

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



Fire This Time!

THE CUBAN 5 ARE FREE!



A VICTORY FOR THE CUBAN PEOPLE! A VICTORY FOR THE WORLD!

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and new US-Cuba diplomatic relations...



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WE ARE NOT CHARLIE HEBDO!

Neither do we condone the bombings and murder of journalists at their headquarters, however much we are repulsed by their racist, chauvinist and hateful Islamophobic caricatures of oppressed people. Neither do we condone the subsequent murders at the Paris Kosher supermarket.

Yes, we are for free speech, freedom of expression and democratic rights for all, including the Muslim and antiwar activists who were banned by the French government from street protests in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, or the Muslim women who are banned from wearing the veil. We are for freedom of expression and the right to exist of Muslim Americans, 700,000 of whom have been investigated or interrogated in the U.S. for being Muslim, or the 1.5 million Latino immigrants in the U.S. who are imprisoned, detained

and deported, or the entire world's people who are victims of the all-pervasive high-tech surveillance of everyone's personal means of communication by the U.S., France and all other so-called democratic nations.

We will NOT join the Paris parades orchestrated by imperialist French President Francois Holland and the heads of state of the world's "great powers;" nor will we applaud their call for the worldwide "Anti-terrorist Conference"



that President Holland has set for Paris. We are saddened at the participation of French working people in these state-sponsored mobilizations, whose objectives are to further war in the Middle East and Africa and to restrict democracy for Muslim communities in France and around the world. Those who participate believing that they can advance freedom of expression, peace and solidarity

are being used for opposite ends.

The war proclaimed by French Prime Minister Manuel Valls as "... a war against terrorism. Against jihadism. Against radical Islam, against everything that is aimed at breaking fraternity, freedom and solidarity" is, in fact, a war to reestablish and strengthen French economic hegemony in her former colonies. As Americans we heard this language from President George Bush when he declared his own "war on terror," shredded the U.S. Constitution, imprisoned the innocent en masse and went to war in Iraq based on the now-exposed false flag lie that the Hussein government possessed "weapons of mass destruction."

We don't march with "leaders"--including the government of the United States and

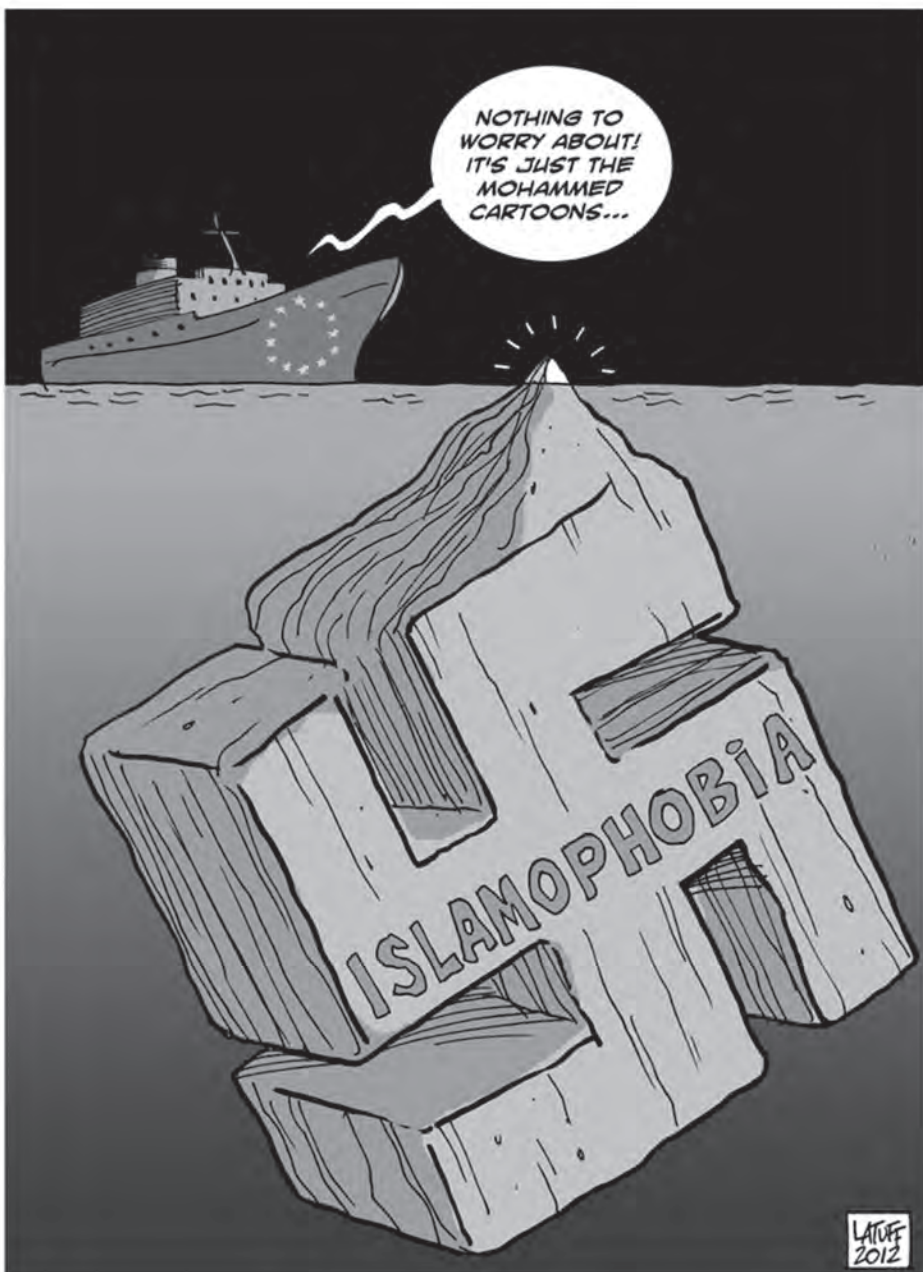
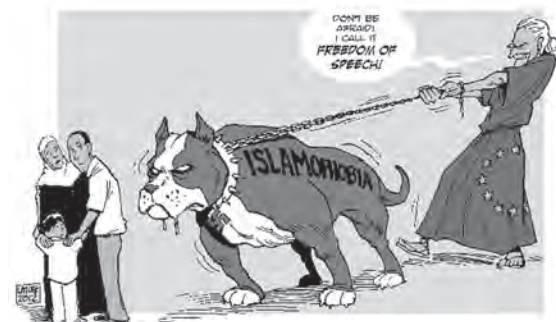
the Barack Obama administration - who oversee and direct mass murder and torture. Need we mention the recent U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee Report revealing the extent of U.S.-sponsored torture?

The heads of state of the world's past and present colonial conquerors today murder with impunity on every continent. President Obama is the headmaster of terrorist wars, with six to his credit since his 2008 election. Need we mention the U.S. drone terror bombings and overt wars in Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, Syria, Somalia and Iraq? Every public poll demonstrates massive majority opposition. Yet the wars continue and expand everywhere.

France's largest party, the neo-fascist National Front of Marine Le Pen, revels in the government-promoted hate-mongering, thinking its time has come. In the past few days some 50 Muslim mosques in France have been hit by bullets and explosives and/or tagged with racist graffiti. In Corsica, a severed pig's head was mounted on a Muslim prayer hall. In Sweden a Muslim mosque was firebombed. Racist mobilizations in Germany denounce the "Islamization of Europe."

As in the U.S., where Latinos flee Latin America to escape poverty and persecution stemming from the policies of U.S.-backed corrupt and murderous regimes, Muslim immigrants flee their homelands that have been ravaged by the wars and exploitation of foreign powers.

We hear no imperialist voices denouncing French troops in Mali. No corporate media voices recalling France's Vietnam in Algeria a decade earlier, where one million were slaughtered until that nation's war for independence was won.



Imperialism's memory is short, as with the four million Vietnamese murdered in that ten-year U.S. colonial war. As social justice and antiwar activists our memory is long. We are not deceived by yet another imperialist campaign to justify the perpetration of new horrors on the world's people.

Neither do we support the renewed calls for stepped up repressive measures, including billions more for police and military repression and new laws further restricting civil liberties and democratic rights.

