

BILL C-45: AN ATTACK ON NATIVE RIGHTS IN CANADA!

On December 10th, thousands of Indigenous people and their supporters across Canada marched through the streets of major cities, small towns and reservations to oppose the Conservative government's increased attacks on Native rights.



Page 6

PEACE NOT WAR

Monthly Petition Drive & Anti-War Rally

IMPERIALISTS HANDS OFF SYRIA! NO SANCTIONS ON SYRIA & IRAN! STOP ISRAEL'S ONGOING ASSAULT ON PALESTINIANS!

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RAUL CASTRO SPEAKS



Page 31

We have come to the end of this Congress after intensive working

FIRE THIS TIME

We are realists... We dream the impossible - che



IN SUPPORT & FOR THE SPEEDY RECOVERY OF VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ

Pages 9-11



NO to Occupation

Solidarity Party of Afghanistan



AFGHANISTAN, A CATASTROPHE FOR HUMANKIND

Page 2



WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE CUBAN 5



Page 13, 27 & 29

GIUSTINO DI CELMO: THE GREATEST PAIN FOR A FATHER

There is no greater pain than the one felt by a father over the death of his son, even more so when that son has died a violent and cruel death said Fabio's father Giustino

Page 17

U.S. VETERANS FOR PEACE: U.S. HANDS OFF SYRIA!

Page 15



Veterans For Peace urgently calls on the United States and NATO to cease all military activity

AFGHANISTAN

A CATASTROPHE FOR HUMANKIND

U.S. & NATO OUT OF AFGHANISTAN!



By Nita Palmer

Catastrophe

December 2 – The quiet before dawn in Jalalabad, Afghanistan was broken by the thunder of bombs and gunfire as a group of Afghan militants attacked the joint US-Afghan air base in the city. The attack was the latest in a series of offensives by the Taliban and other forces this year which have targeted some of the most heavily armed fortresses of the US/NATO forces and the Afghan government. This year alone, there have been assaults on the Afghan Defence Ministry in Kabul and on several major US bases, including

an attack on Camp Bastion in Helmand province which killed a Marine colonel and destroyed six US fighter jets – the largest loss of US combat aircraft since the Vietnam war. Although in this latest ambush the attackers did not succeed in entering the base, it was a reminder of the strength of the Taliban and other Afghan rebel forces, and that, despite claims to the contrary, the US and their NATO allies are not winning the war there.

A Social Catastrophe

Since October 7, 2001, the US and NATO have waged war on Afghanistan. It has of course, been called a war against the Taliban, a war against terrorism, and a war to bring freedom and democracy to

the Afghan people. Rather than a better country, though, Afghans are today more than ever living in a homeland plagued by social degeneration.

The plight of Afghanistan's internally displaced people – refugees in their own country – highlights the social catastrophe which Afghans face. Many refugees dread the freezing temperatures of the coming winter, when many people, most of them children and elders, will die of hunger and exposure. French aid agency Solidarités International estimates that 100 children died in the refugee camps around Kabul alone last winter.

Rather than creating homes and a better

life for those in need, the occupation of Afghanistan has forced many out of their homes and into refugee camps. Many of those in the camps were pushed out of their homes in the fighting between the Taliban and foreign forces. Others have been forced to abandon their homes in search of work or pushed off their land by Afghanistan's powerful warlords.

On the other hand, education is one of the so-called success stories of foreign troops in Afghanistan. Indeed, it is an important goal in a country where the male literacy rate is 43% and woman's literacy is just 13% (UNESCO). USAID claims that they have "built or refurbished" 680 schools in Afghanistan and trained more than 53,000 teachers; however, Afghan accounts reveal that many of these schools provide little actual education. Radio Free Afghanistan, a division of Radio Free Europe, reports that they have received complaints from students and parents across the country that they are learning nothing in schools. Despite attending a refugee camp school in Kabul

for years, 15-year-old Sheila has yet to learn how to write her own name. "I am supposed to study the Koran, Dari, mathematics, Pashto, the English language – altogether I am enrolled in eleven subjects," she said in an interview with RFE. "But there are no lessons at my school because the teachers come for just a few minutes. Then they leave. So we sit there doing nothing."

The Afghan government also funds teacher-training seminars in provincial areas. But some who have attended those seminars say precious money is being wasted. One middle-school science teacher in Konduz Province, who did not want to be named, tells RFE/RL that an Afghan-funded seminar now under way in Konduz began this month with much fanfare but deteriorated into a useless exercise when it was time to focus on training teachers. "There are no instructors there to train teachers. There are no books or teaching materials or laboratory equipment that is so important for teaching science -- like microscopes," the teacher says. "I assume that a lot of money was spent on this seminar. But there is nothing here. This will not bring good results." Yunis, the father of two boys who attend an Afghan public school in the northeastern province of Takhar, has a similar story. "My complaint is about the entire education system in Afghanistan -- the teachers, the administrators, and the government. We send our sons to school but they aren't learning anything in first or second grade, or even by the 12th grade," he says. "Even students in the 12th grade are unable to write their names. The Education Ministry is paying the teachers a salary but the children are learning nothing." (Source of this paragraph: rawa.org)

A Security Catastrophe

As well, the general lack of security in the country has forced many schools to close or prevented students, especially girls, from attending. And for many destitute

Afghan families, their survival comes before the children attending school. Often, even children as young as five must work to feed their families. Without resolving these most basic human rights issues, education for Afghans will not be possible.

Of course, one could argue that change in Afghanistan will take time, and that the corruption and lack of security in the country must be addressed for improvements to be made. This is true; however, the idea that foreign troops will solve any of these problems is a bald-faced lie.

Fighting between NATO troops and the Taliban has created widespread instability. In many areas, warlords with powerful allies in the Afghan government have been armed and given authority to rule as they see fit, designated as the Afghan Local Police. Corruption in the Afghan government, heavily supported by the US and NATO, is legendary as well. All of these factors hinder rather than support the delivery of aid to the country and the improvement of Afghan lives.

While the US and NATO can cite billions of dollars in aid handed to Afghanistan over the last decade, the reality is that these efforts are a tiny drop in the bucket of overall military spending. They are designed more to provide PR for a war which is increasingly unpopular both within Afghanistan and the US -and here in Canada- than to actually help Afghans. For example, the budget for USAID in Afghanistan for 2011 was \$2.05 billion, with just \$300 million spent on health and education (and none on refugee assistance). Six hundred and seventy-eight million dollars was spent on roads and power, amenities which are of as much



Veterans for Peace protest in front of White House December 16, 2011

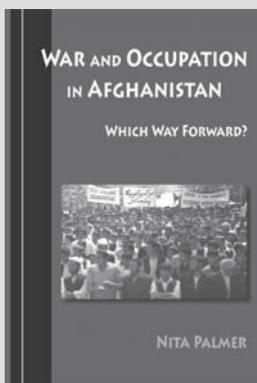
Battle of Ideas Press

WAR & OCCUPATION IN AFGHANISTAN WHICH WAY FORWARD?

BY NITA PALMER

"The problem of Afghanistan boils down to just two words: foreign occupation. The Canada/US/NATO occupation forces claim that corruption, poverty, drug production, the presence of the Taliban and other social or political crises are the fundamental problems of Afghanistan which they must fix. The irony of this claim is that the same occupation forces have proven themselves completely incapable of fixing these problems or of bettering the lives of Afghan people"

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



January 2010, paperback, 155 pages, illustrated, \$7.00
ISBN 978-0-9864716-0-5 Copyright © 2010 by Battle of Ideas Press
PO Box 21607, Vancouver, BC, V5L 5G3, Canada

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continued on page 4

continued from page 3

importance to US forces as to Afghans. With the US war effort alone costing \$10.5 billion per month according to 2012 budget figures, the entire USAID Afghanistan budget for a year is equivalent to what the US military spends in less than a week in the country.

A Moral Catastrophe

There are hundreds, if not thousands of ways to describe the lack of moral integrity demonstrated by foreign forces in Afghanistan, from their very presence in the country, to the humiliating and murderous “night raids” on Afghan villages, to the bombings of weddings and other celebrations. In the past two years, however, we have seen some of the most heinous and inhuman acts committed by US forces against Afghan people. In July 2011, US soldiers were videotaped urinating on the bodies of Taliban militants. Then in March, the horrifying news came of Sergeant Robert Bales attacking and murdering in cold blood 17 Afghan civilians, mostly women and children.

Disturbingly but perhaps not surprisingly, an Afghan parliamentary investigative team found that Sergeant Bales was not the only soldier involved in the atrocity. After speaking to survivors of the attack and reviewing evidence, the commission concluded that Bales did not act alone. Afghan children who were witnesses to the massacre stated that between 15 and 20 soldiers were involved.

Then just a week ago came a report from the Afghanistan Information Network that US forces had raped several women

during a night raid on a village in the Chahar Bolak district of Balkh province. Locals who reported the crimes did not want to disclose the name of the village, as they said they had been threatened with retribution if they reported the incident.

While horrific acts like these have surfaced more frequently on the nightly news, the vast majority of incidents like these likely go unreported for fear of retribution. Particularly in cases of rape, it is likely that many Afghan women would not come forward, since they could be punished or jailed for adultery.

The Pentagon tries to dismiss these crimes as the work of a few “bad apples”, but the reality is that rape, slaughter and other acts of violence are institutionalized within US and other foreign military in Afghanistan. Just like night raids on villages, they are used as weapons to instill fear and compliance in the civilian population.

A Military Catastrophe

After more than a decade of war and the loss of tens of thousands of lives, both of Afghan civilians and foreign forces, there is little that US and NATO forces can claim to have achieved – even by their own benchmarks. As noted previously, the task of helping Afghans create a better country has been a disaster. Only the wealthy elite in Afghanistan have truly benefited from the occupation. Women’s rights, a long-stated goal



of foreign forces, have deteriorated as living conditions have deteriorated – and they are constantly violated by the US’ own soldiers. We have seen that there is a complete lack of will to truly improve the lives of Afghans.

However, even in areas which are of strategic military importance to the US and NATO, their project has failed abysmally. The US, along with other NATO allies have been striving to build an Afghan National Police force and the Afghan National Army with the goal of handing over much of the military responsibility in the country to an obedient and well-trained ally. However, the project is not only failing, it is backfiring. Despite the high unemployment rates in the country, the Afghan National Army has to replace a third of its force every year, according to the New York Times. Desertion, defection and low re-enlistment rates are major causes.

The problems don’t end with enlistment, however. Members of the Army and police are killed at an alarming rate – more than 300 a month, according to the Afghan Defence Ministry. As well, many



NATO supply convoy set on fire on route to Afghanistan August 23, 2011



what the US government is calling the planned removal of tens of thousands of troops from the country. However, in reality, several thousand US Army troops will remain in the country, along

with around 100,000 private “defence contractors” - companies like Xe (formerly Blackwater) that do the work of US Army forces with almost zero accountability. Estimates at the numbers of Army troops needed to remain range from 10,000 to 30,000, with the higher number being favoured by some long-time Afghanistan policy advisers.

The US, Canada and NATO, are facing a quagmire in Afghanistan. There are increasing demands for a total troop withdrawal from within the United States, Afghanistan and from people internationally. At the same time, they have been unable to defeat the Taliban. Yet if they withdraw all troops and let Afghans determine their own future, there is every possibility that Afghanistan will not become the country that the US and NATO want: an ally and a puppet which can provide a base for US and NATO interests in the Middle East, South and Central Asia.

The US, Canada, and NATO have decided instead to try to pull the wool over the eyes of both Afghans and their own citizens by staging a “troop withdrawal” while in fact maintaining a strong military presence in the country. The continued deployment of foreign troops to Afghanistan is not be-

ing decided by whether the presence of those troops has benefited Afghans; it is decided by whether the presence of those troops has benefited the US and NATO’s immediate and strategic interests in the whole region.

Afghans Say: Occupiers Out Now!

On November 26, hundreds of students at Jalalabad University protested the death sentence handed to an Afghan soldier, Abdul Saboor, who killed 5 French soldiers during a joint operation in Kapisa province in January. The Guardian writes, “The Americans and British are killing a lot of Afghan civilians and none of them are going to be hanged. So if an Afghan kills, why should he be executed, this is the biggest question for us,” said Mirwais Ghayour, a 30-year-old engineering student who helped organize the protest. But their anger was directed at Kabul as well as foreign forces; they burned a US flag and shouted “down with the government”, and Ghayour warned there would be a “serious reaction” if the execution went ahead.”

This protest against foreign troops and their Afghan puppet government was one of many thousands that have occurred at Jalalabad University and across Afghanistan over the last twelve years. It is a reminder that it is not only the Taliban who are fighting against foreign troops in Afghanistan, but the whole population of this occupied country. Uncertain as they may be about the country’s future, Afghans all across the country are sure of one thing: foreign troops are not improving their homeland.

The problems of Afghanistan cannot be solved overnight. It is a society suffering from poverty and divisions created by decades of incessant war. The country may indeed be confronted with many difficult challenges and descend into different chaos as it is right now if foreign troops leave. However, amid the challenges, Afghans would also have the opportunity to build a country truly of their own, not one that serves foreign masters. The last decade has proved above all that peace, prosperity and a way forward for Afghans will not be brought by foreign troops, war and occupation. It’s long overdue to leave Afghanistan to the Afghan people. US, UK, Canada and NATO out of Afghanistan now!

recruits have been turning their guns on foreign forces. This year alone, more than 60 US and NATO troops have been killed in attacks by member of the Afghan Army or National Police.

Catastrophic Negotiations with the Taliban

For the last decade, we have heard a constant stream of news decrying the Taliban as the enemies of America, the West and the Afghan people. Yet today the US is officially engaged in peace talks with the Taliban. As the New York Times put it in an October 4 article, “American military commanders long ago concluded that the Afghan war could only end in a negotiated settlement with the Taliban, not a military victory.”

After so many years of decrying the Taliban’s human rights abuses, the US administration is now willing to allow the Taliban control of some areas of the country as well as a role in the Afghan government – so long as they agree to play by the US’ terms.

Occupation Phase II: US “Troop Withdrawal”

After more than a decade of war, US and NATO troops are finally supposed to withdraw in 2014 – at least that is



Bill C-45 an Attack on Native Rights- Disguised as a Budget Bill

By Aaron Mercredi



Protest against Bill C-45, University of Winnipeg

On December 10th, thousands of Indigenous people and their supporters across Canada marched through the streets of major cities, small towns and reservations to oppose the Conservative government's increased attacks on Native rights. Under the banner of "Idle No More", this co-ordinated action took specific aim at the omnibus budget implementation Bill C-45, which the Conservative government introduced and tried to push through without anyone noticing.

What is Bill C-45?

Bill C-45, also known as the Jobs and Growth Act, 2012, was introduced by the Conservative government to put in to law different aspects of the federal government's 2012 budget plan. It is an omnibus bill that includes extensive amendments and revisions to more than 60 existing federal laws and regulations, including changes to the Fisheries Act, the Navigable Waters Protection Act, and the Indian Act. The bill was introduced

in October, and the House of Commons immediately passed a motion to limit how long it could be debated by MPs. While this was taking place, a delegation of leaders from some of the major Indigenous organizations were barred from entering parliament to deliver a message in opposition to the bill. This 'just push it through' style is nothing new for Prime Minister Stephen Harper. In March 2012, when the Conservative government announced its new budget plan, it used its majority in the House of Commons to push it through, despite huge opposition across the country to its gutting of social services, blatant attacks on the rights of workers, Indigenous people, and its completely undemocratic nature. The Conservatives then introduced their first budget implementation bill, Bill C-38 (Bill C-45's older sibling), and once again passed a motion to limit its time for

debate. As it stands now, Bill C-45 has gone through the different layers of government and has been made in to law. But, not without opposition.

What is wrong with Bill C-45?

