do just what the Washington Post had suggested, to ask for aid and foreign intervention from the OAS. Those that travelled to the U.S. included Luis Florido, the head of the delegation and a deputy in the National Assembly of Venezuela, who said to the news agency EFE, “We demand that the OAS discuss urgently the situation in Venezuela and move towards a resolution where the political crisis and political prisoners are recognized, and the people of Venezuela are permitted to hold an

election for the departure of President Nicolas Maduro.”

Venezuela’s Opposition Struggles to Oust President Maduro

In December of 2015 a majority right-wing representatives were elected to the Venezuelan National Assembly for the first time in the nearly 16 years of the Bolivarian Revolution. From the first days they took office in January, this counter-revolutionary majority has been very clear about their goal to roll back the great gains made by poor and working people in Bolivarian Revolution, as well as their intent to oust the President of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro.

So far, their strategy to force the removal of President Maduro has been focused on attempts to pass laws in the National Assembly. One such law that passed was supposed to cut the Presidential term from six to four years, as well as change some of the procedures of the recall referendum, but a review by Venezuela’s Supreme Court (TSJ) determined that this law was unconstitutional (it altered the spirit of the constitution fundamentally and therefore required a vote by the people of Venezuela to be made into law).

Now, outside of their calls for foreign intervention, the counter-revolutionary opposition is also starting the procedures to complete a recall referendum against President Maduro. This process is built into Venezuela’s 1999 Constitution and applicable to any elected official that has served at least one-half of their term in office. As per the Constitution, the first step to begin the referendum is that 20% of the electorate must sign a petition declaring that they want a referendum, in Venezuela this means that the opposition must collect about 4million signatures.

Following the completion of this step, the opposition must collect more votes for a recall then President Maduro received in the 2013 election for President, or over 7.6 million votes, and they have to do it before January if they want to trigger another Presidential election. If the signatures are not collected by next year, the Vice President of Venezuela will take office for the remainder of the term.

Other Tactics of the Counter-revolutionary Opposition in Venezuela

Beyond the legislation that the right-wing opposition has proposed in Parliament related to deposing the current government, there have also been other laws introduced, such as those to privatize public housing and reverse some of the progressive changes made in labour law. There is also a piece of legislation that was passed in the National Assembly

VENEZUELAN REVOLUTION MOVES FORWARD! STOP U.S. INTERVENTION! ★★★★★★



and recently annulled by the Supreme Court called the “Amnesty Law.” This law would have released around 115 people currently imprisoned in Venezuela for crimes including terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking and fraud, including criminals convicted of involvement in the 2002 attempted coup against President Chavez and the 2014 violent opposition protests known as the “Guarimbas” that killed 43 people.

U.S. Intervention in Venezuela Continues

Political support for Venezuela’s counter-revolutionary opposition is only one tentacle of the U.S. strategy for intervention in Venezuela. The big picture of how the U.S. government is working to defend their interests against the Bolivarian Revolution and the interests of the vast majority of people in Venezuela is stated clearly in a 2004 cable released through Wikileaks. In this cable, the U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela at the time outlined a five-point strategy: “Strengthening Democratic Institutions, Penetrating Chavez’ Political Base, Dividing Chavismo, Protecting Vital US business, and Isolating Chavez internationally.”

In March of 2016, U.S. President Obama renewed an unnecessary and inflammatory Executive Order declaring Venezuela an, “unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security of the United States”, and with it enabled the renewal of U.S. economic sanctions against Venezuela. These sanctions, called the “Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014,” have already been extended until 2019 by the U.S. Senate, and are now awaiting a vote in the House of Representatives.

Beyond the lies and media manipulation coming from U.S. and Western mainstream media outlets, there is also an abundance of right-wing, opposition media in Venezuela. Direct ties between the U.S. government and

media in Venezuela have also been exposed in recent years, including a 2010 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request that revealed the U.S. government had been paying off journalists in Venezuela and other Latin American countries through the Pan American Development Foundation.

President Maduro, the Bolivarian Revolution and Venezuela Are Not Alone!

In the face of over 16 years of constant U.S. intervention, the Bolivarian Revolution has continued to fight against a violent counter-revolutionary opposition and capitalist class that still control major sectors of the Venezuelan economy including food production and distribution.