As U.S. social and political activists, we are witness to the horror of institutionalized racism, where Ferguson-type police murder is the norm for most every city – where mass incarceration of the oppressed ranks first in the world – where repeated police murder of unarmed Blacks goes unpunished. We march for the victims in Ferguson and in every city, not for their murderers.

We note the racist parallels between France and the U.S. The great majority who are locked in U.S. prisons are Black and Latino. In France up to 60 percent of the prison population are Muslims.

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AFGHANISTAN

A VICTIM OF IMPERIALIST'S NEW ERA OF WAR & OCCUPATION

By Nita Palmer

It has now become an irrefutable fact that the events of September 11, 2001 and the ensuing invasion and occupation of Afghanistan have changed the course of global politics. In the 13 years since the attacks on the World Trade Center, the world has been defined more than anything else by ongoing wars and occupations in the elusive battle against terrorism – a fight which began, and continues today, in the mountains of Afghanistan.

The protracted war in Afghanistan has been defining point not only for world politics, but also of Canadian foreign policy. The war has marked a step away from the official doctrine of Canada as a “peacekeeping” nation towards a doctrine of unapologetic warmongering – albeit in the name of “fighting terrorism” and developing “human rights and democracy”.

It is therefore imperative that we as Canadians and as citizens of the world reflect on and learn from the longest war in modern history.

On December 28, 2014, NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan officially ended. However, this hardly marked the end of the thirteen-year war. In place of the ISAF flag, a flag for NATO's new mission, Operation Resolute Support, was raised. The new mission will employ 12,000 soldiers in a “supporting role” for the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and the Afghan police. In addition to these soldiers, 5,500 American soldiers will remain in Afghanistan, primarily elite troops involved in counterterrorism operations. However, the bulk of the foreign military presence in Afghanistan will not be soldiers, but 20,000 heavily-armed foreign 'contractors' – employed by companies notorious for their shady human rights records in combat zones.

Marking the end of the mission, US President Barack Obama stated, “our combat mission in Afghanistan is ending, and the longest war in American history is coming to a responsible conclusion”.

However, anyone watching events in Afghanistan can see that combat is far from concluded.

be taking over security of the country is looking rather grim. In 2014 alone, over 5,000 Afghan soldiers were killed – nearly double the number of foreign troops killed in the last decade-plus. For all the talk of 'mission accomplished' in Afghanistan, it is clear that today the country is in perhaps the worst situation since the 2001 invasion.

Over the last fourteen years, the mission has



The United Nations estimates that over 10,000 Afghans were killed or injured in 2014. Attacks by the Taliban on foreign outposts in Kabul have become commonplace – and the Taliban have gained back a substantial amount of territory in rural Afghanistan. Indeed, the security situation for foreign forces and the Afghan army, which is supposed to

cost over a trillion dollars. At least 21,000 Afghans have lost their lives in the war (although the true number is likely much higher). As well, 3387 foreign soldiers have lost their lives – 158 of them Canadian.

So what has been achieved for this massive human and financial cost? Those hailing the mission as a success point to a number of achievements: schools, hospitals and roads

built across the country; increasing school enrollment; the Taliban ousted from power and a democratically elected government installed in its place.

However, the reality on the ground – as told by Afghans and front-line aid workers – is a far cry from the official line of NATO countries.

interviewed had been prevented from getting to a hospital previously. Eighty-seven percent of those interviewed said the conflict had prevented them from getting there. Some had been prevented from leaving their homes due to fighting or lack of security; others faced harassment at checkpoints while en route to the hospital.

Cost, distance, and poor quality of health

Another major concern cited was the use of medical facilities as a base for combat operations. In eighty percent of cases reported, it was Afghan government forces which took over hospitals for military use. This dangerous and irresponsible practice puts patients and staff at risk of attack and serves to further prevent those in need from seeking help at those facilities.



October 2014 Protest in Kabul, Afghanistan

In February 2014, the medical aid organization Medcins Sans Frontieres published a damning report on the state of health care in Afghanistan, titled “Between Rhetoric and Reality: The Ongoing Struggle to Access Healthcare in Afghanistan”.

Introducing the report, its authors note, “the results are grim. Statistics and personal accounts highlight the devastating impact of the ongoing war on Afghan communities. In a country with some of the highest mortality rates in the world, the conflict is causing widespread disruption to health services, particularly in remote areas.”

The report, based on data collected from interviewing patients and those accompanying them at MSF and Afghan hospitals, found that one in eight of those

care at some facilities were found to be major barriers as well. In fact, 13% of respondents from Kabul province and 26% of those from Khost reported that they had family or close friends die due to lack of access to health care within the previous year.

In summary, the report notes that “it is striking how far the accounts of ordinary Afghans differ from prevailing narratives of progress. Packaging the intervention into a simple success story risks obscuring the reality of the ongoing war and people’s increasing humanitarian needs.”



The Afghan education system is in a bad spot as well. Although enrollment numbers have increased, this number does not necessarily reflect the number of children actually attending school. Many schools report that only half of students enrolled attend classes. The necessity to earn a living for their family prevents many children from attending school, while others are barred by security concerns and ongoing fighting.

For those who are able to attend classes, the quality of

education is often sorely lacking. According to a report by the Afghan Ministry of Education, only 40% of Afghan schools have permanent buildings. The majority

and high unemployment rates have taken a psychological toll on men as well – and their pain and anger is often taken out on their wives and daughters. The UN recorded

two important objectives that remain for the US and their NATO allies: ridding Afghanistan of the Taliban and establishing the country as a functioning democracy.



September 30, 2014 - U.S. and Afghan officials sign security agreement for continued U.S. troop presence

The Taliban were ousted from official power rather quickly after the 2001 bombing campaign. However, after 14 years of war, they are now gaining strength and influence across much of the country. Far from eliminating them, the Taliban have become the *de facto* government in many areas of the country where the Kabul government simply has no power. In a number of districts, the Taliban collect taxes, run schools, and mediate disputes through a court system which many Afghans note is more efficient and less corrupt than official government channels.

While the Taliban are having some success at expanding their influence throughout the country, the Afghan government, for all its Western funding and support, seems to be floundering in that

are held in tents or simply in the open air. The lack qualified teachers is another major concern. The Ministry of Education reports that 80% of Afghanistan's teachers either have not completed post-secondary studies or do not even hold a high school diploma themselves. There are financial barriers to achieving an education as well – most families cannot afford to buy the books or even pencils and paper required for their children to complete their school work. As a result of all these factors, high school graduation rates remain low.

In the field of womens' rights, another cause championed by foreign forces, the situation also remains dire. Yes, there are women serving in the Afghan parliament now, and even a few in the Afghan police force. However, the campaign for liberalization on the surface has done little to improve the lives of most Afghan women. They face not only systemic and societal discrimination, but the harsh reality of poverty and war as well. Thousands of women have found themselves in desperate poverty after their husbands have been killed or injured in the war; these women are often reduced to begging, prostitution, or even selling some of their children in order to feed their families. The ongoing violence, instability,

that in 2013, violence against women in Afghanistan increased by 28% compared with the previous year – a number which has been steadily rising. Rather than improving, conditions have in fact worsened over the last decade for the majority of Afghan women. This is perhaps most evident in the



U.S. Soldier in a opium poppy field in Helmand, Afghanistan

epidemic of suicide among Afghan women. The number of women taking their own lives is increasing all the time, with 2500 deaths in 2013.

After 14 years of war, the human rights situation remains dire. However, there are

regard. The “transition to democracy” has become a little more than a running joke in the country. Elections have been marred by low voter turnout, massive fraud, vote-buying, and corruption. The ineffectiveness of government combined with extortion by local officials and blatant vote-buying by

various warlords has left Afghans with little faith in their new “democratic” system. As a result, The government has little real power beyond Kabul, while much of the country remains governed by the Taliban or various warlords. In much of Afghanistan, the reality is that the Taliban is often the lesser of two evils.

With Western aid starting to dwindle, it is looking doubtful whether the country will even be able to support itself. Economic growth, which had been fueled in large part

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CUBA & THE UNITED STATES

A NEW AGE?

By Ricardo Alarcón*

Last December 17th, the US president Barack Obama corrected an excessively long injustice, and simultaneously he changed the direction of history by releasing five Cuban anti-terrorist fighters who were in prison for more than 16 years.