Just like its older sibling, Bill C-45 will be implementing a budget that is not only ignoring the interests of people in Canada, but is steadfastly working against them. The Idle No More national day of action took particular aim at the devastating effects that this bill will have on the environment and Indigenous people in Canada.

The changes made to the Fisheries Act, the federal government act designed to protect fish and fish habitat, would benefit the demands of industry and make it less accountable for their abuse. Industry would be able to request changes, or even cancellations, to their existing commitments to protect fish habitat, or be left off the hook for lost or damaged habitat if they promise compensation. While many Indigenous people depend on harvesting fish, and either have the inherent or treaty-recognized right to access it, this change puts this livelihood and its future more in the hands of industry whose interest is only in exploiting the area for what it can get.

After the changes will have been made to the Navigable Waters Protection Act, only 97 out of the 32,000 major lakes and waterways in Canada would remain protected. For the bodies of water that remain 'protected,' any public participation from decision-making would be eliminated, allowing the Minister of Transport to push through any project without consulting, or even notifying, the public. On top of that, pipeline and inter-provincial power line projects will no longer be required to prove that they



Tsuu T'ina Nation protests Bill C-45, Calgary, December 10, 2012

The Newspaper Of
FIRE THIS TIME
MOVEMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

www.firethistime.net
Special Double Issue Volume 7 Issue 9/10
November 26, 2012
Published every 3 weeks

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Subscriptions

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

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-ISSN-1712-1817-

Next Prints:

Volume 8 Issue 1, January 14, 2012

Volume 8 Issue 2, February 4, 2012



Bill C45 protest, Prince Albert, December 10, 2012

won't damage or destroy navigable waterways in Canada. Eighteen First Nation, environmental, recreation and grassroots groups, including the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, wrote an open letter opposing this bill and outlining that "Bill C-45 further demonstrates a pattern of recklessness by the federal government that puts the long-term safety and health of Canadians in jeopardy. These are major changes that, if not stopped now, will ripple out across communities everywhere in Canada -- putting our water, air, food and quality of life at risk." Aside from the huge impact that Bill C-45 will have on industrial developments on Native land and impact on the waterways and fish habitats, it is a blatant attack on the self-determination of Indigenous nations. This time, the government is making changes to the Indian Act, without the consultation, or even involvement of Indigenous people and is undermining the institutions and structure that itself imposed on Indigenous people. The Indian Act is one of the most debated issues when it comes to Indigenous people's relationship with Canada. It was one of the first acts that the new government passed after Confederation and brought in the legal separation of Indigenous people from other Canadians and complete control over their affairs in the hands of the state. With these new changes, the lease or surrender of reserve lands will be based on a majority of votes at a meeting of bad members or in a ref-

erendum, instead of waiting for a majority vote from all eligible voters. Instead of the majority of the band deciding, it is now a handful of people deciding the sale of reserve lands. This leads to pretty severe complications since included in these changes is the fact that now an Aboriginal Affairs minister will have the authority to call a band meeting or referendum for the purpose of considering a surrender of the band's territory, and can expedite this process. Reserve lands in Canada make up less than a quarter of one percent of the country's land mass, and the Conservative government is trying to whittle away what is left.

It didn't begin and won't end with Bill C-45

Bill C-45 is a continuation of Canada's policy of extinction towards Indigenous people and their rights. This new bill is aimed to make the theft of Native land and resources that much easier. For this, nobody is fooled by the words of Stephen Harper when he spoke about building a new relationship with Indigenous people. The relationship has not changed and is based on the same antagonisms of a colonial state trying to extinguish a people.

Leading up to the omnibus bill, Aboriginal Affairs Minister John Duncan announced deep funding cuts to Canada's Aboriginal representative organizations, in some cases by up to 80%. More than

continued on page 8

continued from page 7

120 academics from across Canada wrote to Duncan expressing the damaging effect this would have on the ability to perform critical research on issues facing Native people today, like clean water, violence against women, and healthcare. The Conservative government is also introducing a number of bills that would affect First Nations education, clean drinking water, band elections, and more changes to the Indian Act.

This increased attack has led to a growing sentiment among Indigenous people, from grassroots to major organizations, to take on Stephen Harper and the Conservative government. There is the example of Theresa Spence, Chief of the Attawapiskat First Nation, who is right now on a hunger strike, demanding to meet with the Prime Minister Harper and the Queen to discuss treaty rights. In her own words, "I'm willing to die for my people because the pain is too much and it's time for the government to realize what it's doing to us." There are also the actions, sparked by Idle No More, which culminated on December 10th and have continued to grow. Actions on that day were organized in dozens of cities, towns and reservations, including Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, North Battleford, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, attracting a large number of supporters and activists who are fed up with the Conservative government's attacks on Native people. Following this, a weekend of highway roadblocks and handing out literature was organized by activists throughout Northern Alberta, and more are planned across the country, culminating with an action to march on Parliament Hill on Friday.

The Idle No More protests have demonstrated that Indigenous people and their supporters are in motion across the country to defend their rights. These ac-



tions also show the importance of uniting together to defend our rights. The issue of Native rights is now discussed more and more, and naturally, is polarizing those involved. The Conservative government will not end with Bill C-45. This much

is true. It is vitally important that the opposition to these attacks grows and that working, poor and oppressed people in Canada show their solidarity to defend Native rights against the Conservative government agenda.

IDLE NO MORE: Vancouver Rallies Against Bill C-45



On December 10th, more than 300 Indigenous people and their supporters marched through the rain in downtown Vancouver to protest against the Conservative government's Bill C-45. Organized by students at the Native Education College, the march ended up at the downtown Vancouver Art Gallery for a program of speakers discussing how Bill C-45 will impact Indigenous people and the importance of fighting against it.



In Dedication to Comandante Hugo Chávez

Statement from Fire This Time to Hugo Chávez & the Venezuelan People

To the Dignified People of Venezuela,

On behalf of the Fire This Time Newspaper based in Vancouver, BC, Canada we would like to extend to you a message of strength and solidarity in a difficult time. Around the world everyone fighting against imperialism and for a better world is today thinking about one of our great revolutionary leaders in this struggle, President Hugo Chávez Frías. Everyone is wishing him a quick recovery as we reflect on the great accomplishments of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela and think about the struggles yet to come. As the great leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, recently said, "The name of Hugo Chávez is admired and respected in the world."

We know that our revolutionary leader President Chávez will be here with us always, as we work together to build the better future that humanity needs and deserves.

¡ P A ' L A N T E
COMANDANTE!

In Solidarity,

Fire This Time Newspaper



Good Wishes for President Chávez from Western Canada

December 17, 2012

Report courtesy of the Consulate General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Vancouver

People of different religions gathered Sunday in the Catholic Church, Our Lady of Sorrows, in the city of Vancouver, to pray for the speedy recovery of the President of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez.

After the day of prayer, participants gathered outside the church with banners showing messages related to the Venezuelan leader. "Pa'lante Comandante!" and "I am also Chavez" were some of the phrases that could be read on the banners. Azza Rojbi, a young Tunisian resident of this city, took the opportunity to send a message of solidarity to President Hugo Chávez. "He is a leader not only for Venezuela and Latin America, but to the peoples of the Middle East, my people of Tunisia and the Palestinian people as well," expressed the member of the group Fire This Time.

Another person who participated was Tamara Hansen, a high school teacher born and raised on the west coast of Canada. Hansen, who is participating in the group Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, also sent her good wishes to the leader. "I call upon the people of the world to support President Chavez and the Venezuelan people. We continue forward. Pa'lante Comandante," cried the girl using a fairly fluent Spanish.



Supporters of Hugo Chavez gathered outside of Our Lady of Sorrows church holding banners, Vancouver, BC. Dec 17, 2012

Hugo Chavez is Admired & Respected Worldwide

Fidel Castro Sends Message to Venezuela

Imagen activa Caracas, Dec 16 (Prensa Latina) Leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, addressed a letter yesterday to Executive Vice President of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, on occasion of the 8th anniversary of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA).

Prensa Latina posts below the full text of the message read at Bolivar Square in Caracas:

Dear Nicolás Maduro

On occasion of the anniversaries you are marking today, I would like to express that the absence of the President elected by more than 8 million Venezuelans shakes us all, filling us with consternation.

I met Hugo Chavez just 18 years ago. Someone had invited him to Cuba and he agreed. He told me he had the idea to request an interview with me. I was far from imagining that those Army men described as putschists by press reports, who had sown their ideas so discretely for years, were an elite group of Bolivarian revolutionaries. I welcomed Chavez in the airport, accompanied him to the place where he would stay and talked with him for hours, exchanging views.

The following day at the Main Lecture Hall of the University of Havana, everyone expressed his ideas.

Our views differ in aspects that have nothing to do with political ideas and principles, and we do not even talk about them.

Our medical cooperation with Venezuela started in the wake of the tragedy of Vargas, in which thousands of people died as a result of the neglect and lack of foresight under which the poorest population in that state lived.

Meanwhile, Venezuela has especially supported the peoples of the Caribbean, Central America and South America.

It developed strong links with Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and other countries and has relations with Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and other former Soviet republics. It does not forget Palestine or Libya. It pays special attention to its economic links and political relations with China. It supports the peoples of Africa. It practices a peaceful policy with all countries.

Hugo Chavez is admired and respected worldwide.

Everybody, even many of his opponents, wish him a prompt recovery. The doctors are fighting with optimism for that purpose.

As it is known, all Cuban revolutionaries support and follow the ideas of Jose Marti and Simon Bolivar. I am certain that you, with him and even without him, as painful as his absence might be, would be able to continue his work.

Long live Hugo Chavez! Forever Until Victory!

Fidel Castro Ruz

December 15, 2012



El nombre de Hugo Chávez, se admira y respeta en el mundo

Fidel Castro envía carta a Vicepresidente Ejecutivo Nicolás Maduro

Caracas, 15 dic (PL) El líder de la Revolución cubana, Fidel Castro, envió hoy una carta al Vicepresidente Ejecutivo de Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, con motivo de la celebración del VIII aniversario de la Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA).

A continuación, Prensa Latina transmite el texto de la misiva leída este sábado en la Plaza Bolívar de Caracas:

Querido Nicolás Maduro

Con motivo de los aniversarios que ustedes celebran hoy deseo expresarte lo siguiente:

La ausencia del Presidente electo por más de 8 millones de venezolanos nos conmueve a todos.

Conocí a Hugo Chávez hace exactamente 18 años. Alguien lo invitó a Cuba y él aceptó la invitación. Me contó que tenía la idea de solicitar una entrevista conmigo. Lejos estaba de imaginarme que aquellos militares tildados de golpistas por las agencias cablegráficas, que con tanta discreción durante años sembraron sus ideas, era un grupo selecto de revolucionarios bolivarianos. Esperé a Chávez en el aeropuerto, lo conduje al lugar de su hospedaje y conversé con él durante horas, intercambiando ideas.

El día siguiente, en el Aula Magna de la Universidad de la Habana, cada cual expresó sus ideas.

Nuestras concepciones difieren en aspectos que son ajenos a las ideas y principios políticos y de los cuales ni siquiera hablamos.

Nuestra cooperación médica con Venezuela comenzó a raíz de la tragedia de Vargas, en la que miles de personas murieron como consecuencias del abandono y la imprevisión en que vivía la población más pobre de ese Estado.

Venezuela, por su parte, ha sido especialmente solidaria con los pueblos del Caribe, Centroamérica y Suramérica.

Desarrolló fuertes vínculos con Bolivia, Ecuador, Brasil, Uruguay, Argentina y otros. Ha cultivado relaciones con Rusia, Belarús, Ucrania y otras repúblicas de la antigua URSS. No olvida a Palestina ni a Libia. Presta especial atención a sus vínculos económicos y a las relaciones políticas con China. Es solidario con los pueblos de África. Practica una política de paz con todos los países.

El nombre de Hugo Chávez, se admira y respeta en el mundo.

Todos, e incluso muchos de los adversarios, le desean un pronto restablecimiento. Los médicos luchan con optimismo por ese objetivo.

Como se conoce, todos los revolucionarios cubanos somos martinianos y bolivarianos. Tengo la seguridad de que ustedes con él y aún por dolorosa que fuese la ausencia de él serian capaces de continuar su obra.

¡Viva Hugo Chávez! ¡Hasta la victoria siempre!

Fidel Castro Ruz

Diciembre 15 de 2012

Government of Venezuela Responds to Obama

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs Statement



"The government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela rejects in the strongest terms the outrageous declarations made by the president of the United States, Barack Obama, in Miami on December 14, 2012 about President Hugo Chavez and Venezuela.

In this moment of special sensitivity for Venezuelans, the Bolivarian government demands respect from the U.S. president and its government officials for the dignity of the Venezuelan people, its institutions, and in particular for Commander Hugo Chavez.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has become, under the guidance of Commander Hugo Chavez, an authentic democracy, thanks to which the people of

Venezuela freely exercise rights and freedoms that U.S. society is still far from achieving.

For the first time in 200 years since independence, the Venezuelan people are building their own destiny thanks to the Bolivarian Revolution.

The Venezuelan people reelected Commander Hugo Chavez as President of the Republic last October 7, after an electoral process that saw the highest level of voter participation in Venezuela's political history, and that earned recognition and congratulations from around the world for its exemplary and transparent nature, quite unlike the doubts and reservations generated by the archaic U.S. electoral system.

With his despicable declarations in this delicate moment for Venezuela, the U.S. president assumes the responsibility of driving bilateral relations toward greater deterioration, putting in evidence the continuity of his policy of aggression and lack of respect toward our country."

Caracas, December 14, 2012

Greetings from Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cubato the Venezuelan Consulate in Vancouver, Hugo Chávez & the Venezuelan People

To Our Compañeras and Compañeros at the Venezuelan Consulate in Vancouver and to the people of Venezuela,

First we wish to thank everyone at the Venezuelan Consulate in Vancouver who organized the Mass for the health and speedy recovery of our great revolutionary leader, President Hugo Chávez Frías at the Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Vancouver, Canada today, it was an honour to stand with you in solidarity and support at a crucial moment for the health of President Chávez.

We are proud of the friendship and solidarity between Cuba and Venezuela, from its roots in the ideas of Simon Bolivar and Jose Marti to its practical implementation today with President Chávez receiving his treatment from the hands of highly skilled Cuban doctors. We stand by the people of Venezuela in this difficult time knowing that the Bolivarian process has its roots in the people of Venezuela, a dignified people that will continue struggling for a better world until the end.

¡Hasta la Victoria Siempre! ¡Venceremos!

¡VIVA VENEZUELA! ¡VIVA CHÁVEZ!

In Solidarity,

Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba

<http://www.vancubasolidarity.com>

Support Workers in B.C. As They Demand Wage Increases & Benefits!



BCIT Staff and Faculty on Strike!

By Alison Bodine

Chants of Sol-Sol-Sol-Solidarity! Sol-Sol-Sol-Solidarity! surrounded the steps at the Vancouver Art Gallery on Wednesday, November 28th. At a rally organized by the BC Federation of Labour, which represents 400,000 workers in British Columbia, 2000 trade union members joined together in support of fair contracts and collective bargaining rights for workers on strike in the province. Workers from community and social services, health and post-secondary education sector are currently on strike at many different workplaces all across British Columbia.

Banners and signs demanding better wages and working conditions rose up in the air as representatives from the BCGEU (BC Government Employees Union), FPSE (Federation of Post-Secondary Educators), (HEU) Hospital Employees Union, CUPE – BC (Canadian Union of Public Employees), CSSBA (the Community Social Services Bargaining Association) and the BC-Fed (BC Federation of Labour) addressed the rally.

Some of the first groups of people to arrive at the rally included workers on strike at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT). November 28th marked the third day of job action by technology instructors, vocational instructors and support staff at the main BCIT Burnaby campus, who are represented by the Faculty and Staff Association (FSA) and the BCGEU.

Quality Education Without a Contract?