So far President Nicolas Maduro, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and the Bolivarian Revolution have held strong against U.S. imperialist intervention and attacks from the counter-revolutionary opposition. In fact, all three main strategies in the “road-map” of the right-wing coalition in the National Assembly, called the MUD, have failed. They have tried to “carryout street mobilizations to push for Maduro’s resignation,” but each time the Bolivarian Revolution has been able to organize massive counter-protests and demonstrations in support of Nicolas Maduro. They tried to use their majority in the Venezuelan National Assembly to “to pass a constitutional amendment reducing the presidential term to four years, leading to elections this year,” and to “begin to mobilize for a recall referendum, starting with a new law on referendums, to impede it from being blocked or impeded,” but both of these laws have been determined to be ruled unconstitutional by Venezuela’s Supreme Court.

Now that the right-wing opposition is directly appealing for intervention from the OAS it is also clear that they have forgotten even their

short-term history. According to an article by the Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA) thinktank, “Despite U.S. and Canadian backing, During the crisis in Venezuela in 2014, even if the U.S., Panamanian, and Canadian governments wanted to do more to interfere in Venezuela’s local situation and use the Democratic Charter to promote a more energetic and interventionist active policy, 29 member states chose to vote in favor of a resolution supporting the elected government of President Nicolas Maduro.”

They had forgotten about institutions that the Bolivarian Revolution Venezuela has fought so hard to build and strengthen, such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), the Community of Caribbean and Latin American States (CELAC) and the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA).

Viva Venezuela!

There is another infamous editorial in the recent history of U.S.-Venezuela relations. On April 13, 2002, the New York Times published an editorial titled “Hugo Chavez Departs.” The Editorial continues, “With yesterday’s resignation of President Hugo Chávez, Venezuelan democracy is no longer threatened by a would-be dictator. Mr. Chávez, a ruinous demagogue, stepped down after the military intervened and handed power to a respected business leader, Pedro Carmona.” Little did the New York Times know that despite U.S. funding and political support, the people of Venezuela would triumph later that day and President Hugo Chavez would be returned to power less than 48 hours after his forced resignation.

On May 1, 2016 the people of Venezuela mobilized alongside workers from all around the world to celebrate International Workers Day and demonstrate their support for the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro and the Bolivarian Revolution. These mobilizations took place in a different political situation then the day that President Chavez was triumphantly returned to power in 2002, but they do take place in the same current.

President Nicolas Maduro and the people of Venezuela led by the United Socialist Party (PSUV) are fighting to maintain and advance the gains made for poor and working people in Venezuela. From imperialist countries like the United States and Canada it is our responsibility to defend the sovereignty and self-determination of Venezuela against imperialist intervention.

VENEZUELAN REVOLUTION MOVES FORWARD! STOP U.S. INTERVENTION! ★★★★★★



14 YEARS SINCE THE FAILED 2002 COUP IN VENEZUELA: “Every 11 has its 13!”

By Alison Bodine

April 13, 2002 was a day of victory for the people of Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution. On that day, then President Hugo Chavez returned as the rightfully elected President of Venezuela after an April 11, 2002 attempted coup d'état lead by right-wing forces supported by the U.S. government.

Over the months and years following the failed coup, the ties between the coup-plotters and the U.S. government, the CIA and U.S. government sponsored agencies like the National Endowment of Democracy (NED), were revealed. Venezuela's top media moguls and leading right-wing opposition politicians were also exposed as being implicated in the coup.

However, despite all of the resources and foreign support for the coup, in less than 48 hours the people of Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution had triumphed in defending President Hugo Chavez and the great gains that the Bolivarian Revolution had made for

poor and working people across Venezuela.

Today, over 14 years after their failed coup, the U.S. continues their non-stop campaign against the Bolivarian Revolution. Through their ongoing support for Venezuela's counter-revolutionary opposition, the U.S. government and their imperialist allies are attempting to destabilize Venezuela and force the removal of President Nicolas Maduro. This continued attack is what makes marking the April 13 victory against the 2002 coup so important.

Vancouver Commemorates the Victory of April 13 in Venezuela!

In Vancouver, Canada, this important victory for oppressed people in Venezuela was commemorated in an event organized by the General Consulate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. This cultural evening was held at the Vancouver Public Library Central Branch in Downtown, Vancouver.