By acknowledging the failure of anti-Cuban policies, re-establishing diplomatic relations, removing all possible restrictions at hand, proposing the complete elimination of the blockade and demanding a new age in the relation with Cuba, all in a single speech, he (Obama) surprised everyone, including brainy analysts.

The hostile policy set up by President Dwight Eisenhower (1953-1961) — before Obama was born— was followed by Democrat and Republican presidents of the U.S., and it was later codified with the Helms-Burton Law, approved by Bill Clinton in 1996.

It was pretty successful in the early years. In 1959, with the Triumph of the Revolution, the U.S. was at the apex of its power. It exercised unchallenged hegemony over several countries of the world, especially in the Western Hemisphere. The U.S. expelled Cuba from OAS and the island was isolated. Cuba was then helped by the Soviet Union and its associates at the COMECON (Council of Mutual Economic Assistance), made of countries that signed the Warsaw Pact.

The falling of the so-called “real socialism” gave false hopes to those who believe it was also the end of the Cuban revolution.

They imagine the imminence of a long period of unipolar dominance. Gloating about good times, they do not notice the deep sense of things happening: the end of the Cold War opened new spaces for social struggles and made Capitalism face new challenges to overcome.

The fall of the Berlin Wall prevented them from seeing that in February 1989, Venezuela was shocked by a social uprising called “El Caracazo”, sign of

the blossoming of a new epoch in Latin America.

Cuba survived the collapse of former allies. Its resistance was key factor for the deep transformation of the continent. The policy to isolate Cuba failed years ago since the U.S. ended isolated itself, as stated by current Secretary of State, John Kerry.

A new relation with Cuba was paramount for Washington. The U.S. needed to approach its relation with the continent, no longer its backyard. The achievement of such a goal is fundamental now. The U.S. cannot lead as it did before.

There is still a long way to go to reach that level of relation. First, the economic, commercial, and financial blockade must stop, as major sectors of U.S. business world are urging.

However, to normalize relations it is essential to learn how to coexist with a different viewpoint and eradicate old dreams of domination. It would imply to respect the sovereignty of people, fundamental principle of the UN Chart, which is not convenient for the most powerful countries.

In relation to the freedom of the Cuban Five, all U.S. presidents have used — without exception— the power granted by the Article II, Section 2, Paragraph 1 of the Constitution. All of them have used it for more than two centuries and nothing has stopped them.

Such paragraph in the Constitution authorizes the President to cancel the sentences and grant pardons, in cases of alleged crimes against the United States.

There were lots of reasons to demand executive clemency for the Cuban Five. In 2005, a judge panel of the Appeal Court revoked the process against them —defining the case as a “perfect storm of prejudice and hostility”— and ordered a new trial.

In 2009, the same court determined the case has nothing to do with neither espionage nor national security in the United States. Both verdicts were approved with full consensus.



Regarding another important charge, that of “conspiracy to commit a murder” against Gerardo Hernandez Nordelo, his prosecutors admitted it was impossible to prove such false accusation and they even tried to remove it in May 2001 in an unprecedented move. Such idea came from the attorneys of former President George W. Bush (2001-2009).

Five years had passed and Gerardo awaited any response to his repeated appeals to Miami court to free him, or at least revise his case, or order the government to present the “evidence” used to condemn him, or agree to listen to him about the extent of the money involved in such media campaign to trigger that “perfect storm”.

The court never answered back. No words from bigger media groups were heard about that unusual paralysis of the judicial system. It was obvious it was a political case and only a political decision could solve the situation. No one else but the President could do it.

Obama showed wisdom and determination when he faced with courage the basic problems rather than limiting himself to free any person. The Cuban Five saga was the consequence of an aggressive strategy and the best move was to put an end to both things simultaneously.

No one can deny the transcendence of the announcement of December 17th. It would be a mistake, however, to ignore that there is still a long, winding way to go. It will be necessary to advance firmly and wisely.

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**Ricardo Alarcón is a former Vice President of Cuba & former President of the National Assembly of People's Power of Cuba*

Cuba y Estados Unidos: ¿Una Nueva Era?

Por Ricardo Alarcón*

El 17 de diciembre, al liberar a los cinco antiterroristas cubanos que guardaron prisión por más de 16 años en Estados Unidos, el presidente Barack Obama reparó una injusticia excesivamente prolongada y al mismo tiempo dio un golpe de timón a la historia.

Reconocer el fracaso de la política anticubana, restablecer las relaciones diplomáticas, suprimir todas las restricciones a su alcance, proponer la eliminación completa del bloqueo y el inicio de una nueva era en las relaciones con Cuba, todo en un solo discurso, rompió cualquier vaticinio y sorprendió a todos, incluyendo a los analistas más sesudos.

La política hostil instaurada por el presidente Dwight Eisenhower (1953-1961), antes del nacimiento del actual mandatario, había sido la norma que aplicaron, con matices casi siempre secundarios, administraciones republicanas y demócratas y fue codificada con la Ley Helms-Burton, sancionada por Bill Clinton en 1996.

En los primeros años la practicaron con bastante éxito. En 1959, al triunfar la Revolución cubana, Estados Unidos estaba en el cenit de su poderío, ejercía indiscutida hegemonía sobre gran parte del mundo y especialmente en el Hemisferio Occidental, que le permitió lograr la exclusión de Cuba de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) y el aislamiento casi total de la isla que pudo contar solo con la ayuda de la Unión Soviética y sus asociados en el Consejo de Ayuda Mutua Económica (CAME), que integraban los países del Pacto de Varsovia.

El derrumbe del llamado “socialismo real” creó en muchos la ilusión de que también llegaba el final para la revolución cubana.

Imaginaron el advenimiento de un largo período de dominio unipolar. Embriagados con la victoria, no apreciaron el sentido profundo de lo que ocurría: el fin de la Guerra Fría abría nuevos espacios para las luchas sociales y colocaba al capitalismo frente a desafíos cada vez más difíciles de encarar.

La caída de muro de Berlín les impidió ver que, al mismo tiempo, en febrero de 1989, estremecía a Venezuela el levantamiento social llamado “el caracazo”, señal



Cuban students celebrate the release of the Cuban 5 Heroes. December 17, 2014.

indicadora del inicio de una nueva época en América Latina.

Cuba logró sobrevivir a la desaparición de sus antiguos aliados y su resistencia fue factor fundamental en la profunda transformación del continente. Hace años era ostensible el fracaso de una política empeñada en aislar a Cuba, pero que terminó aislando a Estados Unidos como reconoció su actual secretario de Estado, John Kerry.

Una nueva relación con Cuba era indispensable para Washington, necesitado de recomponer sus vínculos con un continente que ya no es más su patio trasero. Lograrlo es fundamental ahora pues, pese a su poderío, Estados Unidos no puede ejercer el cómodo liderazgo de tiempos que no volverán.

Falta aún mucho para alcanzar esa nueva relación. Ante todo es preciso eliminar completamente el bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero como reclaman con renovado vigor importantes sectores del empresariado estadounidense.

Pero normalizar relaciones supondría sobre todo aprender a vivir con lo diferente y abandonar viejos sueños de dominación. Significaría respetar la igualdad soberana de los estados, principio fundamental de la Carta de las Naciones Unidas, que, como muestra la historia, no es del agrado de los poderosos.

Con respecto a la liberación de los cinco prisioneros cubanos, todos los presidentes de Estados Unidos, sin excepción, han utilizado ampliamente la facultad que a ellos exclusivamente otorga el Artículo II, Sección 2, Párrafo 1 de la Constitución. Así ha sido durante más de dos siglos sin que nada ni nadie pudiera limitarlos.

Ese párrafo constitucional faculta al presidente a suspender la ejecución de las

sentencias y a conceder indultos, en casos de alegados delitos contra Estados Unidos.

En el caso de los cinco sobraban razones para la clemencia ejecutiva. En 2005 el panel de jueces de la Corte de Apelaciones anuló el proceso contra ellos—definiéndolo como “una tormenta perfecta de prejuicios y hostilidad”— y había ordenado un nuevo juicio.

En 2009 el pleno de la misma Corte determinó que este caso no tenía relación alguna con el espionaje ni la seguridad nacional de Estados Unidos. Ambos veredictos fueron adoptados con total unanimidad.