After working for two years without contracts, this fall the over 2000 members of both unions gave a strike mandate to force the BC government to respect their demands for better salaries and work-

ing conditions. On October 19th, 89% of the BCGEU support staff members at BCIT voted in favour of a strike. This was followed by a vote on November 9th, where 78% of the members of the FSA, technology and part-time studies faculty, assistant instructors, technical staff, researchers, curriculum development professionals, librarians, program advisors, peer tutors and counsellors voted in favour of taking strike action. Then, on November 21st, vocational instructors, members of the BCGEU voted 89% in favour of a strike. For the technology and trades instructors the job action included a ban on overtime and on-call work, as well as strikes which have so far resulted in the cancelling of three full days of classes at the BCIT Burnaby campus, and further night-time and part-time studies cancellations and strike actions at the four other BCIT campuses.

With such an overwhelming majority of workers voting in favour of the strike it is clear just how terrible conditions are for those responsible for instruction and support at BC's second largest post-secondary institution. Quality education is delivered by instructors that are getting the wages and benefits that they deserve. On top of the fact that BCIT faculty and support staff have faced over two years of stagnant wages and have been working without a contract, auxiliary instructors at BCIT, who teach up to 60% of the courses, do not get professional development, sick time or even scheduled vacations, and may not even qualify for benefits after months of teaching according to the FSA.

This is What the "BC Jobs Plan" Looks Like!

According to the FSA, BCIT as an institution has agreed to meet the demands of the instructors, including a four percent

wage increase over the next two years, but the BC government is not willing to authorize them to do so. This is especially shameful given the "Skills and Training Plan" component of the BC jobs plan. The BC government claims that "Of the one million job openings ahead, 43 per cent will need trades and technical training," but they are unwilling to invest in public education at an institution that serves over 48,000 students with the exact training that they are claiming to support.

There will not be any further strike action at BCIT until January 7th due to a negotiated cooling off period as students take final exams. This means that students that were facing a possible loss of their entire semester will not, but the quality of education at BCIT is still on the line until the BC government agrees to meet the demands of all faculty and staff at BCIT.

This attack on the technology and trades instructors and support staff at BCIT is a continuation of the campaign by the BC government to take away the rights of workers to collectively bargain, as they refuse to respect the demands of the workers and their unions and negotiate a contract. This anti-union position can be seen across the board as the BC government demands concession after concession as workers fight for basic wage increases and benefits in BC, a province with the second highest cost of living in Canada and the second-highest child poverty rates.

With cutbacks to social services like health and education on both a Federal and Provincial level, working and oppressed people must stand in solidarity with the workers from the community and social services, health and post-secondary education sector on strike all across B.C. It is only united together fighting for our basic rights that we will win!

By Tamara Hansen

Over 250 local, national and international delegates came together to witness and participate in the Free the 5 People's Tribunal & Assembly on September 21-23, 2012 in Toronto, Canada. Participants came together from various labour organizations, legal entities, community groups and solidarity organizations to learn more about the case of 5 Cuban men held in US prisons for defending their country against terrorism.

Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, and René González are the "Cuban 5". September 12, 2012 marked 14 years that they have been held unjustly in the United States, unable to return to their families and loved-ones in Cuba. They were wrongly accused and convicted in a US Federal Court of "conspiracy to commit espionage" and other charges. The Cuban 5 were actually unarmed men involved in monitoring Miami-based terrorist organizations, which since 1959 have been responsible for the deaths of over 3,400 people in Cuba, including one resident of Canada, Fabio di Celmo. However, according to the US government these men represent a threat. Although no evidence was presented in their trial demonstrating that they had collected any classified documents or US government secrets, they were found guilty and given severe sentences from 14 years in prison to a double life sentence. This case was clearly political from the beginning as the corporate media was basically silent and it was clear the Cuban 5 would be found "guilty" before the trial even began. For more than a decade people in Cuba and around the world have been organizing to break the silence around this case and to put pressure on the White House to free these 5 innocent Cuban heroes. The Free the 5 People's Tribunal & Assembly was another important step in this struggle. In *Fire This Time* Volume 7 Issue 6 we had the chance to interview Heide Trampus, the central organizer of the Free the 5 People's Tribunal & Assembly. Heide explained the reason behind organizing, not just a conference, but a peoples' assembly and tribunal. She said, "The concept, of being able to tell the story through testimonies – witness and victim statements about the arrests of



Report Back from... Peoples' Tribunal & Assembly **JUSTICE FOR THE FIVE** Toronto City Hall, September 21st - 23rd, 2012



the five men, the unjust trials in Miami, the horrendous long sentences handed down, the violation of human rights by denying visiting visas to family members and the inhumane treatment of the Cuban Five, as well as historical accounts of terrorist attacks on Cuba and the suffering of Cuban and other people – appealed to all of us. Although the ruling will not be legally or judicially binding, the Jury comprised of prominent and well respected people will render a decision based on the witness/victim testimonies which have been discarded in the US Court system."

Given the obvious importance of the event, the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver and Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) worked together to send three organizers to Toronto for the People's Tribunal and Assembly. These were VCSC Coordinator Tamara Hansen, as well as Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver organizers Steve Bot-

tomley and Thomas Davies.

With a heavy and impassioned mandate, as explained by Heide, the Free the 5 People's Tribunal & Assembly came together for an opening ceremony on Friday, September 21. This event took place at the Steelworkers' Hall and included speeches from lawyers, labour leaders, as well as Elizabeth Palmeiro, the wife of Ramón Labañino and Adriana Perez, the wife of Gerardo Hernández. The evening included some very challenging moments as Elizabeth and Adriana explained the difficulties they have faced living every day for the past 14 years without their husbands. However, those moments of intense sadness and anger also included powerful words full of love and hope as the two wives urged everyone to re-double their efforts to push for the freedom of these 5 Cuban Heroes.

On Saturday September 22, the "Peoples'

continued on page 14



From L to R: Saul Landau, Director of "Will the Real Terrorist Please Stand Up?"; Cuban Ambassador to Canada Teresita Vicente with Cuban author, Miguel Barnet and Cuban Consul General in Montreal, Alain González; Antiwar activist Cindy Sheehan.

continued from page 13

Assembly" was called to order in the City Hall Chambers in Toronto, Canada. This was a dynamic and distinguished setting for this important event, which featured many prominent guests. The Officiating Magistrates of Conscience included: Juan Carranza, Toronto Lawyer and Lead Magistrate of Conscience; Cindy Sheehan, prominent anti-war activist and author; Reverend Chris Levan, Minister of the United Church of Canada; Denis Lemelin, the National President of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers; Julian Rivas, Venezuelan Journalist; Ken Neumann, National Director for Canada of the United Steelworkers; Marie Clarke Walker, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; Miguel Barnet, Cuban Writer and Novelist; Naveen Mehta, Labour Lawyer for United Food and Commercial Workers; Saul Landau, Award Winning Film Maker and Author; Tony Woodley, UNITE the UNION, UK; Wes Elliott, Grand River Territory; and William Sloan, Quebec Civil Rights Lawyer.

These magistrates of conscience presided over the proceedings which were observed by the over 250 participants. The Tribunal's first session featured five prominent speakers on the historical and political context of the case. The second session had three well-known witnesses on the "Arrests, Trial & Convictions of The Cuban Five". The third and final session invited four distinguished guests to speak on "What has happened since the trial in Florida?" These sessions were all very impacting with mounting evidence proving, not only the innocence of the Cuban 5, but also the criminality of the US courts which convicted them. For the full list of speakers visit: www.freethe5peoples-tribunal.org

One of the many highlights from the tribunal was the speech by Cuban 5 attorney, Richard Klugh. Richard gave one of the most powerful talks of the event by mixing

continued on page 38

Ruling of the "Justice for the 5, People's Tribunal & Assembly" Toronto, Canada / September 2012

Taken from: <http://canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/tribunal/index.html>

>> The Ruling:

This People's Tribunal was convened in Toronto fourteen years after the arrest and detention of Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González Llort and René González in the United States.

After considering all the evidence before this Peoples' Tribunal, we find:

1. There is overwhelming and compelling evidence as to the activity of terrorist groups in Southern Florida, groups which have planned and executed terrorist actions against the people of Cuba for decades in contravention of U. S. and international law.
2. Every country has the right to defend itself and in that context, the Cuban Five acted in the least adversarial and nonviolent manner to prevent acts of terrorism without engaging in actions against the national security of the United States.
3. The U.S. failed to take any action to prosecute the actual terrorists in Southern Florida.
4. We find that men that are peacefully trying to prevent terrorism should not be in prison.
5. This Peoples' Tribunal condemns the cruel and unwarranted treatment of the Cuban Five during their incarceration.
6. We find the Trial was a political trial against the Five.
7. We find there was no credible evidence to support a conviction of conspiracy to commit espionage against the Five.
8. We find there was no credible evidence to support a conviction of conspiracy to commit murder against Gerardo Hernandez.
9. We find the U. S. Government interfered in the trial by spending considerable sums of money to pay reporters to write over one thousand printed articles and other television and radio coverage amounting to propaganda which had the unequivocal effect of influencing the outcome of the trial.
10. We find the court's decision to deny the motion for change of venue was patently unreasonable in light of jury intimidation and a pervasive environment of hostility against the Five.
11. Therefore this Peoples' Tribunal concludes that the Cuban Five were unjustly detained, unjustly prosecuted, and unjustly sentenced, all contrary to international and U.S. domestic law including the U.S. Constitution. This Peoples' Tribunal proposes the convictions be quashed, and that Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González Llort and René González be set free immediately, without any restrictions on their liberty.
12. In the alternative, and in the interest of justice and healing, this Peoples' Tribunal proposes that the President of the United States should exercise his prerogative of a Presidential Clemency and allow the Five to return home.



VETERANS FOR PEACE OPPOSES MILITARY INTERVENTION IN SYRIA

December 13, 2012

Taken from: www.veteransforpeace.org

Veterans For Peace urgently calls on the United States and NATO to cease all military activity in Syria, halt all U.S. and NATO shipments of weapons, and abandon all threats to further escalate the violence under which the people of Syria are suffering.

NATO troops and missiles should be withdrawn from Turkey and other surrounding nations. U.S. ships should exit the Mediterranean.

Veterans For Peace is an organization of veterans who draw upon their military experiences in working for the abolition of war. We have not entered into this work without consideration of many situations similar to the current one in Syria.

Peace negotiations, while very difficult, will be easier now, and will do more good now, than after greater violence. Those negotiations must come, and delaying them will cost many men, women, and children their lives.

No good can come from U.S. military intervention in Syria. The people of Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, the former Yugoslavia, Vietnam, and dozens of other nations in Latin America and around the world have not been made better off by U.S. military intervention.

While experts have great doubt that the Syrian government will use chemical weapons, while accounts of past use are dishonest, and while claims that such use is imminent are unsubstantiated and highly suspicious, the most likely way to provoke such use is the threat of an escalated foreign intervention. Required now by practicality, morality, and the law is de-escalation.

The possession or use of one kind of weapon cannot justify the use of another. Were the Syrian government to use chemical weapons against Syrians, the United States would not be justified in using other kinds of weapons against Syrians. The United States possesses chemical and biological weapons, as well as nuclear weapons, and possesses and uses cluster bombs, white phosphorus, depleted uranium weapons, mines, and weaponized unmanned aerial vehicles -- none of which justifies military attacks on the U.S. government.

The United States' own military actions kill far more civilians than combatants. The United States facilitates and tolerates governments' abuses of their own people in nations around the world and around Western Asia, notably in Bahrain -- not to mention in Syria, to which the United States has in recent years sent victims to have them tortured. The world does not believe U.S. motivations for intervention in Syria are humanitarian. The motivation has been too openly advertised as the overthrow of a government too friendly with the government of Iran and insufficiently subservient to NATO. Syria has been on a Pentagon list for regime change since at least 2001.

The threat of war, like the use of war, is a violation of the U.N. Charter, to which both the United States and Syria are parties. War without Congressional declaration is a violation of the U.S. Constitution.

Another U.S. war will not only breed hostility. It will directly arm and supply those already hostile to the U.S. government.

How many times must we watch the same

mistakes repeated?

The options are not limited to doing nothing or escalating warfare. Nonviolent resistance to tyranny has proven far more likely to succeed, and the successes far longer lasting. Nations and individuals outside of Syria should do what they can to facilitate the nonviolent pursuit of justice.

But Syria's struggles should be controlled by the Syrian people without military intervention. The first step is a cease-fire and de-escalation. The U.S. military and NATO can assist only by departing.

Veterans For Peace is a national organization, founded in 1985 with approximately 5,000 members in 150 chapters located in every U.S. state and several countries. It is a 501(c)3 non-profit educational organization recognized as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) by the United Nations, and is the only national veterans' organization calling for the abolishment of war.

For more on this, please visit the following link:

<http://www.veteransforpeace.org/pressroom/news/2012/12/13/veterans-peace-opposes-military-intervention-syria#.UMvId0Ju8N.email>

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THE CUBAN EXPERIENCE COULD HELP THE UNITED STATES

By Manuel E. Yepe*

A CubaNews translation. Edited by Walter Lippmann.

It is a paradox, but the considerable survival experience Cubans have gained from the blockade imposed on them by the US government for more than half a century with the worst genocidal intentions, could help Americans deal with the total economic collapse forecast for the superpower.

Increasing anxiety has been preying on U.S. citizens since the 2008 crisis. The phenomenon has not been widely reflected in the mainstream media, but alternative independent media have discussed it with strength.

It has even reached Hollywood with the film *Hunger Games*, a horrifying echo of the fear that extends along the vast geography of the US empire as hints of the predicted debacle become a reality.

Designed for young audiences, this super production presents what could happen in the country after decades of lost wars abroad and internal crises. Extreme poverty makes Americans rebel against the central powers which cruelly oppress them. The totalitarian power which emerges from this "victory" is strongly supported by the media which develops new and unimaginable technologies to manipulate the citizens. As a lesson, it orders each of the 12 districts that make up the nation to choose each year a couple of teenagers between 12 and 18 who must fight each other until all contenders die but one who as the winner will survive. This bloody and diabolical lesson terrifies the citizens who are compelled to watch the battle until its macabre end.

The success of this film has been such that a sequel is already being made of what is believed to become a saga rivaling Harry Potter's popularity.

The readings are many. Some think the producers are criticizing the totalitarianism of the American powers that be and the role of the media as the second power. Alternative media are already using *Hunger Games* as a symbol of the decadence at the

gates of the present.

From another perspective it is seen as a warning to present day young people not to rebel against the powers that be, because the outcomes would be those described in the film. There are already many video-games in the US urging young people to annihilate others in the most horrible ways.

Today on the World Wide Web there are abundant examples of the fear the US population feels of the total collapse which might come. Some of these come with proposals and ideas about how to be prepared for the dreadful phenomenon that would shake the world, not only the US.

Constant and diverse are the recommendations for communities to get organized so they can deal with the impact of the collapse predicted by the experts. Among the proposed formulas are, for example, those calling Americans to form tribes that would allow them to face the disaster through voluntary cooperation among neighbours; identify and explore alternative water sources; form local cooperatives for food sharing; design barter and exchange systems with the eventual inclusion of a local currency for such operations; put in place local alternative energy systems; organize commu-



nal night vigilance bodies; study the organization of communication within the community and with other tribes; create a communal food bank; and organize a local system of medical aid that would support a healthy community.

After the overthrow of Batista's dictatorship in 1959 and until the present, the Cuban people have had to face deprivations generated by the hostility of the US towards the Revolution; deprivations which have a lot in common with those now threatening the country to the north. These have forced Cubans to develop communal and socialist initiatives that today are part of their solid and stable political system always in a process of renovation and correction.

The ruthless war with which the US government has punished the disobedience of the Cubans in a hemisphere that was—but no longer is—the US' backyard, provided the island with a lot of experience in affairs related to the struggle for survival. This would perhaps be of use today for their threatened brothers to the North so they can withstand the impact of the economic collapse; a tragedy caused by the same 1% of the US nation that has never wanted to accept Cuba's real independence.