On this evening, supporters of the Bolivarian Revolution in Vancouver participated in a dynamic program that included a film, speakers,

delicious refreshments and live music, as well as the presentation of an art and information display explaining the significance of April 13 and the timeline of the failed coup.

The program was MC'd by Aitzanid Molero, Second General Consul at the Venezuelan Consulate, who began the program by welcoming the First Venezuelan Consul General Wilfredo Perez Bianco. The Consul General gave a short summary of the importance of the April 11 failed coup in Venezuela to the people of Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution. His remarks were translated by Tamara Hansen, the Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC).

Following the Consul General, there was a short film shown that interviewed many of the people that were at Miraflores Palace, where the coup occurred. In this informative video, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro as a variety of people to relive their experiences that day and what it was like to witness the coup as well as the triumphant return of President Chavez.

Following the film and short program, there was live Latin American music and Venezuelan refreshments as participants were given time to view the art display and discuss the coup and Venezuela today.



By Alison Bodine

Tuesday, April 19 was an International Day of Solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution, with actions taking place in 40 countries spanning four continents.

This international day of action was called in response one of the most recent U.S. government attacks on Venezuela. In March 2016, U.S. President Obama renewed Executive Order declaring Venezuela an, “unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security of the United States” and paving the way for continued U.S. sanctions.

At demonstrations from Canada, U.S., and Mexico to Europe and Lebanon to the streets of Venezuela, supporters of the Bolivarian Revolution also joined in a social media campaign using the Twitter hashtag #SomosRevolucionBolivariana (We are the

Bolivarian Revolution). Across Canada, solidarity actions were also held in Vancouver, Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec City, and Toronto.

The solidarity action in Vancouver was organized by the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign with the support of the Venezuelan Consulate in Vancouver. The Venezuela Solidarity Campaign organized two events on April 19, a protest at the U.S. Consulate demanding “U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!” followed by info tabling and petitioning against U.S. and imperialist intervention in Venezuela at the downtown Vancouver Art Gallery.

Kelly White, Coast Salish Elder and supporter of Venezuela opened the program with words and a song of solidarity against U.S. intervention. Then, in between rounds of chanting and marching in front of the U.S. Consulate, Vancouver participants heard from a variety of speakers against Western intervention in Venezuela. This included Azza Rojbi, who spoke from Vancouver's antiwar coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO), as well as Tamara Hansen, the chair of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Venezuela (VCSC) who read aloud a letter of solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution sent as part of the April 19 Day of Action. This protest at the U.S. Consulate, was also the 5th consecutive monthly protest organized by the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign at the U.S.

Consulate.

Following the protest supporters of the Bolivarian Revolution took the action down the street to a busy plaza in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Here, the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign was joined by members of the Venezuelan Consulate as well as the Hugo Chavez Peoples Defense Front – Southwest Chapter. Over the next few hours, participants invited people passing by to get more information about Venezuela as well as to sign the petition calling for an end to imperialist intervention in Venezuela.

In addition to information about the Bolivarian Revolution and its gigantic social, economic and political gains, the tables also included an art display describing the April 11 attempted coup in Venezuela and the popular uprising of Venezuelan people that returned President Chavez to power less than 48 hours later.

April 19 is also a significant day in Venezuelan history as it marks the anniversary of the “Cry for Independence” and the signing of the “Act of Independence,” 206 years ago, in 1810.

Fire This Time invites you to join the Fire This Time's Venezuela Solidarity Campaign in the streets of Vancouver, Canada to defend the Bolivarian Revolution and demand:

- > OBAMA REPEAL THE DECREE NOW!
- > U.S. HANDS OFF VENEZUELA!
- > U.S. RESPECT THE SOVEREIGNTY AND SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE!
- > LONG LIVE THE VENEZUELAN BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION!

MAWO CONTINUES TO MOBILIZE AGAINST WAR AND OCCUPATION!

LAUNCHES NEW PETITION DEMANDING CANADA CANCEL THE \$15 BILLION ARMS DEAL WITH SAUDI ARABIA!

By Alison Bodine

On Saturday April 23, Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) once again returned to the streets of Vancouver to raise their voices for an end to imperialist wars and occupations! With bright yellow signs demanding "Stop War and Occupation: Not Refugees!" and "U.S. Hands Off Syria" and a large tent full of antiwar materials and a long sign inviting passers-by to "Sign a Petition for Humanity," it wasn't long before people walking by stopped to see what the demonstration was all about.