Respecto al otro cargo importante, el de “conspiración para cometer asesinato” formulado solo contra Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, sus acusadores reconocieron que era imposible probar semejante calumnia e incluso intentaron retirarla en mayo de 2001 en una acción sin precedentes, tomada nada menos que por los fiscales del expresidente George W. Bush (2001-2009).

Hacia ya cinco años que Hernández esperaba alguna respuesta a sus repetidas peticiones a la Corte de Miami para que lo liberase, o accediese a revisar su caso, u ordenase al gobierno presentar las “pruebas” utilizadas para condenarlo o accediese a escucharlo a él o a que el gobierno revelase la magnitud y el alcance del financiamiento oficial a la descomunal campaña mediática que sustentó aquella “tormenta perfecta”.

El tribunal nunca respondió. Nada dijeron tampoco los grandes medios de comunicación ante la inusual parálisis judicial. Era obvio que se trataba de un caso político y sólo podría resolverse con una decisión política. Nadie más que el presidente podría hacerlo.

Obama mostró sabiduría y determinación cuando, en vez de limitarse a usar el poder para excarcelar a cualquier persona, enfrentó valerosamente el problema de fondo. La saga de los cinco era consecuencia de una estrategia agresiva y lo más sabio era poner término a ambas al mismo tiempo.

Nadie puede desconocer la trascendencia de lo anunciado el 17 de diciembre. Sería erróneo, sin embargo, ignorar que aún queda un camino, que puede ser largo y tortuoso, en el que será necesario avanzar con firmeza y sabiduría.

15 de enero de 2015. Tomado de CubaSi

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CUBAN PRESIDENT RAUL CASTRO SPEECH DEC. 17 2014



Fellow countrymen,

Since my election as President of the State Council and Council of Ministers I have reiterated in many occasions our willingness to hold a respectful dialogue with the United States on the basis of sovereign equality, in order to deal reciprocally with a wide variety of topics without detriment to the national Independence and self-determination of our people.

This stance was conveyed to the US Government both publicly and privately by Comrade Fidel on several occasions during our long standing struggle, stating the willingness to discuss and solve our differences without renouncing any of our principles.

The heroic Cuban people, in the wake of serious dangers, aggressions, adversities and sacrifices has proven to be faithful and will continue to be faithful to our ideals of independence and social justice. Strongly united throughout these 56 years of Revolution, we have kept our unwavering loyalty to those who died in defense of our principles since the beginning of our independence wars in 1868.

Today, despite the difficulties, we have embarked on the task of updating our economic model in order to build a prosperous and sustainable Socialism.

As a result of a dialogue at the highest level, which included a phone conversation I had yesterday with President Obama, we have been able to make headway in the solution of some topics of mutual interest for both nations.

As Fidel promised on June 2001, when he said: "They shall return!" Gerardo, Ramon, and Antonio have arrived today to our homeland.

The enormous joy of their families and of all our people, who have relentlessly fought for this goal, is shared by hundreds of solidarity committees and groups, governments, parliaments, organizations, institutions, and personalities, who for the last sixteen years have made tireless efforts demanding their release. We convey our deepest gratitude and commitment to all of them.

President Obama's decision deserves the respect and acknowledgement of our people.

I wish to thank and acknowledge the support of the Vatican, most particularly the support of Pope Francisco in the efforts for improving relations between Cuba and the United States. I also want to thank the Government of Canada for facilitating the high-level dialogue

between the two countries.

In turn, we have decided to release and send back to the United States a spy of Cuban origin who was working for that nation.

On the other hand, and for humanitarian reasons, today we have also sent the American citizen Alan Gross back to his country.

Unilaterally, as has always been our practice, and in strict compliance with the provisions of our legal system, the concerned prisoners have received legal benefits, including the release of those persons that the Government of the United States had conveyed their interest in.

We have also agreed to renew diplomatic relations.

This in no way means that the heart of the matter has been solved. The economic, commercial, and financial blockade, which causes enormous human and economic damages to our country, must cease.

Though the blockade has been codified into law, the President of the United States has the executive authority to modify its implementation.

We propose to the Government of the United States the adoption of mutual steps to improve the bilateral atmosphere and advance towards normalization of relations between our two countries, based on the principles of International Law and the United Nations Charter.

Cuba reiterates its willingness to cooperate in multilateral bodies, such as the United Nations.

While acknowledging our profound differences, particularly on issues related to national sovereignty, democracy, human rights and foreign policy, I reaffirm our willingness to dialogue on all these issues.

I call upon the Government of the United States to remove the obstacles hindering or restricting ties between peoples, families, and citizens of both countries, particularly restrictions on travelling, direct post services, and telecommunications.

The progress made in our exchanges proves that it is possible to find solutions to many problems.

As we have reiterated, we must learn the art of coexisting with our differences in a civilized manner.

We will continue talking about these important issues at a later date

Thank you.



DISCURSO
Diciembre 17, 2015

PRESIDENTE CUBANO **RAUL CASTRO**

el Gobierno de los Estados Unidos había mostrado interés.

I g u a l m e n t e , hemos acordado el restablecimiento de las relaciones diplomáticas.

Esto no quiere decir que lo principal se haya resuelto. El bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero que provoca enormes daños humanos y económicos a nuestro país debe cesar.

Aunque las medidas del bloqueo han sido convertidas en Ley, el Presidente de los Estados Unidos puede modificar

su aplicación en uso de sus facultades ejecutivas.

Proponemos al Gobierno de los Estados Unidos adoptar medidas mutuas para mejorar el clima bilateral y avanzar hacia la normalización de los vínculos entre nuestros países, basados en los principios del Derecho Internacional y la Carta de las Naciones Unidas.

Cuba reitera su disposición a sostener cooperación en los organismos multilaterales, como la Organización de Naciones Unidas.

Al reconocer que tenemos profundas diferencias, fundamentalmente en materia de soberanía nacional, democracia, derechos humanos y política exterior, reafirmo nuestra voluntad de dialogar sobre todos esos temas.

Exhorto al Gobierno de los Estados Unidos a remover los obstáculos que impiden o restringen los vínculos entre nuestros pueblos, las familias y los ciudadanos de ambos países, en particular los relativos a los viajes, el correo postal directo y las telecomunicaciones.

Los progresos alcanzados en los intercambios sostenidos demuestran que es posible encontrar solución a muchos problemas.

Como hemos repetido, debemos aprender el arte de convivir, de forma civilizada, con nuestras diferencias.

Sobre estos importantes temas volveremos a hablar más adelante.

Muchas gracias.

Compatriotas:

Desde mi elección como Presidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros, he reiterado en múltiples ocasiones, nuestra disposición a sostener con el gobierno de los Estados Unidos un diálogo respetuoso, basado en la igualdad soberana, para tratar los más diversos temas de forma recíproca, sin menoscabo a la independencia nacional y la autodeterminación de nuestro pueblo.

Esta es una posición que fue expresada al Gobierno de Estados Unidos, de forma pública y privada, por el compañero Fidel en diferentes momentos de nuestra larga lucha, con el planteamiento de discutir y resolver las diferencias mediante negociaciones, sin renunciar a uno solo de nuestros principios.

El heroico pueblo cubano ha demostrado, frente a grandes peligros, agresiones, adversidades y sacrificios, que es y será fiel a nuestros ideales de independencia y justicia social. Estrechamente unidos en estos 56 años de Revolución, hemos guardado profunda lealtad a los que cayeron defendiendo esos principios desde el inicio de nuestras guerras de independencia en 1868.

Ahora, llevamos adelante, pese a las dificultades, la actualización de nuestro modelo económico para construir un socialismo próspero e sostenible.

Resultado de un diálogo al más alto nivel, que incluyó una conversación telefónica que sostuve ayer con el Presidente Barack Obama, se ha podido avanzar en la solución de algunos temas de interés para ambas naciones.

Como prometió Fidel, en junio del

2001, cuando dijo: ¡Volverán!, arribaron hoy a nuestra Patria, Gerardo, Ramón y Antonio.