December 2012.

**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; and secretary of the Cuban Movement for the Peace and Sovereignty of the Peoples.*

The Greatest Pain for a Father

By Giustino Di Celmo

September 4, 2012

There is no greater pain than the one felt by a father over the death of his son, even more so when that son has died a violent and cruel death said Fabio's father Giustino Di Celmo in a recent statement, in which he recalled that sad moment for his family and once again denounced the terrorist action:

Recently, on June 1, 2012, the day when Fabio would have celebrated his 47 birthday, his mother, Ora Bassi, who for more than sixty years had been my wife and my love, passed away. Ora shared with me the pain of having lost Fabio, our youngest son. She died without the comfort of knowing that the person who masterminded and ordered that terrorist action had been tried for his crime. That is not fair.

Luis Posada Carriles masterminded the terrorist action that killed my son. I will never forget the statements made by this criminal, which were published by The New York Times on July 12 and 13 of 1998. After recognizing that he had hired the murderous hand of the Salvadoran mercenary who planted the bomb at the Copacabana Hotel, he confessed to the journalist, without any decency, that he

was not concerned about Fabio's death and that he slept like a baby because: "The Italian was in the wrong place at the wrong time."

However, despite innumerable denunciations, Luis Posada Carriles, a confirmed and confessed terrorist, is walking freely down the streets of Miami and has been awarded several recognitions and honors granted by the Cuban American mafia and the extreme right of the United States of America. The farce of his trial at El Paso, Texas, was the last straw. He was only tried for being a liar, although evidence showed that he had masterminded the action that caused Fabio's death...

And then I ask you:

How is it possible that a country that is saying to condemn terrorism is sheltering a terrorist with such a long record of



Anti-Cuban terrorist, Luis Posada Carriles.



Giustino Di Celmo standing beside a painting of his son marking the 15th anniversary of his murder, Havana, Cuba. September, 1997

crimes, including the blowing up in mid-air of a CUBANA airliner off the coasts of Barbados, the murder of hundreds of Venezuelans and the death of my son?

How is it possible that the US Government includes Cuba in a list of terrorist countries when Cuba has only been a victim to the terrorist actions perpetrated by the criminals that the US Government itself has hired and protected?

Why is it that the big media do not say that the Five Cuban anti-terrorists are still imprisoned in the United States for trying to prevent the commission of terrorist actions in Cuba while the terrorists are living in freedom in the United States?

How is it possible that the big media remain silent in the face of such injustice, thus denying the American people the opportunity to know the truth?

I could ask many more questions which will make my statement endless. The answers to those questions would confirm the double-standards of the US Government and the big media when it comes to terrorism.

I only wanted to tell all of you that I am a hard-working and peace-loving man, a 92

continued on page 18



Billboard for the 5 Cuban Heroes, in prison for fighting against terrorism.



Laura Labañino (Palmeiro daughter of Cuban 5 Hero, Ramon Labañino, at vigil for victims of anti-Cuba terrorism, Havana, Cuba. Oct 5, 2012

continued from page 17

year-old man who, despite his pain, does not harbor any ill feelings of revenge. Since Fabio died I swore to have no rest until justice is served, and so I decided to stay in Cuba. I want to be part of the struggle that this country is waging for justice.

I swore I would stay in Cuba until the final moments of my life because, as I have said many times, everyday I see Fabio walking down the streets of Havana; at the court where he used to play football; at the restaurant he longed to have, which is now named after him. Day after day I pass by the house where Fabio used to live and I feel that by doing that I can look after him, because a good father never abandons his children.

I am very grateful to all those persons who have given me words of encouragement; those who have not abandoned me in this struggle for truth and justice; those who work to knock down the wall of silence that surrounds the terrorist actions perpetrated against Cuba; the Cuban Five, who infiltrated the Miami mafia groupings and risked their lives, their families and their happiness to try to prevent the commission of terrorist actions like the one that severed the life of my son. I feel grateful to the

Government and the Communist Party of Cuba, the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples, the Cuban-Italy Friendship Association, La Villeta, the Comitato Fabio Di Celmo and all other institutions that both in Cuba as well as in Italy have supported me in this endeavor. My special gratitude goes to the people of Cuba, to each and every one of those persons whom I meet in the streets and hug me on behalf of Fabio. All of them make me feel that

the members of the Di Celmo family are not alone when we keep on crying out for JUSTICE for Fabio before the deaf ears of the government that is sheltering the mastermind of these actions?

Finally, I would like to convey my gratitude and respect to Commander Fidel Castro. I want Fidel to know that I will never cease in the struggle to bring Posada Carriles and all other terrorists to justice. I will always reject the hypocrisy and double standards of the United States Government. I will never get tired of living up to my determination of struggling until the last moments of my life. I dream of hugging Fidel again, as he once hugged me and Ora, and telling him: Did you see, my Commander, Justice has been served! The terrorist have been prosecuted! No one else will ever cry for their crimes, as Tiziana, Livio my wife and I did!

I ask all of you to allow me to fulfill this dream. Together we could make it, if we denounce the injustice and double standards of the imperialists; if we struggle to have Posada Carriles extradited to Venezuela so that he is tried for the crimes he committed; if we all struggle for the freedom of the Cuban Five and for peace in a better world for all.

Thank you, very much.

Giustino Di Celmo



Giustino Di Celmo speaking to millions of Cubans at May Day celebration, Havana, Cuba. May 1, 2005

5TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CHE GUEVARA CONFERENCE IN VANCOUVER & KAMLOOPS IS A HUGE SUCCESS!

CHE CONFERENCE DISCUSSES CUBA'S ECONOMIC CHANGES & ADVANCES

By Janine Solanki

Cuba is...

All around the world, "Cuba" is synonymous with so many aspects of life, culture, and of course politics, that it is clear that this island of 11.2 million people has an enormous impact on the world. In the Middle East and North Africa, in countries in the midst of mass uprisings against repressive US backed regimes, posters of the revolutionary leader of the Cuban Revolution, Che Guevara, are held high in protests and demonstrations. In Pakistan, Cuba means the 2,601 doctors who volunteered their services after the devastating 2005 earthquake... not to mention, the 37,041 Cuban doctors and other health workers on medical brigades in 77 countries around the world. For a survivor of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, Cuba is home to the medical complex dedicated to providing free specialized treatment to the Chernobyl victims. For any country under occupation, war, oppression or aggression by the U.S., Cuba is a country that has been standing up against U.S. imperialism since the triumph of the 1959 revolution. For a feminist, Cuba is the Cuban Federation of Women, made up of 85.2% of Cuban women. For an envi-

ronmentalist, Cuba is a leader in organic farming and sustainable agriculture. For an aspiring musician, Cuban music is the maestro. For ballet lovers, Cuba is revered and admired.

For anyone in this world interested in the struggle for a better world, Cuba is a

wealth of experience, leadership and inspiration. The Annual International Che Guevara Conference aims to bring together the ideas of Cuba and Che Guevara and beyond, and provide an opportunity to learn from Cuba's example, to discuss, to debate, and to join Cuba in creating a better world!

5 years and growing

The first International Che Guevara Conference started as a question, with the theme "Che Guevara: Thinker & Fighter - Are His Ideas Relevant for the 21st Century?"

The second year brought into perspective an important milestone of the Cuban Revolution, with "50 years of Dynamism of the Cuban Revolution". The third year of the conference explored how Cuba has impacted the world with "Cuba & Revolutionary Internationalism". Last year's conference focused on "Cuba Today!

Continued on page 22



CHÁVEZ



¡PA'LANTE

COMANDANTE!

Continued from page 19

The Gains and Challenges”. The 2012 conference theme, “Cuba’s Economic Reforms: Capitalism or Socialism” approached a topic that is hotly debated both in and outside of Cuba.

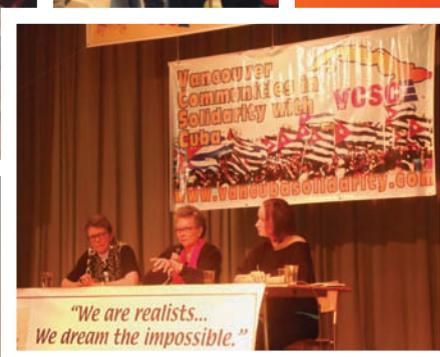
The 5th Annual International Che Guevara Conference, from November 2nd to 5th 2012, brought together more than 600 people who participated in four dynamic days of inspiring talks, passionate speakers, discussion, and debate as well as poetry, music and film. The four-day conference, organized by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC), featured 6 prominent Cuban speakers, including Dr. Aleida Guevara, a Cuban revolutionary leader, pediatrician, prominent author of the book, “Chavez, Venezuela and the New Latin America” and daughter of the legendary Ernesto Che Guevara.

C u b a ’ s heroes, our heroes, honoured at conference opening
Cuba’s is a land of many heroes – you can count Fidel Castro and Che Guevara as

the most well known around the world. But Cuba’s heroic history is a continuing tradition, and the Cuban 5 are today’s heroes not only for Cuba, but for humanity. The opening night of the conference on Friday November 2nd was titled “¡Volveran! A Special Evening Dedicated to the Freedom of the 5 Cuban Heroes: Fighting Against Terrorism & Fighting for Humanity”. The Cuban 5, Ramon, Gerardo, Fernando and Antonio held in U.S. prisons, and Rene on parole in the U.S. are true heroes fighting for humanity even from inside their jail cells. *(Read more about the case of the Cuban 5 on page 27 this issue)*

The evening was opened and welcomed by the conference MC’s, Tamara Hansen (Coordinator of VCSC and author

of the book, “5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution: The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership”), Colleen Glynn (VCSC Executive Member and Richmond Federal New Democratic Party President) and Aaron Mercredi (organizer with VCSC and organizer with the Indigenous Rights and Action Project).



from behind bars. The film was followed by another heartfelt narrative by one of the Cuban 5, Antonio Guerrero, whose poetry was read by Gisela Lara, a young Venezuelan activist and journalist. Following the poem by Antonio Guerrero, participants then heard from special guest Antonio Guerrero Cabrera,

the son of Antonio Guerrero and a member of Cuba’s Union of Young Communists. He spoke passionately about the heroism of the Cuban 5, and the need for the world to join the campaign to free these 5 Cuban men from the U.S. so they can return home to their people and their families. Participants then were inspired by the words of Dr. Aleida Guevara, who appealed to people

to get involved in the campaign and to expose the hypocrisy of the U.S. government in imprisoning the 5 Cuban Heroes. The cultural elements of the program included musical performer Réjean singing

songs of peace, love and freedom,

beautiful poetry by a young Venezuelan revolutionary and journalist Eder Delgado, as well as hard-hitting poetry from the soul of VCSC organizer Shakeel Lochan. Socially conscious Hip Hop from Joose Justice brought people to their feet and the final performance of the night was the powerful and romantic musical performance of Sangre Morena. The conference began with this beautiful evening dedicated to 5 Cuban Heroes, Cuba’s heroes, our heroes, heroes for the world. The solidarity with these 5 men who should be home with their families and not locked behind prison bars was felt as the evening ended with everyone chanting “Free the Cuban 5 NOW!”

Prominent speakers, engaging workshops, dynamic discussions and debates

The 2012 conference brought together a line up of nine speakers, six of whom

Over 120 people joined together for the opening night, at the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood House in Vancouver. The event started with an explanation of the case of the Cuban 5 by Tim Louis, former Vancouver City Counsellor and long-time supporter and activist of social justice causes. Participants also heard two video messages of solidarity from the U.S., from Gloria La Riva, coordinator of the National Committee to Free the Cuban 5, and from Alicia Jrapko, coordinator of the International Committee to Free the Cuban 5. Many hearts were touched by the short film “The Prisoner and the Bird” narrated by U.S. actor Danny Glover, which gave a view of the life of one of the Cuban 5, Gerardo Hernandez,

were prominent Cuban guest speakers. Through the workshops their great experience and knowledge was shared with conference participants, as well there was an opportunity for many discussions and debates.

Before launching into two days of workshops at the Russian Hall in Vancouver, November 3rd started out with the film “Ode to the Revolution” by director Roberto Chile which was an emotional and inspiring tribute following the many gains made throughout the Cuban Revolution. After the film, the Keynote Address of the day was given by the Cuban Consul General of Toronto, Javier Domokos. Javier, a graduate of Havana’s “Instituto Superior de Relaciones Internacionales” has been posted in several diplomatic missions around the world including Turkey, Zimbabwe and Kenya, and during this time he has also worked for Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Javier spoke on “Where the World is Today and Where Cuba is in the World” and with many examples it was clear that the small island of Cuba occupies an important role in the world.

Moving into the workshops for the day, Cuba’s expertise in sustainable agriculture was addressed by the workshop “Cooperatives in Cuba: A New Revolutionary Path?” presented by Wendy Holm and Mavis Alvarez. Wendy Holm is a Professor of UBC’s International Field Studies in Sustainable Agriculture (Cuba), an economist, author and award winning journalist and sustainability expert, as well as the organizer of the Canada-Cuba Farmer to Farmer Project. After she spoke and presented a slideshow on her topic, participants heard from Mavis Alvarez, an agricultural engineer and educator who consults with Cuban family farming and cooperatives and a member of the national leadership of Cuba’s National Association of Small Farmers.

A day of workshops is not only a day of workshops though – before breaking for lunch, musical performer Réjean had the whole hall singing along, smiling and laughing to his music.

The next workshop was on the topic “Cuba’s Economic Transformation: Causes, Challenges and Necessities”. The workshop was presented by Alberto Prieto, the Coordinator for North and Central America for the Central Committee of Communist Party of Cuba. Alberto

to hear from Dr. Aleida Guevara. Aleida illustrated this topic with examples of the effects of the criminal U.S. blockade on Cuba, her own experience as a Cuban doctor, and with the principals of the Cuban revolutionary movement. She even demonstrated Cuba’s rich culture by dancing a traditional Cuban dance and challenging others to try it out!

Throughout the day, over 140 people participated in the conference, with a diversity of ages and from many ethnic communities. Participants were eager to bring their questions and comments to the floor during the discussion periods following each workshop, and the conference speakers were also eager to respond and expand on the points brought up in discussion. As the second day of the conference closed it was with high spirits from a dynamic and inspiring day of workshops and discussion, and enthusiasm for the next day of the conference.

More prominent speakers, engaging workshops, dynamic discussions and debates

The second day of workshops, on November 4th, began with the film “ALBA: Venezuela & Cuba” outlining the development of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and the strong relationship between Venezuela and Cuba. Following the spirit of international cooperation and internationalism shown in the film, the Keynote Address of the day was given by Merli Vanegas, the Venezuelan Consul General in Vancouver. Merli is also a lawyer of the Venezuelan National Assembly, Legal Consultant founder of Citizen Power, and was a diplomat in Libya. Her address followed the topic “The Re-election of President Chavez and the Consolidation of Participative Democracy” The first workshop of the day was on “Youth Today in Cuba and the prospect of revolutionary advancement within the new policies of the Cuban government” given by Antonio Guerrero and



was also previously the first secretary of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, DC. His talk gave an in depth perspective to the 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, the economic, social and political guidelines that came out of the congress and how and why they are being implemented.

The final workshop of the day was “The Dynamics of Cuba’s New Economic & Social Guidelines: Healthcare, Education & Culture in Perspective” In this workshop, participants had the opportunity

Continued on page 24

Continued from page 23

Alberto Prieto. As a young revolutionary in Cuba, Antonio had many perspectives to share and relate to both the young and young at heart at the conference. Again, a day of workshops included not only listening to exceptional speakers and participating in discussion, but also participants sung along to the famous song “Hasta Siempre Comandante” and other favourites played by Latin American musician, social justice activist and radio host Joaquin Ernesto.