The end of March 2016 marked one year of the vicious U.S.-backed Saudi Arabian bombing of Yemen. To date approximately 8,500 Yemenis have been killed and over 80% of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance. Despite these massive human rights abuses, imperialist governments continue to supply weapons to Saudi Arabia. This includes the Canadian government, which is going ahead with a \$15 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia. In response to this assault, MAWO launched a new petition demanding that Canada cancel their sale to Saudi Arabia immediately.

MAWO activists also were asking people to sign a petition demanding "Canada Hands Off Syria and Iraq!" which outlines the recent Canadian intervention in the region, including the fact that Canada has tripled the number of

special forces in Iraq from 65 to over 200 in the last month, bringing the total number of Canadian military personnel in Iraq to 830.

Throughout the afternoon people of all ages and from many different walks of life came by the table to discuss and debate about imperialist wars, occupations and intervention from Afghanistan and Syria to Palestine and Libya. All the while, antiwar music and chanting could be heard along the crowded block.

MAWO defines the period of perpetual war that we live in today as the new era of war and occupation. Already the countries of Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and now Yemen have been devastated. As peace-loving people in Vancouver, Canada we cannot stand by as the war machine continues on its brutal campaign. Mobilization Against War and Occupation invites you to join in the struggle to organize against war and occupation. Find out about upcoming events online at www.mawovancouver.org or Twitter @mawovan.

US/UK/CANADA/France/NATO:
NO TO WAR ON SYRIA, IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN!

SAUDI ARABIA HANDS OFF YEMEN,
SYRIA AND IRAQ!

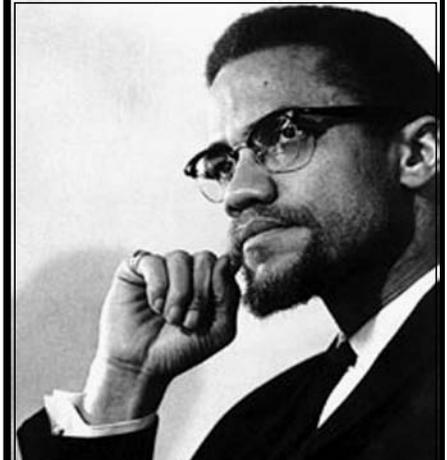
CANADA OUT OF IRAQ!

CANADA OUT OF AFGHANISTAN!

TURKEY OUT OF SYRIA AND IRAQ!

BUILDING AN ANTIWAR MOVEMENT IS A NECESSITY NOT AN OPTION

"By Any Means Necessary..."



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

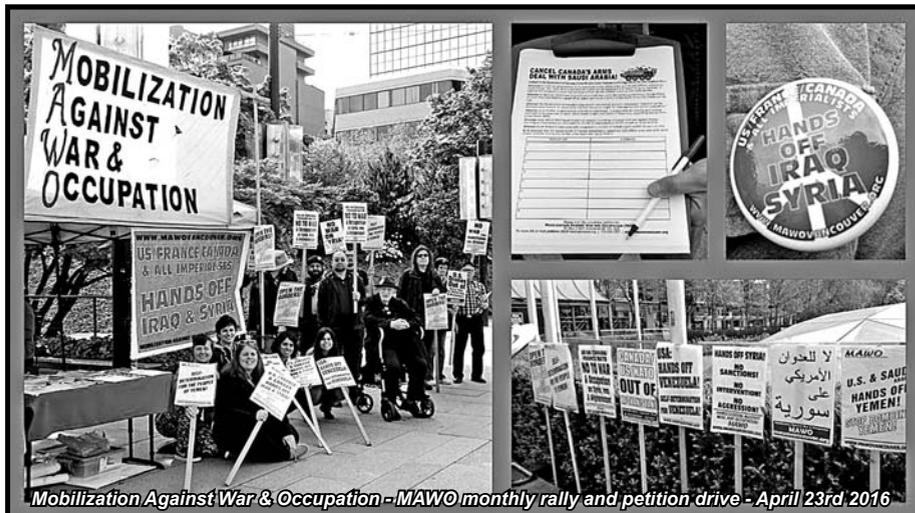
Revolutionary Black Liberation Leader in the U.S.
1925-1965

Speech at Ford Auditorium
February 14, 1965 (the day after his house was bombed)
Detroit, Michigan

Man, how could you think you're an American and you haven't ever had any kind of American treat over here? You have never, never!