La enorme alegría de sus familiares y de todo nuestro pueblo, que se movilizó infatigablemente con ese objetivo, se extiende entre los cientos de comités y grupos de solidaridad; los gobiernos, parlamentos, organizaciones, instituciones y personalidades que durante estos 16 años reclamaron e hicieron denodados esfuerzos por su liberación. A todos ellos expresamos la más profunda gratitud y compromiso.

Esta decisión del Presidente Obama, merece el respeto y reconocimiento de nuestro pueblo.

Quiero agradecer y reconocer el apoyo del Vaticano, y especialmente, del Papa Francisco, al mejoramiento de las relaciones entre Cuba y Estados Unidos. Igualmente, al Gobierno de Canadá por las facilidades creadas para la realización del diálogo de alto nivel entre los dos países.

A su vez, decidimos excarcelar y enviar a Estados Unidos a un espía de origen cubano que estuvo al servicio de esa nación.

Por otra parte, basados en razones humanitarias, hoy también fue devuelto a su país el ciudadano norteamericano Alan Gross.

De manera unilateral, como es nuestra práctica y en estricto apego a nuestro ordenamiento legal, han recibido beneficios penales los reclusos correspondientes, incluida la excarcelación de personas sobre las que

New Year's Messages from the Cuban 5 ¡Feliz Año Nuevo! de Los 5

GERARDO HERNANDEZ & ADRIANA PEREZ

To the friends who share our happiness

We have lived very intense days since last December 17. There are not enough hours in the day to respond to so many messages we've received by different means, and very soon, with Gema's arrival, it could be we will have even less time to communicate with you. But you should know that there has not been one day that we have not thought of you all, who today are also enjoying this victory, by the return of the Five to our Homeland.

Each and every one of your efforts of solidarity contributed to make this triumph possible. For more than 16 years we've dreamed of this happiness that we are now living. You all struggled to make it possible. And today, with each display of love that we receive from our people, our gratitude multiplies toward the sisters and brothers who supported us for so long.

On behalf of the Five and our families, we wish you a happy and very successful 2015, and we send you greetings for the 56th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution.

A strong embrace, Adriana, Gerardo (and Gema).

ANTONIO GUERRERO

We wish you all much happiness in the New Year with good health, success in your plans and love.

Infinite thanks for all the help given during all these years that passed, you all were our comfort and our support in feeling we were not alone. When 12:00 arrives on the 31st, we will toast to all those friends who accompanied us and made possible the return of our Five brothers. This year's end will sing, dance and laugh with much joy for the union of our families and for the new goals that we will pursue here on out.

We love you all. The Guerrero family

RENE GONZALEZ & OLGA SALANUEVA

Long Live the 57th Anniversary of the Revolution!

Underneath this photograph many friends who visited us made it theirs, while we fought for the freedom of our brothers who were still imprisoned. It was also our struggle, to become fully free. Today I can say that this complete freedom accompanies me as I sit here with Olguita to give testimony of this moment.

It was more than 13 years ago that Fidel said: "I only have one thing to say to you: They will return!" That sentence was a call to all to take on the task of bringing the Five home to Cuba. Today that call became reality, but it has been thanks to the struggle of all of you, who knew how to convert the words of Fidel into a movement, in energy and living matter.

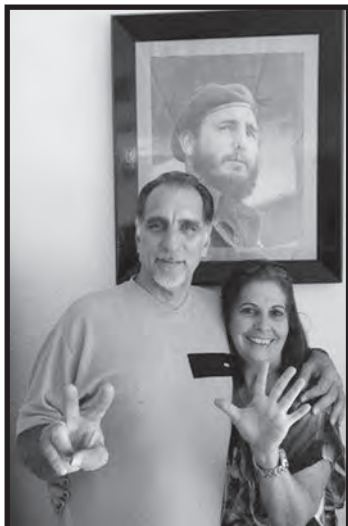
We thank you for having accompanied us all these years. For not having faltering in the demand that this justice be rectified. For having multiplied the voices that joined our cause until the empire could no longer continue keeping the Five in prison. This is our happiness, of everyone, but it is the victory of you all.

We owe you our gratitude, and our commitment to always be deserving of the love and affection with which you took up Fidel's call.

Embraces to everyone from my family, on behalf of the families of the Five.

Thank you for returning this happiness to us.

With all our affection, René y Olguita



GERARDO HERNANDEZ & ADRIANA PEREZ

A los amigos que comparten nuestra felicidad

Hemos vivido unos días muy intensos desde el pasado 17 de diciembre. Las horas no nos han alcanzado para responder tantos mensajes recibidos por diferentes vías, y muy pronto, con la llegada de Gema, puede que dispongamos aun de menos tiempo para comunicarnos. Pero deben saber que no ha habido un solo día en el que no pensemos en todos ustedes, quienes hoy disfrutan también esta victoria que ha representado el regreso de los Cinco a nuestra Patria.

Todos y cada uno de sus esfuerzos solidarios contribuyeron para hacer posible este triunfo. Por más de 16 años los Cinco soñamos con esta felicidad que ahora vivimos. Ustedes lucharon por hacerla posible. Y hoy, con cada muestra de amor que recibimos de nuestro pueblo, se multiplica la gratitud hacia las hermanas y hermanos que nos apoyaron durante tanto tiempo.

En nombre de los Cinco y de nuestros familiares, les deseamos un feliz y muy exitoso 2015, y los felicitamos por el 56 Aniversario de la Revolución Cubana.

Un fuerte abrazo, Adriana, Gerardo (y Gema).

ANTONIO GUERRERO

Les deseamos muchas felicidades en el nuevo año con buena salud, éxitos en sus planes y amor.

Gracias infinita por todo el apoyo brindado durante los todos estos años que pasaron, ustedes fueron nuestro aliento y nuestro soporte para sentir que no estábamos solo, cuando lleguen las 12 del 31 brindaremos por todos los amigos que nos acompañaron e hicieron posible el regreso de nuestros 5 hermanos. Este fin de año cantaremos, bailaremos y reiremos con mucha alegría por la unión de nuestras familias y por las nuevas metas que seguiremos de ahora en adelante.

Los queremos mucho. Flia Guerrero

RENE GONZALEZ & OLGA SALANUEVA

VIVA EL 56° ANIVERSARIO DE LA REVOLUCION!

Queridos amigos:

Bajo esta fotografía muchos amigos que nos visitaron se hicieron la suya, mientras luchábamos por la libertad de nuestros hermanos aún presos. Era también la lucha por ser, nosotros, plenamente libres. Hoy puedo decir que esa libertad plena me acompaña mientras poso con Olguita para testimoniar este momento.

Hace más de 13 años que Fidel dijo: "Sólo les digo una cosa: ¡Volverán!". Esa frase fue un llamado a todos los que se encargarían de traerlos a los Cinco de vuelta a Cuba. Hoy el llamado se hizo realidad, pero ha sido gracias a la lucha de todos ustedes, que supieron convertir las palabras de Fidel en movimiento, en energía, en materia viva.

Les damos gracias por habernos acompañado todos estos años. Por no haber desmayado en la demanda porque se corrigiera esta injusticia. Por haber multiplicado las voces que se fueron sumando a nuestra causa hasta que se hiciera insostenible para el imperio el mantenernos a los Cinco en prisión. Esta es la felicidad de nosotros, de todos, pero es la victoria de ustedes.

Les debemos nuestra gratitud, y el compromiso de ser dignos para siempre del amor y el cariño con que ustedes se unieron al llamado de Fidel.

Abrazos a todos de mi familia, a nombre de las familias de los Cinco.

Gracias por habernos devuelto esta felicidad.

Con todo nuestro afecto. René y Olguita

THIS IS A HISTORIC MOMENT! THE WORLD CELEBRATES THE RELEASE OF ALL THE CUBAN 5 HEROES!

A Statement From the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver & Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba December 17, 2014 - Vancouver, Canada

This morning we woke up to the breaking news that the 3 remaining CUBAN 5 HEROES HAVE BEEN RELEASED AND RETURNED TO CUBA! We are still awaiting official announcements from the Cuban and U.S. governments. Both president Raul Castro of Cuba and Barack Obama of the United States are scheduled to speak on the details related to this release at 12pm (Eastern Standard Time) and 9am (Pacific Standard Time).

The release of Antonio, Ramon and Gerardo to join the already released René and Fernando, no matter how western media portrays it, is a HISTORIC VICTORY that could not have been accomplished without the tireless work of their families, the Cuban people, the Cuban government, and all the international movement of people like you!