The next workshop moved forward with the topic “The New Economic and Social Guidelines and the future of Cuba’s Socialist Project” given by Manuel Yepe. Manuel is a journalist and professor at the Superior Institute of International Relations of Havana. His immense historical knowledge dates back

to his own experience as a leader of the underground July 26 Movement in Matanzas leading up to the triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959. His analysis of the workshop topic came with his great experience and knowledge, from the Cuban revolution and his memories of working directly with Ernesto Che Guevara, up until today.

The third workshop of the day was on “Revolutionary Internationalism within Cuba’s Socialist Project vs. Socialism in One Country” and was presented by Ali Yerevani, the Political Editor of the Fire This Time Newspaper, Political Editor of the Battle of Ideas Press, and participant in the 1979 Iranian revolution. His talk delved into the political theory that Cuba’s socialist project is built on, and how Cuba’s revolutionary internationalism contributes to revolutionary

movements worldwide. He emphasized that Cuba’s profound Communist internationalist theory and practice is in direct conflict with the nationalist concept of socialism in one country as practiced by the former Soviet Union and its bloc

presented by the conference speakers.

To summarize this very significant conference, Aaron Mercredi spoke on “What we have learned from workshops and discussion.” He put the Cuban Revolution and the Che Guevara Conference in a global perspective of the world economic crisis and the imperialist war drive, and how within this Cuba is leading the way to creating a better world. Tamara Hansen then wrapped up with the “Facts, Statistics, Framework and Outlook” and broke down the conference to “7 workshops, 2 keynote speakers, 5 special talks, 3 films, 4 musical guests, 4 poets and poems, all in one 5th Annual International Che Guevara Conference!”

As the conference came to a close, the MC’s reminded participants that although the Vancouver portion of the conference was over, there was still one more day of the conference – taking place for the first time in Kam-

loops, BC the next day!

The Che Guevara Conference touches on new ground

For the first year the Che Guevara Conference reached out from Vancouver to encompass Kamloops, in the interior of B.C. The ideas of Che and of Cuba’s revolutionary project are two much for just one city in this conference, and to expand the conference to a neighbouring city is a good example of how this conference can grow!

The conference speakers arrived in Kamloops at the Thompson Rivers University after a 350km drive from Vancouver, through the mountains of BC. The final day of the conference was opened by Darcy Robinson, an organizer with the Thompson Rivers University Socialist Club which organized the Kamloops event. He was followed by Tamara Hansen,



worldwide.

He put forward his analysis explaining how the Cuban Communist Party is the vanguard and leader of the worldwide working class struggle against capitalist and imperialist hegemony today.

The much anticipated final workshop of the day was given by Dr. Aleida Guevara, on the topic “Are Che Guevara’s Ideas Relevant Today in Cuba?” The conclusion of Aleida’s talk, through many personal and political examples was a resounding “YES!” and proved that Che Guevara’s ideas are relevant today in Cuba, and around the world.

Day 3 brought together 150 people throughout the day. As in the first day of workshops, each speech was quickly followed by a line of participants behind the discussion microphone, as there was never a shortage of people who wanted to take part in discussing the themes pre-



coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, who shared in opening the event. Over 170 people from Kamloops and the surrounding area of the Okanagan were in attendance.

The first workshop titled “The case of Cuban 5 Heroes Held in U.S. Jails” was presented by Dr. Aleida Guevara and Antonio Guerrero. Many people had heard about the case of the Cuban 5, and many more learned about the struggle for the freedom of the 5 Cuban Heroes for the first time, but for all question in the discussion was how to get involved in supporting the case of the Cuban 5. The workshop, “Cuba’s Economic Reform: Capitalism or Socialism” was given by Dr. Aleida Guevara, Alberto Prieto and Manuel Yepe, and encompassed many of the topics and discussions from the entire conference. The wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise of these three speakers made for a comprehensive final workshop, and participants followed the presentation with many thoughtful questions and discussion points.

For many Kamloops conference participants, this conference has just been the first step to discovering more about the examples Cuba has to offer, and how someone in Kamloops can get involved further activities in support of the Cuban Revolution.

The Che Guevara Conference... What is next?

The 5th Annual International Che Guevara was a great success, from the number of participants to the media coverage locally and internationally, to the significance of the topics discussed, to the invaluable contribution of all of the speakers, especially the six prominent Cuban speakers. Four days was not enough to cover everything that can be learned by people here in Canada and around the world about the gains and examples of Cuba’s Revolution, from its historic triumph in 1959, to understanding Cuba’s continued socialist project as it implements the current economic measures and transformation.

More of Cuba’s great example is sure to be covered in the 6th annual conference, but that doesn’t mean conference participants have to wait a whole year until the next conference. If something is to be learned from all the speakers, workshops and discussions, it is that Cuba’s struggle for a better world is constant, active and ongoing – and so for anyone wanting to join Cuba in this great ef-

fort, the simple message is, get involved! The gains of the Cuban Revolution are immense achievements, but people in Vancouver need to be made aware of Cuba’s example in order to learn from it. Furthermore, Cuba, a beacon of hope and struggle for humanity, is also a country under attack from U.S. imperialism, through a criminal blockade, the support of anti-Cuban terrorists, and a campaign of demonizing Cuba’s revolutionary government. For this beacon to shine, Cuba solidarity activists have the task of defending Cuba and the Cuban revolution, and calling for the end of the U.S. blockade against Cuba

Cuba, as stated in the beginning of this article, has had an impact on people in every corner of the world, and through the Che Guevara conference, that impact can be felt in Vancouver and Kamloops – an impact that says, a better world is necessary, is possible, and Cuba is leading the way towards that world!

Battle of Ideas Press

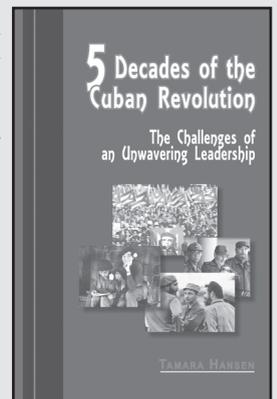
5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership

By Tamara Hansen

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

Tamara Hansen is the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC).

She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba ten times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.



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

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CAMPAIGN UPDATE!

VANCOUVER COMMITTEE TO DEFEND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

By Thomas Davies

On Friday, August 31 over ten Transit Police and RCMP officers participated in the assault, handcuffing, and forced removal of three Fire This Time (FTT) newspaper distributors who were peacefully and legally distributing the FTT newspaper at the Metrotown Skytrain station. All three were released without charges later that night and visited hospital emergency rooms with various injuries. This was the culmination of four months of harassment by Translink authorities despite the fact that their own publicly posted regulations specifically state that distribution of non-commercial publications is permitted.

The Vancouver Committee to Defend Freedom of Expression (VCDFE) was formed immediately in response to the growing public outcry since the assault. The committee includes members of various political parties and organizations, trade union members and executives, as well as community members outraged by the blatant attack on civil liberties and democratic rights.

Soon, the BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) took on the case and wrote a letter to Translink demanding an explanation for the assault. The ensuing media coverage on both mainstream and alternative media has meant the case has been brought to the attention of hundreds of thousands of people both in Canada and internationally. The www.stoppoliceassault.com webpage has become an important resource for updates on the case, and over thousands of people have viewed videos of the assault on YouTube.

The assault and initial response were covered extensively in Fire This Time Volume 7, Issue 7 which is still available upon request, and on www.firethistime.net

The VCDFE has continued to be very busy pursuing both a legal and political campaign. Two very successful legal and political defense fundraisers have been organized with many of Vancouver's best artists donating their talents for the evening. The "Mouth Vs. Mic" collective is also organizing a fundraiser for the campaign with over 10 performance artists on Wednesday, January 16th at the Calabash Bistro.

Very importantly as well, the VCDFE has helped support the return of Fire This Time distributors to different Skytrain stations to reassert the right to distribute there. Despite initial harassment, successful distribution has taken place on dozens of occasions with an increased demand for the newspaper. This has been a huge victory for the campaign.

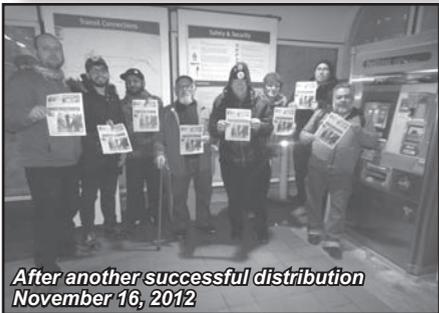
Despite bringing increased attention to the need to defend our civil liberties and democratic rights, and also reestablishing the right to distribute at Skytrain stations, the VCDFE will continue to pursue both the legal and political campaigns. There has so far been no apology for the assault, and the words of Fire This Time's initial public statement continue to be true:

"Incidents like these remind us that if we do not defend our rights we lose them. We will vigorously defend not only the right of our organization to organize and publish its ideas, but the right of all poor and working people to do the same even if they contradict the current government's policies and practices. We absolutely refuse to be intimidated by violence and harassment, and call on all peace and social justice loving people to join with us in defending our fundamental democratic rights. United we can defend and extend the rights past generations fought so hard to establish! United we can win!"

For more information on the campaign or to get involved, visit www.stoppoliceassault.com or call 778-889-7664



Initial Assault, August 31 2012



After another successful distribution November 16, 2012



MX Katracho performs at VCDFE Fundraiser December 15, 2012

MOUTH VS. MIC

ROUND 3

FEATURING:
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 BEATBOX K-REC & CORVID HIP HOP NADIA CHANEY
 SLAM POET SHAKEEL LOCHAN POET UN-1 EMCEE/SINGER/
 BEATBOX SMX EMCEE JIMMY BARNES COMEDIAN JAN FM
 HUMAN BEATBOX TAMARA HANSEN, ALISON BODINE,
 THOMAS DAVIES VANCOUVER COMMITTEE TO DEFEND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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 DJ WORK BY MASARO

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 JANUARY 16
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2012 Was Another Year of Struggle for Freedom & Dignity!

FREE THE CUBAN 5 NOW!

By *Azza Rojbi*

“Brothers and sisters in the struggle: Our solidarity multiplies like leaves in springtime. You will deliver us victory. You will be with us on the great day of our return.”

- *Antonio Guerrero*

Those are the words of Antonio Guerrero, one of the five Cuban heroes unjustly imprisoned in U.S. jails. Those words of courage, hope and struggle echoed from Antonio's prison cell and resonated in the hearts of activists in Vancouver as they gathered on Wednesday December 5th, 2012 outside the U.S. consulate for the 85th monthly picket action to free the Cuban 5 heroes. This monthly picket action was organized by the Free the Cuban 5 Committee—Vancouver as part of the international “5th of the month for the Cuban 5” campaign.

Cuban Five supporters filled the sidewalk in front of the U.S. Consulate with colourful banners and picket signs. Chants like “Hey Obama! Free the Cuban 5!” and “Justice for the 5 Now!” filled the cold air with a passionate and unified voice for dignity and justice.

In between rounds of picketing participants heard from a number of speakers who gave updates on the case of the Cuban 5 and emphasized the importance of the Cuban 5 struggle for freedom and dignity. Among the speakers was David Whittlesey, a long time social justice activist who shared some of his experience from his time as an organizer during the anti-Vietnam War movement and the Civil Rights movement in U.S. Alison Bodine, co-chair of Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO), Vancouver's antiwar coalition, spoke about the necessity for a strong, united and consistent international campaign for the freedom of the five Cuban heroes and the need for the antiwar movement to join in the fight for their freedom.

Thomas Davies, an organizer with the Free

Cuban 5 Committee—Vancouver, spoke about his recent trip to Holguin, Cuba, where he attended the 8th International Colloquium for the Freedom of the Cuban Five. Thomas warned the crowd with a strong message of unity and struggle from the Cuban people and the over 340 delegates from 47 countries who gathered there from November 28th through December 1st to discuss the case of the Cuban 5 and how the international community can work to advance the struggle for their freedom.

Who are the Cuban Five?

Since the triumph of the revolution on January 1st, 1959, Cuba has been the

Court of “conspiracy to commit espionage” and other fabricated charges. They are currently serving outrageously long sentences, including even a double-life sentence plus fifteen years. Four of the Five unjustifiably remain behind U.S. bars today, while René Gonzalez, who was released from prison last year for having completed his sentence, is being forced against his will to remain on parole in Florida for three years without being allowed to return to his homeland and visit his family in Cuba.

¡Volverán! (They will return!)

As 2012 comes to a close, January marks the beginning of a new year of struggle for the freedom of the Cuban 5 heroes.

The Free the Cuban 5 Committee—Vancouver would like to urge everyone to get involved in the fight for dignity and freedom and to join us on January 5th for the 86th monthly protest action to free the Cuban 5. We will begin the new year with the energy and determination that 2013 will not be only the beginning of yet another year of struggle, but a year that the Cuban 5 will return home to their families and loved ones in Cuba.



subject of terrorist attacks orchestrated by terrorist organizations operating out of Miami, Florida. Those mafia organizations were responsible for criminal acts against the Cuban people such as the bombing of Cuban tourist hotels and the blowing of a Cuban airliner on October 6, 1976. Over 3,400 people in Cuba, including one resident of Canada, Fabio di Celmo, were killed in those terrorist attacks.

Five brave Cuban men were sent to Miami to collect evidence on those committing such terrorist attacks. After turning the information they have gathered over to the FBI, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González were arrested and sent to jail. They were wrongly accused and convicted in a U.S. Federal

After 14 years of being unjustly kept behind U.S. prison bars, the Cuban 5 have not given up hope in the fight for their freedom and the struggle for a better world! Neither will we! Louder than ever, we will demand:

FREE THE 5 CUBAN HEROES NOW!
RELEASE ANTONIO, FERNANDO,
RAMON & GERARDO FROM U.S. PRISONS
NOW!

LET RENÉ GONZÁLEZ RETURN TO
CUBA NOW!
GRANT VISAS TO OLGA SALANUEVA &
ADRIANA PEREZ NOW!

For more information please visit:
www.freethe5vancouver.ca
www.antiterroristas.cu
www.freethefive.org
www.thecuban5.org

By Alison Bodine

If you were walking down Robson Street in Vancouver this Saturday, December 15th you might of come across the Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) monthly antiwar rally and petition campaign. Large banners demanding "U.S./U.K./Canada/E.U./NATO Hands of Syria! No to Sanctions! No to War!" and "No War on Iran! U.S. Out of the Middle East and North Africa!" lined the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery that

afternoon. Despite the cold and rain, antiwar activists were holding picket signs high, as peace-loving people in Vancouver stopped to sign a petition against war and sanctions in Syria or a petition against war and sanctions on Iran and came to the MAWO table to get more information.

Educate Against War and Occupation!

Alongside the sanctions, murders, violence, torture, rape and humiliation caused by imperialist governments, mass media also wages campaigns in step with the march of war and occupation. Before the invasion of Iraq it was the mass media that cried wolf for "weapons of mass destruction" and it is now the same media that is demonizing the governments of Iran and Syria, crying crocodile tears for the people of Syria and Iran in order to gain public support for further covert and overt intervention and sanctions. To counter the vicious lies and manipulations of mass media, MAWO organizes twice a month public forums and discussions.

On Tuesday, December 4th, MAWO held a forum called "The Occupations of Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and Canada : What are the Similarities and What are the Issues at Stake?" Featured speakers at the forum were MAWO co-chairs Janine Solanki and Alison Bodine, who spoke about the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, and Aaron Mercredi, a Metis

organizer with the Indigenous Rights and Action Project (IRAP) and member of editorial board member of the Fire This Time newspaper who spoke about the occupations of Palestine and Canada.

From the genocide of Indigenous people in Canada to the recent 8-day brutal Israeli assault on the people of Palestine, and from the legacy of birth defects caused by depleted uranium bombs in

and self-determination for all oppressed nations!

The following week, on Tuesday December 11th, MAWO came together once again for "the Evolving Political Map in the Middle East and North Africa: The Dynamic Role of Iran, Turkey and Syria!" This public forum and discussion was held in order to discuss recent developments in the threats, sanctions and manoeuvrings against Syria and Iran within the context of the imperialist war drive in the Middle East and North Africa.