Ten men can be sitting at a table eating, you know, dining, and I can come and sit down where they're dining. They're dining; I've got a plate in front of me, but nothing is on it. Because all of us are sitting at the same table, are all of us diners? I'm not a diner until you let me dine. Then I become a diner. Just being at the table with others who are dining doesn't make me a diner, and this is what you've got to get in your head here in this country.

Just because you're in this country doesn't make you an American. No, you've got to go farther than that before you can become an American. You've got to enjoy the fruits of Americanism. You haven't enjoyed those fruits. You've enjoyed the thorns. You've enjoyed the thistles. But you have not enjoyed the fruits, no sir. You have fought harder for the fruits than the white man has. You have worked harder for the fruits than the white man has, but you've enjoyed less. When the man put the uniform on you and sent you abroad, you fought harder than they did. Yeah, I know you--when you're fighting for them, you can fight.



Mobilization Against War & Occupation - MAWO monthly rally and petition drive - April 23rd, 2016

GERARDO SPEAKS!

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don't know in the whole magnitude how much you helped us. Not only our freedom but our resistance.

In one of the worst moments I had in those 16 years, was when it was back in 2003, they took me once again to the hole (solitary confinement). We were used to the hole already after having spent almost 20 months there. But this time the orders from who knows who, were that we had to be in complete isolation, no contact with any human being except the guard that took the food to me. So, the hole was not enough because there were people cleaning our prison and they could talk to you and say things. So they took me to a section that prisoners in there used to call it 'the cage'. It was in the basement below the hole, just 10 cells with double doors. The first door bars with a plastic screen so you couldn't speak to anybody and a space like this [again, he opens his hands almost a meter apart and forms a tall but very small space] and a metal door. Oh man, when they closed that you were completely isolated. You wouldn't know if it was day or night. They got me there wearing just underwear, no shoes, light on 24 hours, no reading material, no writing material. I re-

member there was a Colombian guy, another prisoner that was the one that cleaned the floors. And the people in the other 9 cells had the middle door open, so they could at least chat with one another, and this guy comes cleaning everyday and goes there and says: "hey buddy, how you doing? You need something? Keep up" whatever... I used to listen to his voice. He'd get as close as possible to my cell, and be like: "hey you, the one in the last cell. I'm sorry man, I can't get closer to you. The guards are watching me. They told me I could not be closer to you." And one day when I was in the yard after all that finished I listened to the same voice and I called him saying:

- "are you Colombian?"

- "Yes"

- "You were the person who cleaned the cage?"

- "Yes"

- "Oh, I was the one in the last cell"

And I tell you to have an idea of how they behaved with the 5, without having committed a single disciplinary record. In that cell, in a very old facility, when the guy in the cell on top flushed the toilet, dirty water used to run through my wall [crowd gasps]. And the plan was to have me there for one year, under something called S.A.M., Special Administrative Measure. One day, they gave me a bunch of paper to sign; no contact with other prisoners, no visitation, no this and this and this... and you're gonna be here like that and you're gonna be here for a year and after a year we can check and sign for another whole year. That was the plan. But I received the visit of one lawyer. He told me: "Keep up, keep your strength, there are many people out there fighting for you. There are people in front of the State Department, there are people in front of Justice Department, in front of the Bureau of Prison, there are people in front of many embassies and consulates around the world fighting for you." Those words were with me during the 30 days that lasted. The only thing that I could do was pace from one wall to the other but I kept thinking about that. I kept thinking about many people like you who were out there and thanks to that I didn't lose my mind. And thanks to that, what was suppose to last for a year, lasted only for 30 days. And I knew every time you resisted something like that it makes you stronger. Because you said if I resisted that, there's nothing that I couldn't resist. And this is one example of how much you helped to the Cuban 5.

So, don't be tired, I'm sorry if I made you tired by listening to this. Thank you very much! thank you all! [crowd cheers] on behalf of my four brothers, on behalf of our families, on behalf of the Cuban people, thank you very much! Long live solidarity!