CONGRATULATIONS CUBA!

CONGRATULATIONS CUBAN PEOPLE!

CONGRATULATIONS RENÉ, FERNANDO, ANTONIO, RAMON, GERARDO!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE BRAVE FAMILIES OF THE CUBAN 5 HEROES!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT, FIDEL AND RAUL!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD AND ALL WHO FOUGHT FOR THIS IMMENSE VICTORY!

While awaiting the official announcement, here is an article from AP News source, one of the many articles that ran the story earlier this morning: <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/ap-source-cuba-releases-us-prisoner-alan-gross-27660003>

Vancouver! Let's start celebrating this historical victory together! We would like to celebrate with you t h i s

great humanity and nine years of struggle, 109 consecutive monthly protests by the Free the Cuban 5 Committee Vancouver in front of the US Consulate. We invite you to join us TODAY WED DEC 17, 2014 for:

1- An open mic celebration 4 – 5:30pm in front of the US Consulate, 1075 West Pender, downtown Vancouver

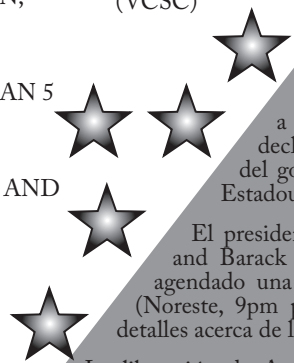
2- Celebration party and open mic 6:30pm at Joe's Cafe, the large North Hall, 1150 Commercial Drive, Vancouver.

Let's share this sweet moment of victory and humanity together. Let's feel together the energy and excitement of this incredible historic moment!

Please stay tuned for more details!

In Solidarity,

Free the Cuban Committee – Vancouver and Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC)



Esta mañana despertado con una increíble noticia: Los 5 héroes cubanos han sido liberados y regresados a Cuba! Aún esperamos declaraciones oficiales tanto del gobierno Cubano como del Estadounidense

El presidente de Cuba Raúl Castro and Barack Obama del EE.UU. han agendado una reunión hoy a las 12pm (Noreste, 9pm pacifico) para discutir los detalles acerca de la liberación.

La liberación de Antonio, Ramón y Gerardo, junto con la ya alcanzada liberación de René y Fernando, sin importar como los medios de comunicación occidentales lo den a conocer, es un VICTORIA HISTÓRICA, la cual no podría haber sido alcanzada sin el inagotable y arduo trabajo de sus familias, del pueblo Cubano, del gobierno Cubano y de todo el movimiento internacional conformado por personas como tú. FELICITACIONES CUBA!

FELICITACIONES PUEBLO CUBANO!

FELICITACIONES RENÉ, FERNANDO, ANTONIO, RAMÓN, GERARDO!

FELICITACIONES A LAS FAMILIAS DE LOS 5 HEROES POR SU CORAJE!

FELICITACIONES AL GOBIERNO CUBANO, FIDEL Y RAUL!

FELICITACIONES A LAS FAMILIAS DE LOS 5 HEROES POR SU CORAJE!

FELICITACIONES A TODAS A LAS PERSONAS ALREDEDOR



**¡ E S T A M O S
PRESENCIANDO UN
MOMENTO HISTÓRICO!**

**¡EL MUNDO CELEBRA
LA LIBERACION DE LOS 5
HEROES CUBANOS!**

Un comunicado del Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver & Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba Diciembre 17, 2014 - Vancouver, Canada

DEL MUNDO QUE LUCHARON POR ALCANZAR ESTA INMENSA VICTORIA!

Mientras esperamos por las declaraciones oficiales, adjuntamos el link the AP News source, uno de lo principales artículos que ha circulado con la historia desde hoy temprano en la mañana. <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/ap-source-cuba-releases-us-prisoner-alan-gross-27660003>

Vancouver! Comencemos a celebrar esta victoria! Nos gustaría celebrar contigo este gran triunfo para la humanidad y nueve años de lucha, 109 meses consecutivos de protestas realizadas por el Free the Cuban 5 Committee Vancouver en la puerta del consulado de los Estados Unidos. Te invitamos a venir, hoy miércoles 17 de diciembre, 2014, a las siguientes actividades:

1- Celebración desde las 4-5.30 pm en frente al consulado de USA, 1075 West Pender, downtown Vancouver

2- Fiesta de celebración y micrófono abierto en Joe's Cafe, the large North Hall, 1150 Commercial Drive, Vancouver.

Compartamos este glorioso momento de victoria y humanidad juntos. Disfrutemos la energía y la emoción de este increíble momento histórico!

Por favor, manténgase atento a más detalles.

En Solidaridad.

Free the Cuban Committee – Vancouver and Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC)

VANCOUVER CELEBRATES WITH THE WORLD THE RELEASE OF THE CUBAN 5 HEROES!



The Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver and Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) send our congratulations to everyone around the world that have been struggling for the freedom of our 5 Cuban Heroes! When Gerardo, Ramón and Antonio landed in Cuba, reunited with René and Fernando, their loved ones and the people of Cuba, a historic victory was won for not just the Cuban 5 and Cuba, but for the human rights of all of us. We share with you in this immense feeling of joy!

Please see below the report and photos from two celebratory actions held in Vancouver, Canada on December 17, the day of their release.

VOLVIERON! THEY HAVE RETURNED!

>>> Vancouver, Canada Celebrates the Release of ALL 5 Cuban Heroes!

“Like stones rolling down hills, fair ideas reach their objectives despite all obstacles and barriers. It may be possible to slow or hinder them, but impossible to stop them.” Jose Marti

Before the sun had risen over Western Canada, sleep was broken by joyful news... Ramón, Antonio and Gerardo, 3 of our 5 Cuban Heroes, were on their way home to Cuba! On December 17, 2014, after over 16 years of unjust imprisonment in the United States, ALL the Cuban 5 Heroes were free at last! The immense joy at this historic victory for human rights was heard all around the world!

Preparations for the Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver’s 2 celebrations began immediately following the victorious announcement. Our 5 Cuban Heroes, imprisoned unjustly for over 16 years for defending the people of Cuba against US-backed terrorist actions, now had the warm Cuban sun on their faces, and their loved ones in their arms. Now was the time to celebrate, to recognize the significant contribution of over 300 committees around the world that had been struggling, alongside the people of Cuba, to release Gerardo, Ramón, Antonio, Fernando and René from the clutches of the empire. Around the world people declared **VOLVIERON! THEY HAVE RETURNED!**

To mark this historic victory, the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver first called for all organizers and supporters to return to the U.S. Consulate for the 110th time. However, this action was not a protest, but something we had all been dreaming of for 9 long years of consecutive monthly protests, a

victory celebration! It was only 12 days before that supporters of the 5 Cuban Heroes went to the US Consulate for the 109th consecutive monthly picket action, chanting for freedom for all of the Cuban 5. Now, peace and justice loving people were gathered despite the rain and cold in downtown Vancouver for one last time, to share embraces and chant, “Let the world know! The Cuban 5 are free!”

The gathering was a joyful celebration of solidarity messages and poetry in response to this immense victory for human rights, including special greetings from Don Foreman, organizer with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) in Ottawa. Many took part in the open mic, and reflected on our many years of struggle in the campaign for freedom of ALL 5 Cuban Heroes in Vancouver, Canada and around the world.



The Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver then called on everyone to continue the celebration at a second evening event where 100 people united for this historic victory in the united struggle the return of our 5 Cuban Heroes. An exuberant room of Cuban 5 supporters were welcomed by the Free the Cuban 5 Committee singing choir. This was followed by the video of Cuban President Raul Castro’s speech on the normalization of US/Cuba relations and release of the Cuban 5 Heroes, from earlier that day. Raul’s speech was then followed by the beautiful victory video of Gerardo, Ramón and Antonio, the 3 remaining Cuban 5 prisoners, landing in Cuba and embracing their families for the first time as free men.

Many joyful tears were shed while watching the images of all of the 5 Cuban Heroes together with their families; a beautiful moment denied for over 16 years. This moment reminded us all, that when we struggle together as oppressed people, even against the mightiest powers in the world, we

win.