The speaker for the evening was Ali Yerevani, the political editor of the Fire This Time newspaper and the Battle of Idea's Press. Ali was also a participant in the 1979 Iranian Revolution and has been a long-time social justice organizer in Iran, Europe, the U.S. and Canada and brought this experience to give a total picture of what really are the roots of the current imperialist strategy against countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Ali began by explaining the importance of three historical events, the 1979 Iranian Revolution that overthrew the U.S. backed dictator in Iran, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the mass movements in the Middle East and North Africa against imperialist puppet regimes that continue on to this day. With these three events, Ali was able to illustrate the struggle of the U.S. and their allies for complete domination in the Middle East and North Africa, as they manoeuvre against independent governments, like the governments of Syria and Iran.

Organize Against War and Occupation!

In a world characterized by the struggle of oppressed people against colonial powers, we as people in Canada need to take a stand. When the government of Canada increases sanctions against Syria, maintains over 1000 troops in Afghanistan, they are also cutting back on the basic social services and democratic rights of people in Canada. We must join together to end the war at home and abroad. For more information on how to get involved visit

www.mawovancouver.org

Join the struggle against war & occupation at home & abroad!



Iraq to the drone

weddings in Afghanistan, each speaker outlined a common thread of destruction and humiliation brought on by colonial occupation, but also a common thread of resistance to occupation. As the forum concluded it was clear that basic conditions for life under occupation all point to a disaster conclusion with only one solution – an end to occupation

By Thomas Davies

"Perhaps the enemies of liberty are such only because they judge it by its loud voice." - Jose Marti

Holguin, Cuba

Those trying to book a flight into the city of Holguin, Cuba at the end of November often find themselves completely out of luck. Holguin, "City of the Parks", becomes booked up beyond belief once a year as the International Colloquium for the Freedom the Cuban 5 Against Terrorism turns Cuba's 4th largest city into busy hive of activity. This year more than 344 delegates from 47 countries participated in 4 full days of workshops, strategy sessions, cultural presentations, and solidarity. One could often hear group conversations excitingly taking place in 3 or 4 languages at once, all focused on how to free the 5 Cuban political prisoners unjustly held in the United States. Most importantly, the Colloquium has become a central meeting place to plan and coordinate growing international actions for the Cuban 5 Heroes.

Colloquium for the Freedom of Cuban 5

The 8th Annual Colloquium for the Freedom of Cuban 5 Against Terrorism took place in Holguin despite the fact that the city and several surrounding municipalities had been in the path of Hurricane Sandy as it ripped through the Eastern part of Cuba only one month before. International participants were able to see the incredible Cuban resolve and spirit as they rebuilt their city and their lives, and also how they have applied this to the entire country's fight to have the anti-terrorist heroes returned to Cuba once and for all.

The packed Colloquium program had enthusiastic participation from the residents of Holguin. Nearly a thousand people participated in the opening bicycle ride for the the Cuban 5, while hundreds of Holguin's mothers joined a special session dedicated to the struggle of the mothers and families of the Cuban 5. Participating from the families of the Cuban 5 were Elizabeth Palmiero (wife of Ramon Labaniño), Adriana Perez (wife of Gerardo Hernandez) Irma Schwerert, (mother of Rene Gonzalez) and Mirta Rodriguez (mother of Antonio Guerrero).

Hundreds of 'Holquineros' participated in the Colloquium's plenary sessions as well, while international delegates were witness to incredible cultural displays of every medium dedicated to the Cuban Five – from opera to quilt making to painting and dance. Taxis would drive by with Cuban Five signs placed

The World Demands: "Free the Cuban 5 Heroes NOW!"



8th Annual Colloquium for the Freedom of the Cuban 5 Against Terrorism

neatly in their windows and school classrooms were full of students full of focus as they painted new pieces dedicated to the Cuban 5.

Cuban Institute of Friendship with the People (ICAP)

The Colloquium is organized by the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the People (ICAP), which is the organization responsible for maintaining relationships with Cuba solidarity organizations on every part of the globe. Many ICAP organizers were present, especially from ICAP Holguin which hosted the event. ICAP President Kenia Serrano Puig was also very active throughout the four days. From the microphone she reminded participants that the fight for the Cuban 5 is connected to every single struggle for justice in every single country

around the world, and that Cuba would continue to support these struggles with every ounce of its being, as it always has.

While organizers came from across the globe, the biggest delegations were from Russia, Bulgaria, Italy, Venezuela, Canada, Spain and the United States. Countries like Vietnam, Haiti, Lebanon, and Peru were all represented as well. Besides getting a change to connect and coordinate with other groups around the world, delegates also spent a day touring Hurricane Sandy struck areas and volunteering with the ongoing reconstruction.

Canadian Participants

Canada had one of the largest number of Colloquium participants, with over 25 people from across the country making the trip. A great step forward was also that the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) had organized to send a delegation of 6 of their union members coordinated by CUPW Union Representative Don Foreman. Quebec was represented by members of La Table de Concertation de Solidarité Québec-Cuba and their Comité Fabio di Celmo Pour les 5.

Representing the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver and Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) were Nestor Otero and Fire This Time Editorial Board member Thomas Davies. Cuban 5 organizing in Vancouver is becoming well known around the world because of the monthly picket action which the Free the Cuban 5 Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver has organized in front of the U.S. Consulate for 85 consecutive months. The Committee has made a point of organizing a consistent campaign to Free the Cuban 5 and to try and take the case to as many new places as possible.

There was a steady stream of people at the Vancouver table, and over the course of two days they distributed over 750 postcards and 600 buttons demanding, “Free the Cuban 5 Now!” which are part of the Vancouver Committee’s ongoing campaign materials. 300 Fire This Time Newspapers were quickly snapped up as well.

Thomas was also one of the final speakers during the closing plenary session, bringing greetings and suggesting that Cuban 5 committees around the world



learn from Cuba once again with its campaign to become more productive and efficient, “The more coordinated the campaign to Free the Cuban 5 Heroes becomes, the more productive and efficient it will also become. We are up against the biggest enemies in the world, but we can Free the Cuban 5 Heroes if we all work together!”

Final Declaration

Other organizations from around the world are clearly thinking the same way. The Final Declaration of the Colloquium, which was passed unanimously and enthusiastically by all those present laid out a plan of actions for the New Year. This included a point to repeat the very successful “5 Days for the Cuban 5” actions in Washington, DC which last year saw organizers from around the world come to Washington, DC for 5 straight days of activities which culminated with a large rally in front of the White House. The International Committee to Free the Cuban 5 has already announced the dates for the second, “5 Days to Free the Cuban 5” which will be May 31st to June 5th.

A Great Success

The 8th Annual International Colloquium to Freedom of the Cuban Five Against Terrorism came to a close on December 1st, and those wishing to fly in and out of Holguin were once again able to do just that. Perhaps one day someone wishing to book a flight to Washington, DC will have difficulty because of the massive numbers of people converging on the U.S. Capital to demand the immediate release of the 5 Cuban Heroes. As the great fighter for social justice Che Guevara once said, “We are realists, we dream the impossible.”

The campaign to Free the Cuban 5 has not grown to that point yet, but the U.S. Government cannot deny that in every corner of the world there are actions demanding freedom for the Cuban 5 Heroes, and the Colloquium in Holguin is playing an increasingly important role in coordinating and focusing them to become more loud and more effective. The Cuban 5 have become the most well known political prisoners on the planet, and we all demand together, “Free the Cuban 5 Heroes NOW!”

Dear Fidel,
Comrades,



CLOSING REMARKS BY THE FIRST SECRETARY
OF THE **COMMUNIST PARTY OF CUBA**
ARMY GENERAL RAUL CASTRO RUZ,
AT THE **6TH PARTY CONGRESS**



US blockade and the adverse conditions prevailing in the international market, which

We have come to the end of this Congress after intensive working sessions where the Cuban communists have discussed and adopted the Guidelines of the Economic and Social Policy of the Party and the Revolution, the Central Report and various resolutions on the main issues examined.

I think that the best and most productive way to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Victory over the Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs) mercenary invasion, on a day like this April 19, 1961, is precisely this excellent Party Congress. This meeting comes to an end more than five months after the onset of the Guidelines discussions. This was a profoundly democratic and transparent process whose indisputable protagonist was our people under the Party's leadership.

On behalf of the nearly 800 thousand Party members, the one thousand delegates to the Congress, the new leadership of our organization and, particularly of comrade Fidel Castro Ruz, I wish to congratulate every Cuban for their decisive participation in the discussions and their unquestionable display of support for the Revolution. This is to us a source of great satisfaction, but most importantly it entails a greater responsibility and commitment to achieve, with everyone's cooperation, the updating of the Economic Model in order to make Socialism in Cuba irreversible.

We said in the Central Report that we are not under the illusion that the Guidelines and the related measures can by themselves solve all of our problems. Our success in this strategic issue and every other will certainly require that we focus on the execution of the agreements reached at this Congress. To that end, our conduct must be guided by one common denominator: **ORDER, DISCIPLINE and EXIGENCE.**

The updating of the economic model is not a miracle that can happen overnight like some people believe. Its full development will only be attained gradually in the course of five years for it requires a conscientious work of planning and coordination both in legal terms and in the thorough training of

all those involved in its implementation.

It will also be necessary to work intensively providing the people with adequate information on every measure adopted while, at the same time, keeping our feet and ears firmly on and attentively to the ground, to be able to overcome the obstacles we encounter, and to quickly rectify the mistakes we make in implementation.

We are convinced that the main enemy we are confronting and shall confront will be our own inefficiencies and that an endeavor of such a great significance to the future of our country cannot be tackled recklessly or hastily. We will make every change required, as Fidel indicated in his Reflections published yesterday, but we will do it at the adequate pace mindful of our objective conditions and always with our people's support and understanding. We will never risk our most powerful weapon: the unity of our nation in support of the Revolution and its programs.

Chauvinism aside, I think that Cuba is one



of the few countries in the world in which conditions exist to transform its economic model and leave the crisis behind while avoiding social trauma. First of all because our patriotic people know that their force stems from their monolithic unity, the justice of their cause and military training as well as from their high instruction and pride in their history and revolutionary roots.

We shall advance resolutely despite the

among other things, limit Cuba's access to financial sources and expose it to the oil prices spiral that impinges on the prices of the rest of the raw materials and food. Simply put, everything that we purchase abroad is more expensive.

Barely a few months into the year 2011 and the data already show that the additional cost of imports for this year amounts to over 800 millions USD. This is just on account of price increases and only to buy the same quantities planned; therefore, we will be forced to make adjustments to the plan adopted last December, as soon as this Congress is over.

At the moment, saving all kinds of resources is one of the main things that our country can do to preserve our income since there is still irrational spending and huge reserves of efficiency remain untapped. We should work on this with much common sense and political sensitivity.

Despite the existing acceptable situation to this date concerning the delivery of fallow lands in usufruct, in compliance with Legislative Decree No. 259 of 2008, there are still thousands and thousands of hectares of arable land waiting for those willing to produce what our people and the national economy keep demanding and that can be grown in our farmland to replace the increasingly expensive imports of a number of products that are today benefiting foreign suppliers instead of our farmers.

The first thing that we should do is to implement what we have just approved in this Congress. It is no accident that we have decided that the Central Committee should examine at its plenary meetings --at least twice a year-- the execution of the agreements reached at the Congress, particularly, the updating of the economic model and the enforcement of the Economy Plan.

In this sense, I should emphasize the transcendence of the mission assigned to the Government Standing Commission for Implementation and Development, which will harmoniously lead the efforts and actions of the national organs and entities in charge of updating the economic model with the special support of the Ministry

continued on page 33

Querido Fidel;
Querida Nemesia;
Queridos compañeros y compañeras:

**DISCURSO PRONUNCIADO POR EL PRIMER SECRETARIO DEL
COMITÉ CENTRAL DEL PARTIDO COMUNISTA DE CUBA
GENERAL DE EJÉRCITO RAÚL CASTRO RUZ,
EN EL 6° CONGRESO DEL PARTIDO COMUNISTA**

Nos vamos acercando al final del Congreso, luego de intensas jornadas en las que los comunistas cubanos hemos discutido y aprobado los Lineamientos de la Política Económica y Social del Partido y la Revolución, el Informe Central y diferentes resoluciones sobre los principales asuntos analizados.

Considero que la forma más digna y a la vez productiva de conmemorar el 50° Aniversario de la Victoria sobre la invasión mercenaria en Playa Girón, un día como hoy, el 19 de abril de 1961, es precisamente haber efectuado un magnífico Congreso del Partido, reunión que culmina tras algo más de cinco meses del inicio de las discusiones acerca de los Lineamientos, proceso de profundo carácter democrático y transparente, cuyo protagonismo indiscutible lo asumió el pueblo bajo la dirección del Partido.

Deseo, en nombre de los casi 800 mil militantes comunistas, de los mil delegados al Congreso, de la nueva dirección de nuestra organización y en particular, del compañero Fidel Castro Ruz, felicitar a todas las cubanas y cubanos por su decisiva participación en el debate y la indudable demostración de apoyo a la Revolución, lo cual constituye para nosotros motivo de satisfacción y lo más importante, una responsabilidad y compromiso superiores para lograr, con el concurso de todos, la actualización del modelo económico a fin de garantizar el carácter irreversible del Socialismo en Cuba.

Ya expresamos en el Informe Central que no nos hacíamos ilusiones de que los Lineamientos y las medidas a ellos asociadas, por sí solos, fueran la solución a todos los problemas existentes. Para alcanzar el éxito en esta cuestión estratégica y en las demás, es preciso que de inmediato nos concentremos en hacer cumplir los acuerdos de este

Congreso, bajo un denominador común en nuestra conducta: el ORDEN, la DISCIPLINA y la EXIGENCIA.

La actualización del modelo económico no es un milagro que pueda obrarse de la noche a la mañana, como algunos piensan; su despliegue total se logrará gradualmente en el transcurso del



quinquenio, pues es mucho el trabajo de detalle, planificación y coordinación, tanto en el plano jurídico como en la preparación minuciosa de todos los que intervengan en su ejecución práctica.

También será necesario desarrollar una intensa labor de divulgación a la población sobre cada medida que vayamos adoptando y al mismo tiempo, mantener los pies y

los oídos bien atentos y pegados a la tierra, para superar los obstáculos que encontremos y rectificar rápidamente los fallos que cometamos en su aplicación.

Estamos convencidos de que el principal enemigo que enfrentamos y enfrentaremos serán nuestras propias deficiencias y que por tanto, una tarea de tamaño dimensión para el futuro de la nación, no podrá admitir improvisaciones ni apresuramientos. No renunciaremos a hacer los cambios que hagan falta, como nos indicó Fidel en su reflexión de ayer, los que efectuaremos al ritmo que demanden las circunstancias objetivas y siempre con el apoyo y comprensión de la ciudadanía, sin poner nunca en riesgo nuestra arma más poderosa, la unidad de la nación en torno a la Revolución y sus programas.

Sin el menor afán de chovinismo, considero que Cuba está entre el reducido número de países del mundo que cuentan con las condiciones para transformar su modelo económico y salir de la crisis sin traumas sociales porque, en primer lugar, tenemos un pueblo patriótico, que se sabe poderoso por la fuerza que representa su unidad monolítica, la justeza de su causa y preparación militar, con elevada instrucción y orgulloso de su historia y raíces revolucionarias.

Avanzaremos con decisión a pesar del bloqueo norteamericano y las adversas condiciones imperantes en el mercado internacional, que se expresan, entre otras, en las restricciones para el acceso de Cuba a fuentes de financiamiento y la espiral de los precios del petróleo, que arrastra al resto de las materias primas y los alimentos; en pocas palabras, se encarece todo lo que adquirimos en el exterior.