[standing ovation]

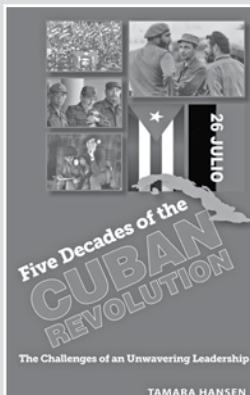
Battle of Ideas Press

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.



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OUR HERITAGE



Rosa Luxemburg
Revolutionary Marxist Leader
1871-1919

Excerpts from - *The Idea of May Day on the March (1913)*

Armaments and wars, international contradictions and colonial politics accompany the history of capitalism from its cradle. It is the most extreme intensification of these elements, a drawing together, a gigantic storming of these contradictions which has produced a new epoch in the course of modern society. In a dialectical interaction, both cause and effect of the immense accumulation of capital and the heightening and sharpening of the contradictions which go with it internally, between capital and labor; externally, between the capitalist states - imperialism has opened the final phase, the division of the world by the assault of capital. A chain of unending, exorbitant armaments on land and on sea in all capitalist countries because of rivalries; a chain of bloody wars which have spread from Africa to Europe and which at any moment could light the spark which would become a world fire; moreover, for years the uncheckable specter of inflation, of mass hunger in the whole capitalist world - all of these are the signs under which the world holiday of labor, after nearly a quarter of a century, approaches. And each of these signs is a flaming testimony of the living truth and the power of the idea of May Day.

No wonder! The whole development, the whole tendency of imperialism in the last decade leads the international working class to see more clearly and more tangibly that only the personal stepping forward of the broadest masses, their personal political action, mass demonstrations, and mass strikes which must sooner or later open into a period of revolutionary struggles for the power in the state, can give the correct answer of the proletariat to the immense oppression of imperialistic policy. In this moment of armament lunacy and war orgies, only the resolute will to struggle of the working masses, their capacity and readiness for powerful mass actions, can maintain world peace and push away the menacing world conflagration. And the more the idea of May Day, the idea of resolute mass actions as a manifestation of international unity, and as a means of struggle for peace and for socialism, takes root in the strongest troops of the International, the German working class, the greater is our guarantee that out of the world war which, sooner or later, is unavoidable, will come forth a definite and victorious struggle between the world of labor and that of capital.

Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 Reaches 60th Weekly Action in Campaign Demanding, "REPEAL BILL C-51 NOW!"

As the months of Canadian government inaction on Bill C-51 pile up, the Vancouver-based Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 continues to push forward with its weekly action campaign demanding the repeal of the hated "Secret Police State Law". April saw yet another month where Prime Minister Justin Trudeau did everything he could not discuss the issue, while at transit stations and busy roads across the Lower Mainland the Working Group continued to encounter huge support for its demand to, "REPEAL BILL C-51 NOW!"

The addition to the campaign of banner drops has been very successful. Organizers have taken a large bright banner, picket signs and megaphone to overpasses on busy roads to encourage drivers to honk if they support a repeal of Bill C-51. The amount of honking is almost non-stop, with drivers also waving, giving the 'thumbs up' and even parking their cars to come and join the actions! This month the campaign held banner drops on the Queensborough bridge between Burnaby and New Westminster, and over Highway #1 east of Vancouver – the busiest transit artery in and out of Vancouver.

The Working Group also held picket and petition drives at the Main Street Skytrain Station as well as the City Centre Skytrain Station. These continue to be very busy and dynamic actions as people come to sign the petition to repeal Bill C-51, and also to ask about recent developments regarding the law. The level of frustration with the Liberal government and Justin Trudeau increases every week, as people come to understand that Liberal Party elections promises of "Real Change Now!" and pledges to address the massive public concern over Bill C-51 remain unfulfilled.

The Working Group has now completed its 60th consecutive weekly action against Bill C-51, and remains committed to continue the actions until the law has been repealed. The fight to defend our democratic and human rights is far from over!

ISLAMOPHOBIA: THE WAR AT HOME

WHY IMPERIALIST GOVERNMENTS USE RACISM & FEAR

PUBLIC FORUM + MULTIMEDIA
WEDNESDAY

**MAY 18
7PM**

JOE'S CAFE
1150 COMMERCIAL DR.



MONTHLY ANTI-WAR PETITION DRIVE & RALLY

US/UK/CANADA/France/NATO: NO TO WAR ON SYRIA, IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN!
SAUDI ARABIA HANDS OFF YEMEN, SYRIA AND IRAQ!