The room then heard solidarity greetings directly from the Cuban Ambassador to Canada his Excellency Julio Garmendia Peña over the phone from Ottawa. The microphone was then opened up for participants to come and share their own experiences and reflections in the fight for the freedom of the Cuban 5 Heroes. The famous quote from revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara, “We are realists, we dream the impossible,” became a sort of theme for the night, which many speakers connected to the victory.

Some of the participants who shared their words included: Wilson Muñoz, a civic politician and social justice organizer from El Salvador and Tim Louis, lawyer and former Vancouver City Councillor. Others

who participated included: poets, activists and many leading organizers from Latin America solidarity work in Vancouver. Also, musicians who have been supporting the case of the Cuban 5 Heroes came with very little notice, to lend their art to the cause. Maria Louisa Melendez, organizer with the FMLN Vancouver shared songs from the heart and soul of Latin America, and MX Katracho, a Honduran musician and social justice fighter. During his performance he shared

that over a year ago he had tied a yellow ribbon to his guitar in support of freedom for the Cuban 5. During the performance he untied his yellow ribbon and attached it to a touching gift he had made for the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver. The energy was high as the night ended with the rallying cry to take this great victory of the release of the Cuban 5 political prisoners, and continue to expand our campaign in Vancouver, and around the world, to end the cruel and illegal US Blockade against Cuba.

The international campaign to Free the Cuban 5 political prisoners from US jails has resulted in a tremendous and historic victory for human rights, with the release of ALL of our 5 Cuban Heroes, who are home with their loved ones and the people of Cuba. The Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver will continue the celebration into the new year and invites everyone to come together for a special event on Monday January 5th, to celebrate the 5th of the month and the release of the Cuban 5!

We Used to Chant United "Free the Cuban 5!" Now Together We Cheer "They Have Returned!"

By Alison Bodine

On December 5th, 2014 the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver was gathered in front of the US Consulate in Vancouver for the 109th consecutive monthly protest for freedom for ALL of the Cuban 5. For over 9 years, the consecutive monthly protests in Vancouver ended in much the same way, with an announcement. The announcement stated that, although we hoped not to have to return, if any of the Cuban 5 remained behind US prison bars, the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver would once again be protesting at the US Consulate the next month. The same announcement was made on December 5th, and a leaflets posters were handed out for the 110th monthly protest in Vancouver for the Cuban 5 Heroes, to be held on January 5, 2015.

Only 12 days later, on December 17, 2014, in a historic victory for human rights, ALL the Cuban 5 returned home to Cuba! They has spent over 16 years held unjustly in U.S. prisons for defending Cuba against U.S.-backed terrorism in their country. A tremendous shout of joy was heard around the world as supporters of the Cuban 5 gathered to celebrate. The Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver also celebrated that day with two events, including returning to the US Consulate for the 110th, and final, time for the Cuban 5.

Over the next 2 weeks, celebrations continued, as the significance of the historic return of the Cuban 5 Heroes began to sink in and to begin to reflect on the lessons learned during the historic campaign for their freedom. On January 5, 2015, the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver held the last "5th of the month for the Cuban 5," this time not the protest that had been originally scheduled, but a cultural celebration of the freedom of ALL the Cuban 5 heroes! Songs, greetings, reflections, videos and poetry filled the evening as over 100 people came out on a rainy Vancouver night dedicated to the return of Gerardo, Ramon, Antonio, Fernando and Rene to Cuba.

The evening began with a powerful start, a welcoming and song by Coast-Salish indigenous elder Kelly White, who has long been a supporter of the Cuban 5 Heroes and a leader in the fight for social justice and human rights. Next was former Vancouver City Councillor and lawyer, Tim Louis. Tim reminded everyone that the victory of the return of the Cuban 5 was not the result of the US Government benevolently granting freedom to the Cuban 5, but the result of an internationally coordinated campaign. Following Tim, the audience heard greetings of support to supporters of the Cuban 5 in Vancouver from His Excellency, the Cuban Ambassador to Canada, Julio Garmendia Pena.



Next in the program were messages from two supporters of the Cuban 5 from the other side of Canada. The first was Don Foreman, Central region organizer with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, joined the meeting live over the phone from Ottawa, Canada. On December 5th, 2014, supporters of the Cuban 5 in Ottawa marked 1-year of consecutive monthly protests for the Cuban 5, inspired by consecutive monthly protests in Vancouver. During his greeting, Don also gave special recognition to a long-time organizer with the Free the Cuban 5 committee Vancouver, Nestor Otero. He said "Nestor stand



up, that's what solidarity looks like, he is an inspiration for everybody," in recognition of the fact that Nestor was present at and incredible 105 of the 110 actions for the Cuban 5 held in Vancouver!

Following Don, a video greeting was played from Canadian journalist and author Stephen Kimber. In 2013, Stephen wrote an important book on the Cuban 5, "What Lies Across the Water, the Real Story of the Cuban 5." This book quickly became an invaluable tool for the campaign to Free the Cuban 5, helping to reach many more people across the world.

The program continued with a slideshow of photos representing the over 9 years of organizing by the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver. Tamara Hansen, Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and Azza Rojbi, Executive Committee member of the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver led everyone through the weekly and monthly consistent work of the past nine years of the campaign to free the Cuban 5. The slideshow went from the very first picket action at the US Consulate in December of 2005 through continued monthly pickets, forums, vigils, petitioning, poetry nights, cultural events, bike rides, speaking tours and other activities. The photos spanned not only time, but also over many different parts of the world showing the many times that members of the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver travelled to support and help organize actions for Freedom of the Cuban 5, especially in the United States.

To reflect this depth of the International movement to Free the Cuban 5 Heroes, and the

critical role of international coordination in the campaign for freedom of the Cuban 5, throughout the evening there were also special International greetings from four continents. This included a live phone call from Carolina Escarrá, the head of the North America section of the Foreign Relations department of the Youth of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (Juventud del Partido Socialista Unida de Venezuela-JPSUV), as well as greetings from Manuel López Rodríguez, Coordinator of the National Ukrainian Committee "For the Freedom of the 5 Cuban Heroes," Elizabeth Hulm, for the Australia Cuba Friendship Society - Perth, and Haleem Khan, President of Guyana Cuba Solidarity Movement.

Gloria La Riva, Coordinator of the National Committee to Free the Cuban 5 also joined the celebration in a videoconference. She spoke from San Francisco, U.S. about the significance of the victory of the Freedom of the Cuban 5, and the importance of the support that the U.S. committees received from International groups during the victorious campaign.

During the celebration there was also an open mic which brought up leading community organizers and supporters of the Cuban 5 in Vancouver. Thomas Davies, founding member of the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver, reflected on the past 9 years of organizing and the growth and expansion of the campaign for freedom for ALL the Cuban 5. Also speaking was Nino Pagliccia, author of the new book, Cuba Solidarity in Canada Five Decades of People-to-People Foreign Relations. This book includes a chapter on the Cuban 5 campaign in Canada written by leading Vancouver Cuba solidarity organizers Tamara Hansen and Ali Yerevani. As well, the dynamic open mic section included Colleen Glynn, the Secretary of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and President of the Richmond NDP; poetry from Sarah Alwell, member of the Executive Committee of the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver; Wilson Muñoz, leader of the Latin American Community; Michael O'Neill, of the Canada Cuba Friendship Association (CCFA); and Elizabeth Hill, Co-chair of the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC), who was visiting from Toronto.

Even as the Vancouver celebration for freedom of ALL the Cuban 5 came to a close, the full room remained bright with a feeling of solidarity and joy. After this evening of speakers, videos, music and poetry from around the world there could be no doubt that the return of all of the Cuban 5 to Cuba is an enormous historic victory! A victory not only for the Cuban people but also a great victory for human rights and for people around the world who have united with Cuban people to organize and win their freedom!

The international movement that united and organized for the Cuban 5 now has the responsibility to carry forward this historic victory for human rights; to take the time to reflect and learn from the many lessons of this campaign. We have now shown that united we can, and will win!
VICTORY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS!

FREEDOM OF THE CUBAN 5!

**¡VOLVIERON!
THEY HAVE RETURNED!**

**FIRE THIS TIME
MOVEMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

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

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

Donations

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

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

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EDITORIAL

THIS ISSUE OF FIRE THIS TIME

Fire This Time Newspaper Back Again!