A pocos meses de iniciado el 2011 y según datos muy recientes, ya se eleva a más de 800 millones de dólares el costo adicional de las importaciones del año, sólo por el incremento de los precios, para adquirir las mismas cantidades planificadas, lo que nos obligará en cuanto termine el Congreso a realizar ajustes al plan aprobado en diciembre pasado.

continúa en la página 35

continued from page 31

of Economics and Planning as the government's General Staff for this activity.

On the other hand, our deputies have an arduous work to carry out since the Guidelines approved by this Congress will be submitted to analysis at the National Assembly of People's Power for legislative ratification in the successive sessions as the elaboration of the corresponding legal regulations is completed.

As you heard, the Congress agreed to convene the National Conference for next January 28, the day we shall commemorate the 159th Anniversary of José Martí's birth. That meeting, actually a continuation of

Committee.

As reflected in its announcement, the National Conference will be guided by the determination "to change everything that must be changed" contained in the brilliant definition of the concept of Revolution offered by comrade Fidel.

In order to succeed, the first thing we need to change in the life of the Party is its mentality, which as a psychological barrier will, in my opinion, be more difficult to overcome for it is tied to many years of repeated dogmas and obsolete criteria. It will also be indispensable to correct mistakes and to shape, with rationality and firm principles, a comprehensive vision of the future that

positions. At the same time, the gender and racial composition of these organs has been considerably improved.

The Central Committee is now made up by 115 members; 48 of them are women, for a 41.7%. This is more than three times the 13.3% proportion obtained in the previous Congress. The number of black and mixed blood people is 36, which accounts for 31.3% of the total, and 10% higher than before.

This outcome, which I insist is only a first step, is not the result of improvisation. The Party has been working for months toward this end with the objective of submitting a list of candidates that takes into account the necessity to have a fair representation of



Debates in the Cuban National Assembly

the 6th Party Congress, will essentially assess the Party's work with realism and with a critical spirit. Also, it will make the necessary adjustments to the transformations required for playing the role of senior leading force of the society and the State as provided in Article 5 of the Constitution of the Republic. We have also agreed to empower that Conference to bring up to date the Party's work methods and style, its structure and cadre policy, and even the renovation and expansion of its Central

will guarantee the preservation and development of Socialism under the present circumstances.

In terms of the cadre policy, the election of the new Central Committee, its Secretariat and Political Bureau, and their presentation this morning, constitute a first step towards compliance with the agreements reached at this Congress, particularly with respect to the beginning of a gradual process of renovation and rejuvenation of the cadre in different governmental and political

gender and race in the Central Committee membership.

These were chosen from the huge number of university graduates and certified specialists that the Revolution did not waste time to train. These are the children of the working class; they belong to the most humble segments of the population and have had a politically active life in students' organizations, the Young Communist League and

continued on page 34

the Party. Most of these youths accumulate 10, 15 or 20 years of experience working at the grassroots level without abandoning their jobs in the professions they studied, and the majority were proposed by their respective Party cells during the process leading up to the Congress.

It is our duty now to monitor and assist their training to enable the progressive improvement of their work and future access to higher responsibilities.

In the makeup of the senior Party organs, --despite the exit of 59 comrades from the Central Committee, half its full members, most of them with a positive record of services to the Revolution— some veterans of the historic generation remain, and it is only natural, for it is one of the consequences of the mistakes made in this area and criticized in the Central Report, the same that prevent us today from having a reserve of mature and sufficiently experienced replacements to take over the main positions in the country.

Therefore, we shall continue working along these lines during the forthcoming National Conference and in our daily Party, Government and State responsibilities.

Comrade Fidel Castro Ruz, founder and Commander in Chief of the Cuban Revolution, set the first example of a consistent behavior in this matter, when he expressly asked not to be included in the Central Committee list of candidates.

Fidel is Fidel, and he does not need to hold any position to forever occupy a topmost place in the present and future of the Cuban nation. While he is strong enough to do it, and fortunately he is at the peak of his political thoughts, in his modest capacity as Party member and soldier of ideas, he will continue making contributions to the revolutionary struggle and the noblest purposes of Mankind.

As for me, I assume this last assignment with firm conviction and I pledge my honor that the chief mission of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba that gives meaning to his life is to defend, preserve and continue to improve Socialism, and to never allow the return of the capitalist regime.

As you can see, we have in the Political Bureau a proper representation of leading chiefs of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. This is only logical and to explain it I will

quote some lines included by comrade Fidel in his Central Report to the First Party Congress: “The Ejército Rebelde was the soul of the Revolution. The new homeland emerged free, beautiful, strong and invincible from its victorious weapons... When the Party was founded... our Army, the heir to the bravery and patriotic purity of the Ejército Libertador whose struggles it had carried on victoriously, placed in its hands the banners of the Revolution and became from then on and forever its most loyal, disciplined, humble and staunch follower.”

I have plenty of reasons to assert that the Revolutionary Armed Forces, which I am proud to have served as a minister for nearly 49 years, will never renounce that role and will carry on defending the people, the Party, the Revolution and Socialism.

Membership in the Central Committee, which until now had been partly a recognition to the life of struggle of those elected, --and fairly so-- will from now on be based on the concept of the great responsibility of these comrades to the Party and the people, since the Central Committee acts, between Congresses, as the top leading Party organ and, according to the Statutes, it is empowered to check the implementation of the adopted policies, the economic and social development of the country, and the cadre policy and ideological work, among other tasks.

In keeping with this, it is necessary to constantly raise the preparation and knowledge of its members as we intend to actively employ the Central Committee in the implementation of the Congress' agreements, in the way of a forum where collectively, and devoid of formalities, we can analyze the main issues concerning life in the Party and the nation.

At the Political Bureau, we shall do likewise, as it befits this organ, which is the highest leading body between Central Committee plenary sessions.

The Political Bureau consists of fifteen members. This is a reduction with respect to the previous 24 members, which proved an excessive number. Three new comrades are now members: Mercedes López Acea, First Secretary of the Party Provincial Committee in La Habana; Marino Murillo Jorge, Vice-president of the Council of Ministers and head of the Government Standing Commission for Implementation and Development; and, Adel Yzquierdo

Rodríguez, who was recently appointed Minister of Economics and Planning.

These promotions are no accident. In the first case, it is due to the priority attached by the Party to its work in the capital, with a population of over two million. Regarding the other comrades, the promotion responds to the strategic significance of updating the economic model and developing the national economy.

We shall keep the useful practice of holding joint weekly meetings of the Political Bureau Commission and the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers to evaluate the fundamental issues pertaining to national life. At the same time, we shall continue promoting the participation in the monthly meetings of the Council of Ministers --depending on the issues under discussion and as guests-- of members of the Political Bureau and the Secretariat of the Central Committee; the Council of State and the Speaker of the National Assembly; the leading cadres of the Workers Central Trade Union (CTC), the Young Communist League and other mass organizations; alongside the First Party Secretaries at the provinces and the chairpersons of the Provincial Management Councils.

This method has proved its efficiency to directly convey to the main leaders throughout the country the indispensable information and orientations to carry out their work.

Finally, none of us ignores the historical significance that the crushing defeat of the Playa Girón mercenary invasion had for the destiny of the Revolution. This was achieved thanks to the firm, constant and determined action of our combatants under direct orders from Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, who stayed all the time in the theater of operations where the battles were fought. In less than 72 hours, they shattered the US Government's attempt to set up a beachhead in a distant corner of our homeland to which they planned to bring, from a military base in Florida, a puppet government that would appeal to the Organization of American States, the notorious OAS, for a military intervention by the US forces already deployed very close to Cuba, as they had accompanied the mercenary troops since their departure from Central America, the same way they had done in Guatemala seven years before,

En estos momentos el ahorro de recursos de todo tipo continúa siendo una de las fuentes principales de ingresos del país, pues todavía existen gastos irracionales e inmensas reservas de eficiencia que debemos explotar con mucho sentido común y sensibilidad política.

Pese al aceptable comportamiento obtenido hasta la fecha en la entrega de tierras ociosas en usufructo, al amparo del Decreto-Ley 259 del 2008, aún persisten miles y miles de hectáreas de superficie cultivable esperando por brazos dispuestos a extraerle los frutos que tanto demanda la población y la economía nacional y que podemos cosechar en nuestros campos para sustituir las cada

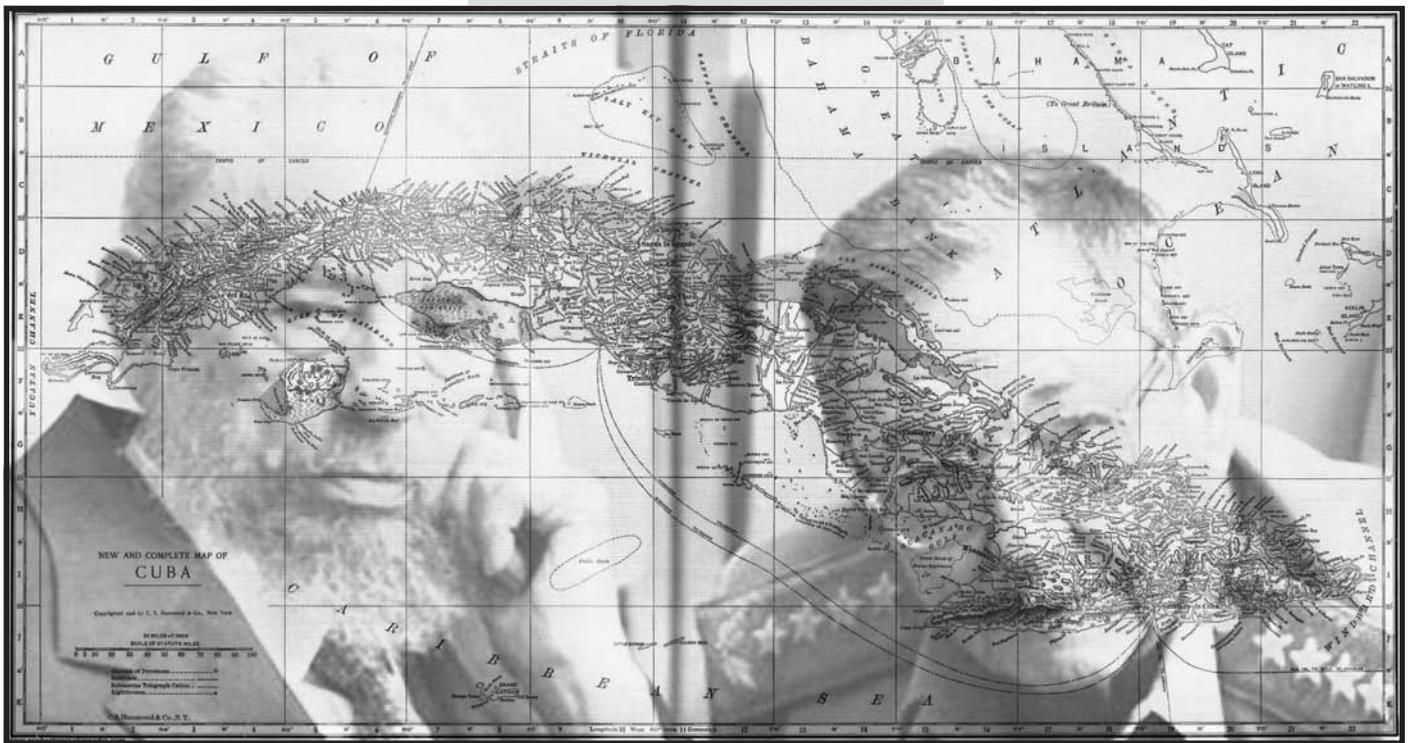
Permanente del Gobierno para la Implementación y Desarrollo, la cual conducirá armónicamente los esfuerzos y acciones de los organismos y entidades nacionales involucrados en la actualización del modelo económico con el apoyo, en particular, del Ministerio de Economía y Planificación, que constituye el Estado Mayor del Gobierno para esta actividad del quehacer nacional.

Por otra parte, nuestros diputados tienen un mayor trabajo por delante, ya que los Lineamientos aprobados por el Congreso serán sometidos al análisis de la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, para su ratificación legislativa en los sucesivos períodos de sesiones, a medida que vayamos completando la elaboración de las normativas

actualizar los métodos y estilo de trabajo, estructuras y política de cuadros, incluyendo ampliar y renovar el Comité Central.

Como se expresa en su convocatoria, la Conferencia Nacional estará presidida por la determinación de “cambiar todo lo que debe ser cambiado” contenida en la brillante definición del concepto Revolución del compañero Fidel.

Para alcanzar el éxito, lo primero que estamos obligados a modificar en la vida del Partido es la mentalidad, que como barrera psicológica, según mi opinión, es lo que más trabajo nos llevará superar, al estar atada durante largos años a los mismos dogmas y criterios obsoletos. También será imprescindible rectificar errores y conformar,



vez más costosas importaciones de muchos productos, que hoy benefician a suministradores extranjeros, en lugar de a nuestros campesinos.

Lo primero que debemos hacer es cumplir lo que acabamos de aprobar en este evento y por ello no es fortuita la decisión de que el Comité Central analice en sus plenos, al menos dos veces al año, cómo se cumplen los acuerdos del Congreso, en particular la marcha de la actualización del modelo económico y la ejecución del plan de la economía.

En este sentido, debo resaltar la trascendencia de la tarea asignada a la Comisión

legales correspondientes.

Como ustedes escucharon, el Congreso acordó convocar para el 28 de enero del próximo año, fecha en que se cumple el 159 aniversario del nacimiento de José Martí, la Conferencia Nacional, la cual en la práctica será una continuación del 6to Congreso, dedicada a valorar con realismo y espíritu crítico la labor del Partido y también precisar las transformaciones requeridas para ejercer el papel de fuerza dirigente superior de la sociedad y el Estado que le corresponde en virtud del Artículo cinco de la Constitución de la República. Asimismo, acordamos otorgar a dicha Conferencia facultades para

sobre la base de la racionalidad y firmeza de principios, una visión integral de futuro en aras de la preservación y desarrollo del Socialismo en las presentes circunstancias.

En materia de política de cuadros, con la elección del nuevo Comité Central, su Secretariado y el Buró Político, presentados en la mañana de hoy, hemos dado un primer paso para cumplimentar lo que acordamos en el Congreso, muy especialmente en lo que se refiere a iniciar un proceso gradual de renovación y rejuvenecimiento de la cadena de cargos políticos y estatales, al tiempo que se mejoró, de manera sustancial, la composición

continúa en la página 36

racial y de género.

El Comité Central quedó integrado por 115 miembros, de los cuales 48 son mujeres, el 41.7 por ciento, lo que más que triplica la proporción alcanzada en el congreso anterior, que fue del 13.3 por ciento. Los negros y mestizos son 36, creciendo en un 10 por ciento su representación, que asciende ahora al 31.3 por ciento.

Este resultado, que repito es un primer paso, no es fruto de la improvisación. El Partido, desde hace varios meses, venía trabajando con profundidad en esta dirección con el propósito de conformar una candidatura que tuviera en cuenta la necesidad de lograr proporciones justas de género y raza en la membresía del Comité Central.

Fueron seleccionados de la gigantesca cantera de graduados universitarios y especialistas calificados, que la Revolución no perdió tiempo en formar. Son hijos de la clase obrera, surgidos de las entrañas más humildes del pueblo, con una vida política activa en las organizaciones estudiantiles, la UJC y el Partido; jóvenes que en su mayoría cuentan con más de 10, 15 ó 20 años de experiencia en la base, sin dejar de trabajar en las profesiones que estudiaron y casi todos fueron propuestos por los núcleos donde militan, como parte del proceso de preparación del Congreso.

Nos corresponde en lo adelante darles seguimiento y proseguir su formación para prepararlos en interés de que progresivamente, con su trabajo, puedan ocupar responsabilidades superiores.