CANADA OUT OF IRAQ!

CANADA OUT OF AFGHANISTAN!

TURKEY OUT OF SYRIA AND IRAQ!

NO TO ISLAMOPHOBIA!

ISRAEL HANDS OFF PALESTINE!

END THE OCCUPATION NOW!

END THE BLOCKADE OF CUBA!

LIFT ALL SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAN!

NO TO WAR & OCCUPATION!

YES TO SELF-DETERMINATION!

**SATURDAY
MAY 28**

2PM

**Vancouver
Art Gallery
Robson Street @
Howe Street**

Downtown Vancouver, BC
WWW.MAWOVANCOUVER.ORG



THERE IS NOTHING 'NORMALIZED' ABOUT THIS RELATIONSHIP



9TH MONTHLY PROTEST
**TUESDAY MAY 17, 2016
U.S. CONSULATE
4-5PM**

1075 W. PENDER ST. - DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER, CANADA

FRIENDS OF CUBA AGAINST THE U.S. BLOCKADE VANCOUVER

NoBloqueoVancouver@gmail.com | @NOBLOQUEOVAN

WWW.VANCUBA@BLOCKADE.ORG

1 Decade of Fire This Time Newspaper

continued from page 16

world defined by war, occupation and a deep world wide capitalist crisis coupled with the necessity of building an anti-capitalist and anti imperialist consciousness to confront it. 10 years later he reflected, "From an idea we have become an established political tendency. The Fire This Time newspaper is not just a new revolutionary working class newspaper, but the backbone of a revolutionary socialist project in Canada."

He emphasized Fire This Time's focus on solidarity with Cuba and Venezuela, and its organizing perspective and method, "Fire This Time tries very hard to be very close to touch the pulse of understanding, mentality and struggle of the working class. The newspaper's job is to support and engage with other progressive

and revolutionary movements and their struggles. We seek to reach a collective level of mass consciousness through analysis, solidarity and political campaigns which allows the working class and oppressed people to think socially and act politically, to achieve social justice locally and internationally, as Malcolm X said, by any means necessary."

Noah Fine and Macarena Cataldo, both contributors to the Fire This Time Newspaper finished the program by performing a song by revolutionary Chilean musician, Violeta Para.

Tamara Hansen closed the celebration by thanking everyone for attending and emphasizing, "The reasons Fire This Time was created are even more real and more important today, let's continue to work together to build that better world we all know is possible!"



Friday May 13 ²⁰¹⁶

① **PROTEST ACTION:**
U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!
4-5pm
 U.S. Consulate
 1075 W. Pender St. at Thurlow St.
 Downtown Vancouver, Canada

② **INFO TABLING & PETITIONING:**
Maduro is Our President!
5:30-7pm
 Vancouver Art Gallery
 Robson St. at Howe St.
 Downtown Vancouver, Canada

Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice
 Venezuela Solidarity Campaign

WWW · FIRETHISTIME · NET



**FUNDRAISER
 ALL AGES!
 VANCOUVER, CANADA**

CUBAN HIP-HOP PIONEERS ARE CELEBRATING THEIR 20TH ANNIVERSARY THIS SUMMER! TO MARK THE OCCASION, THEY ARE ORGANIZING THREE DAYS OF WORKSHOPS, SEMINARS AND HIP HOP EVENTS IN HARANA - AND INVITING FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD TO JOIN THEM.

HUGE HIP-HOP & PEACE FESTIVAL SUPPORTERS, OBSESSION TRAVELLED TO VANCOUVER FOUR TIMES TO ROCK CROWDS AND COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL ARTISTS. THEY ALSO HOSTED US AT THE INTERNATIONAL HIP-HOP SYMPOSIUM IN HAVANA.

NOW, THEY'VE ASKED MAMU AND HIP-HOP 4 PEACE FOR OUR SUPPORT IN MAKING THEIR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION A GREAT SUCCESS.

**ART • PHOTO EXHIBIT • VIDEO
 LIVE PERFORMANCES**

TUESDAY MAY 24TH 7 PM

**MOBILIZATION
 AGAINST WAR
 & OCCUPATION
 - MAMU -**

1150 COMMERCIAL DRIVE

JOE'S CAFE NORTH HALL

WWW.MAMOVANCOUVER.ORG