En la integración de los órganos superiores del Partido, no obstante la salida del Comité Central de 59 compañeros, la mitad de sus miembros efectivos, la mayoría de ellos con una positiva hoja de servicios a la Revolución; nos mantuvimos varios veteranos de la generación histórica y es lógico que así sea, como una de las consecuencias de las deficiencias cometidas en este ámbito, criticadas en el Informe Central, que nos han impedido contar hoy con la reserva de sustitutos maduros y con experiencia suficiente para asumir el relevo en los principales cargos del país.

Por consiguiente, seguiremos adoptando medidas similares en esta decisiva dirección durante la próxima Conferencia Nacional del Partido y en la vida diaria de nuestro quehacer partidista, gubernamental y estatal.

El compañero Fidel Castro Ruz, fundador y Comandante en Jefe de la Revolución Cubana, nos dio el primer ejemplo de actitud consecuente en esta materia, al solicitar expresamente no ser incluido en la candidatura del Comité Central.

Fidel es Fidel y no precisa de cargo alguno para ocupar, por siempre, un lugar cimero en la historia, en el presente y en el futuro de la nación cubana. Mientras tenga fuerzas para hacerlo, y afortunadamente se encuentra en la plenitud de su pensamiento político, desde su modesta condición de militante del Partido y soldado de las ideas, continuará aportando a la lucha revolucionaria y a los propósitos más nobles de la Humanidad.

En lo que a mí respecta, asumo mi última tarea, con la firme convicción y compromiso de honor de que el Primer Secretario del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba tiene como misión principal y sentido de su vida: defender, preservar y proseguir perfeccionando el Socialismo y no permitir jamás el regreso del régimen capitalista.

En el Buró Político, como podrán observar, se refleja una adecuada proporción de Jefes principales de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias. Es natural que sea así, lo cual fundamento citando las palabras del compañero Fidel en el Informe Central al Primer Congreso del Partido:

“El Ejército Rebelde fue el alma de la Revolución. De sus armas victoriosas emergió libre, hermosa, pujante e invencible la patria nueva... Cuando se fundó el Partido... nuestro ejército, heredero a su vez del heroísmo y la pureza patriótica del Ejército Libertador y continuador victorioso de sus luchas, depositó en sus manos las banderas de la Revolución y fue a partir de ese instante y para siempre su más fiel, disciplinado, humilde e inmovible seguidor”. Fin de la cita.

Tengo sobradas razones para proclamar que las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, de las cuales albergo el orgullo de haber sido ministro por casi 49 años, nunca renunciarán a cumplir ese papel al servicio de la defensa del pueblo, del Partido, de la Revolución y el Socialismo.

La condición de miembro del Comité Central, si bien en parte había sido hasta ahora un reconocimiento a la trayectoria de lucha de los elegidos, lo cual fue justo, a partir de este momento deberá predominar el concepto de que en esencia, esa categoría representa una enorme responsabilidad frente

al Partido y el pueblo, pues entre congreso y congreso, el Comité Central es el organismo superior de dirección partidista y le corresponden, según los estatutos, amplias facultades en el control de la aplicación de la política trazada y los programas de desarrollo económico y social del país, así como en la política de cuadros y la labor ideológica, entre otras.

En consonancia con ello, se requiere elevar la preparación y superación constante de sus miembros, ya que nos proponemos utilizar activamente al Comité Central en la materialización de los acuerdos del Congreso, como foro para analizar de modo colegiado, sin asomo de formalismo, los principales temas de la vida del Partido y la nación.

Lo propio haremos en el Buró Político, como le compete, por ser el organismo superior de dirección entre los plenos del Comité Central.

El Buró Político se compone de 15 miembros, reduciéndose en comparación con el anterior de 24 integrantes, cantidad que en la práctica resultó excesiva. En él ingresaron tres nuevos compañeros: Mercedes López Acea, Primera Secretaria del Comité Provincial del Partido en La Habana; Marino Murillo Jorge, Vicepresidente del Consejo de Ministros y Jefe de la Comisión Permanente del Gobierno para la Implementación y Desarrollo y Adel Yzquierdo Rodríguez, quien recientemente fue nombrado Ministro de Economía y Planificación.

Estas promociones no son casuales, en el primer caso obedece a la prioridad que el Partido concede a su labor en la capital, de más de dos millones de habitantes y en los restantes compañeros, responde a la significación estratégica de la actualización del modelo económico y el desarrollo de la economía nacional.

Mantendremos la útil práctica de reunir de conjunto, semanalmente, a la Comisión del Buró Político con el Comité Ejecutivo del Consejo de Ministros, para evaluar los asuntos fundamentales del acontecer nacional, al tiempo que continuaremos propiciando la participación en las sesiones mensuales del Consejo de Ministros, según los temas a debatir y en calidad de invitados, a los miembros del Buró Político y del Secretariado del Comité Central, el Consejo de Estado y la presidencia de la Asamblea Nacional; los cuadros centro de la Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC), demás organizaciones de masas y la UJC, al igual que a los primeros

in 1954, when the progressive government of Jacobo Arbenz was overthrown.

Let's use the occasion to repeat Fidel's remarks in the 5th Anniversary of the Victory, on April 19, 1976, when he said: "After Girón, all of the peoples of our America were a bit freer."

It was in Girón that we used for the first time in defense of Socialism in Cuba the weapons supplied by the Soviet Union a few months before, and that we had barely learned how to use. It is only fair that on a day like this we recognize that without the assistance of the peoples that made up that immense country, particularly the Russian people, the Revolution would not have been able to survive those initial years in light of the constant and increasing imperialist aggressions; and for this we shall be forever grateful.

On a day like this, our gratitude goes to the current socialist countries for their

continuous cooperation and support during these years of hard battles and sacrifices.

Our brothers and sister in the Third World, especially those from Latin America and the Caribbean, who are making great efforts to transform the legacy of centuries of colonial domination, should know that they can always count on our solidarity and support.

Our fraternal greetings also go to the communist parties and other progressive forces all over the planet fighting restlessly with the deep conviction that a better world is possible.

I also wish to express the recognition of the Cuban people to all those governments that every year claim, with their voices and votes at the United Nations, for the removal of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba by the United States.

Finally, let us express our appreciation to all the comrades who took part in the

successful organization of and support to this Congress.

I think there can be no better way to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Victory of Playa Girón than closing this historic Party Congress, with the presence of Fidel here and the symbolism contained in the "Elegía de los Zapaticos Blancos" by Indio Naborí, vividly recited by actor Jorge Ryan, and the touching words of Nemesia, the daughter of a charcoal burner who looked on helplessly as her mother was killed and her grandmother and two brothers injured by the murdering action of planes disguised with the Cuban insignia; the same girl whose white shoes in holes from the enemy's shrapnel are exhibited at the Playa Girón Museum as material evidence that 50 years later the Revolution remains victorious and paying respects to the fallen.

Thank you, very much.

Viene de la página 36 - Español

secretarios de los comités provinciales del Partido y los presidentes de los consejos de la Administración Provincial.

Este método ha probado su eficacia para transmitir, sin intermediarios, a los principales dirigentes de todo el país, informaciones indispensables y orientaciones para el desempeño de sus responsabilidades.

Finalmente, a ninguno de nosotros escapa la importancia histórica que revistió para el destino de la Revolución la aplastante derrota a la invasión mercenaria de Playa Girón, como resultado de la firme, incesante y decidida acción de nuestros combatientes, que bajo el mando directo del Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro, quien se mantuvo todo el tiempo en el teatro de operaciones donde se libraban las acciones combativas, destrozaron, en menos de 72 horas, el intento del gobierno de los Estados Unidos de crear una cabeza de playa en un apartado rincón de la patria, al cual pretendían trasladar después, desde una base militar en la Florida, un gobierno títere que solicitara a la Organización de Estados Americanos, la tristemente célebre OEA, la intervención militar de fuerzas norteamericanas, ubicadas en aguas muy cercanas, acompañando al contingente mercenario desde su salida de costas centroamericanas, como ya habían hecho en Guatemala en 1954 siete años antes, al derrocar al gobierno progresista

de Jacobo Arbenz.

Sirva la ocasión para repetir las palabras de Fidel en el décimo quinto aniversario de la Victoria, el 19 de abril de 1976 cuando dijo: "A partir de Girón todos los pueblos de América fueron un poco más libres" fin de la cita.

En Girón por primera vez fue empleado en defensa del socialismo en Cuba el armamento suministrado por la entonces Unión Soviética pocos meses antes, sin apenas haberlo podido asimilar completamente. Es justo, un día como hoy, reconocer que sin la ayuda de los pueblos que componían aquel inmenso país, en especial el pueblo ruso, la Revolución no hubiera podido sobrevivir en los años iniciales ante las crecientes y continuas agresiones del imperialismo y por eso les estaremos eternamente agradecidos.

Nuestra gratitud, un día como hoy, a los actuales países socialistas por su invariable cooperación y apoyo en todos estos años de duras batallas y sacrificios.

Los pueblos hermanos del Tercer Mundo, en especial los de América Latina y el Caribe, que se esfuerzan por transformar la herencia de siglos de dominación colonial saben que siempre contarán con nuestra solidaridad y apoyo.

Un caluroso saludo fraternal a los partidos comunistas y demás fuerzas progresistas de todo el planeta, que luchan sin cesar,

partiendo de la firme convicción de que un mundo mejor es posible.

También deseo expresar el reconocimiento del pueblo cubano a todos los gobiernos que, año tras año, han reclamado con su voto y con su voz, en las Naciones Unidas, el cese del bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero impuesto por los Estados Unidos a Cuba.

Finalmente, llegue nuestro agradecimiento a todas y todos aquellos que de uno u otro modo participaron en la exitosa organización y aseguramiento de este Congreso.

Creo que no existe mejor modo de celebrar el 50 aniversario del Día de la Victoria en Playa Girón, que clausurar este histórico Congreso del Partido con el regalo y la presencia de Fidel y el simbolismo que encierra la "Elegía de los Zapaticos Blancos" del Indio Naborí, declamada vibrantemente por el actor Jorge Ryan y las emocionadas palabras de Nemesia, la niña carbonera que vio morir indefensa a su madre y las heridas producidas a su abuela y dos hermanos por la acción asesina de aviones pintados con las insignias cubanas y cuyos zapatos blancos, perforados por la metralla enemiga, se exponen en el museo de Playa Girón, como constancia material de que la Revolución se mantiene victoriosa 50 años después, rindiéndole honor a sus caídos.

Muchas gracias

continued from page 14

both his sharp legal knowledge of the case and his very personal experiences working together with the Cuban 5 and their families over the many years of this injustice.

Once all of the witnesses had provided their testimony, it was up to the Magistrates of Conscience to render the decisions of the Tribunal. The Lead Magistrate, Toronto lawyer, Juan Carranza read the final ruling of the Peoples' Tribunal (see the ruling on this page 14 this issue). This ruling was met with loud applause and cheering of "Free the Cuban 5 Now!"

The next morning the Peoples' Assembly began with some reports on recent work and accomplishments made by different organizations involved in the fight to free the Cuban 5. There were then closing statements from Elizabeth Palmiero and Adriana Perez, a greeting by guests, Esperanza Luzbert and Sandra Ramirez, of the North American Desk of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) and an address by Her Excellency Teresita Vicente Sotolongo, the Cuban Ambassador to Canada. These inspiring talks opened the way for the afternoon workshops. However, Assembly participants first turned their words into action with a noon-hour march to the United States Consulate where a protest had been organized to demand freedom for the 5 Cuban Heroes.

When everyone returned to the Peoples' Assembly in the afternoon, it was time to discuss future plans and to share ideas for moving forward with this crucial campaign. Many issues and ideas were discussed in these workshops, but the strongest message from the final general discussion was that while the "Free the 5 People's Tribunal & Assembly" had been a well-organized and attended event, the success of this event was not so much what happened at Toronto City Hall that weekend. Instead, the success of the event would be measured based on the work for the Cuban 5 that it inspired following the event. During the wrap up, many expressed how the Peoples' Assembly & Tribunal had given them a new sense of urgency to return to their groups and committees and begin strengthening and building the movement for the freedom of our 5 Cuban Heroes. **FREE THE CUBAN 5 NOW!**



Raul Castro: Cuban Economy is Advancing at Firm Pace

Taken from: Radio Havana Cuba www.radiohc.cu

Cuban President Raul Castro said that the update of the Cuban Economic model is firmly advancing, as he closed the 10th Session of the Cuban Parliament Seventh Legislature on Thursday.

In his closing remarks, Raul Castro analyzed the different changes that have thus far taken place in the country and he noted that all decisions are aimed at improving the country's economy.

Following the initial measures related to the lifting of prohibitions and other hurdles on the development of productive forces, the update of the Cuban economic model is advancing at a firm pace and it now begins to address major and more complex issues, said the Cuban President.

The number of self-employed workers has continued to increase with nearly 400,000 people at this point in time, and this trend will be backed with the rental of state facilities for the food business, a more flexible payment relationship between the private sector and state companies and the granting of licenses for new self-employment modalities, Raul explained.

The successful implementation of the economic and social guidelines demands the change of a mindset rooted in habits and concepts of the past, said Raul and added that such a battle, which show progress, must be first waged by leaders and executives. He added that nearly 3700 senior directives and national executives have taken leadership and entrepreneurial management courses.

In another part of his speech Raul reiterated Cuba's willingness to hold a respectful dialog with the United States about bilateral issues on equal grounds, while the island maintains its cooperation offers on subjects of bilateral interest, without preconditions or previous gestures.

Raul stressed the permanent demand of the Cuban people for the return of the five Cuban antiterrorist fighters held in the U.S., and he recalled that an increasing majority of the US people and the Cuban emigration opposes Washington's economic blockade of the island.

For 21 years in a row, the international community has overwhelmingly demanded the end of the US blockade and President Obama has the constitutional prerogatives to take sig-

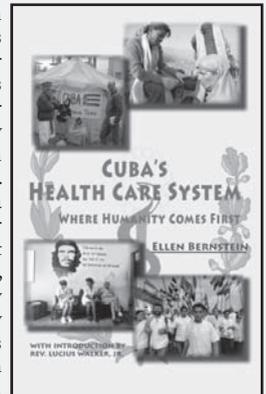
Battle of Ideas Press

CUBA'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM WHERE HUMANITY COMES FIRST

BY ELLEN BERNSTEIN

"The unflinching dedication of Cuban health care professionals has led to dramatic improvements in quality of life, for millions of people who previously had no other hope of receiving decent medical care. IFCO/Pastors for Peace is pleased to honor the diligent health care professionals of the Cuban health care system. We especially pay tribute to Cuba's national leadership, whose vision of universal health care as a right of every citizen sets an example for the world."

Ellen Bernstein has served as Associate Director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) since 2003. She has been a key staff member of IFCO's project Pastors for Peace, and has been deeply and integrally involved in IFCO's historic work with Cuba.



September 2010, paperback, 149 pages, illustrated, \$6.00
ISBN 978-0-9864716-2-9 | Copyright © 2010 by Battle of Ideas Press
PO Box 21607, Vancouver, BC, V5L 5G3, Canada

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nificant steps in this direction, said Raul and went on to point out that independently from whatever happens, Cuba will continue on its own path.

Raul said that Cuba will chair the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2013, which entails a high honor and a great responsibility to which the island will dedicate its best efforts.

Despite all difficulties and risks, Our America perseveres in its independence, sovereignty, development and integration, aware that without social justice and equitable wealth distribution such goals will not be possible to achieve. At the same time, Cuba will continue to discretely and prudently support Colombia's peace process, said the Cuban President.

As to the situation of Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, Raul said that Cuba will always be by the Bolivarian President and his revolution. He expressed affection and solidarity to Chavez and wished him his recovery to jointly celebrate a victory in the upcoming Venezuelan regional elections slated for December 16.

Finally, Raul Castro said that at just few days from the 55 anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, Cuba will face the challenges of the future, since as Fidel said: "if on that day, in the past, we were only a handful of men, today we constitute a whole nation conquering its future."

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