Dear readers and supporters, we would like to happily announce that Fire This Time is here to stay with you for a long time to come. Since 2003, when Fire This Time was born, until now we have always tried regardless of increasing financial pressure to continue publishing. Most of the time we have been able to succeed in this task, but there have also been times that we had no choice but to stop. So since the last issue of Fire This Time in January of 2013, two years have passed until the Fire This Time Newspaper is out in your hands again.

We also would like to thank many of our supporters who with their emails and phone calls asked us to continue publishing Fire This Time regularly because there is a big absence of a revolutionary working class newspaper in Canada. Some of you even sent us subscription forms while we were not publishing. Thank you all. We promise you to get this valuable newspaper out regularly.

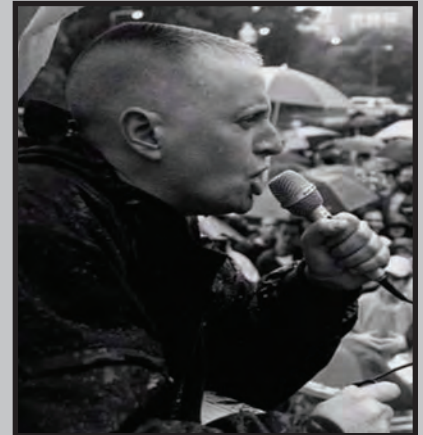
Fire This Time is a revolutionary newspaper. Our newspaper reflects the battle of ideas that is shaping the political, economic and social fabrics of our society on the local and international stage. Fire This Time is a platform and standpoint of working and oppressed people. We intend to present an alternative that is intellectually honest and presents facts and analysis for those who are interested to know

the truth and want to bring about a better world.

Fire This Time newspaper was born out of necessity, not out of an eccentric desire, to present our vision. As a matter of fact, after many considerations and looking more carefully into what we wanted to achieve in the short and long run as revolutionaries, and looking into the potential and actual capacity of the working class movement and its political organizations as a whole, we decided to go ahead with this project.

We believe this newspaper will be more and more approved of by you. So if you find that Fire This Time is doing a good job as a revolutionary newspaper, then we would like you to ask for your financial help. We are independent and do not receive any money from any political parties or any other institutions. You are our reason for existence and we depend only on you. Thank you!

Message of Solidarity at the Passing of Revolutionary Communist Fighter Leslie Feinberg Nov. 26, 2014



Many people involved in the fight for a better world, are at this time feeling a great sadness at the loss of Leslie Feinberg, whose contributions in the working-class movement were vital. Leslie Feinberg dedicated her life to the struggle against oppression and for liberation.

Her work and writing has been an inspiration to social justice and LGBTQ+ rights activists throughout her life and in her passing it is even more necessary to follow the example she left for us.

Leslie Feinberg believed in the right of self-determination of oppressed people and oppressed nations. You could see her organizing at a mass labor rally one afternoon, in the evening speaking against war and occupation, then fighting for LGBTQ+ rights, for immigrants rights, and speaking out in defense of Cuba.

We remember Feinberg's words when speaking on the topic of creating an international progressive LGBTQ+ movement: "I do not believe that our sexuality, gender expression and bodies can be liberated without making a ferocious mobilization against imperialist war and racism an integral part of our struggle."

We honor her memory by learning from her commitment and dedication to the struggle of oppressed people and oppressed nations, for justice and for self-determination.

Fire This Time Movement for Social justice offers our sincere condolences to Leslie Feinberg's partner Minnie Bruce Pratt, her family, friends, co-fighters in Workers World Party and all the activists following her footsteps in fighting for a better and just world.

Fire This Time Movement for Social justice
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“Either we change global capitalist society or it annihilates the world’s peoples and nature itself.”

Speech by Bolivian President Evo Morales to the UN Climate Change Conference. December 10, 2014



President Evo Morales addresses VIII ALBA Summit. December 14, 2009

Introduction by Thomas Davies

Below is an excerpt of Bolivian President Evo Morales’ speech to the UN Climate Change Conference (“COP 20”) held in Lima, Peru from December 1 to 14, 2014. He spoke as Bolivia’s President, but also on behalf of the “G77+ China” group of nations, which Bolivia chaired in 2014.

President Morales continued to build on Bolivia’s important leadership in the fight to save mother earth. He denounced the endless cycle of high profile climate meetings which have accomplished nothing more than excellent photo opportunities while the issue of climate change, and the fundamental question of the survival of the humanity, goes unanswered. “We have to get at the fundamental roots of the problem of climate change. We don’t want more protocols; we want more structural solutions, overcoming capitalism, saving the peoples of the world.... What is the use of reducing gas and toxic emissions by 1 or 2 degrees if the next generation will end up baking in suffocating heat?”

This position has been strengthened by ALBA (the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America), an coalition of countries founded by Cuba and Venezuela in 2004 as a direct alternative to the now dead FTAA (Free Trade Agreement of the Americas) the US government was attempting to shove down the throats of Latin-America countries. ALBA has now grown to 13 member nations and represents an inspiring example of creating

concrete alternatives and agreements based on solidarity, cooperation and social justice.

ALBA and Morales also went one better. The day after the UN Climate Change Conference ended in Lima, ALBA member states announced in their meeting’s final declaration that they will be organizing an alternative global climate summit in 2015.

Morales stated, “Stopping climate change cannot be left to those who profit from the destruction of nature. That is why we the peoples must directly accept our own responsibility for the continuation of life and society by taking control of governments, and using that power to pressure and force government and businesses alike to take drastic and immediate measures to stop us from falling into this abyss of nature’s destruction.”

These words and actions are important and necessary for everyone concerned about the survival of the environment and humanity, especially in a country like Canada where the government has demonstrated no regard for either. On the issue of self-determination of indigenous nations, the Canadian government has also demonstrated time and time again its disregard and disrespect for these fundamental rights, as it tries to help ram resource extraction projects through despite clear opposition from indigenous nations.

Recent struggles, such as the sustained mobilizations on Burnaby Mountain against Kinder Morgan, (the largest “energy infrastructure” company in North America)’s attempt to carry out drilling work with the objective of building another pipeline, have

shown that environmental issues are once again becoming “hot button” issues with broad sections of people. Over 100 people were arrested during the demonstrations, only to have those arrests finally thrown out under public scrutiny and worldwide media attention.

President Morales talks the talk, walks the walk, and connects all the dots which must be connected to understand the cause and effects of climate change. It is this kind of analysis and audacity which shows the way forward. We are neither alarmists or extremists for pointing out the current climate crisis and demanding solutions. The following words are vital to that international struggle to save, and build, a better world.

“Sisters and brothers of COP20, we sometimes debate in this class of conferences only the effects, and not the origin, of global warming. We have had more than 30 years of pretence, futile negotiations with no result....

Today we find ourselves on the threshold of the destruction of Mother Earth, faced with the disappearance of the human species. The developed countries of the North, responsible for the destruction of nature, have brought us to a barren land to legitimize their supposed commitment to humanity. We, the developing countries, have served as a source of legitimation for a unilateral and sterile dialogue.

We have served as a pretext for the powerful to continue doing the same thing, which has settled



Rally against KinderMorgan on Burnaby Mountain. November 27, 2014

into a simulacrum of dialogue and deliberation. There is in this entire staging of environmentalism a great deal of hypocrisy, racism and neocolonialism.

Climate change has become once again the safety valve to avoid discussing substantive questions like the voracious model of capitalist development that is putting an end to humanity.... We are losing time because the dialogue is not between equals; it is an unsuccessful monologue....

We must now say to you, nothing has changed in those 30 years....

On behalf of my people, I can only say that we feel betrayed once again faced with this simulacrum of international agreements that are never enough. Our peoples are tired of all this deception, they are tired of suffering the increase in temperature, the melting of our mountain snow caps, of the heavy rains, the cruel flooding and the heartbreaking droughts, which each time make us poorer.

We have to get at the fundamental roots of the problem of climate change. We don't want more protocols; we want more structural solutions, overcoming capitalism, saving the peoples of the world.... What is the use of reducing gas and toxic emissions by 1 or 2 degrees if the next generation will end up baking in suffocating heat?

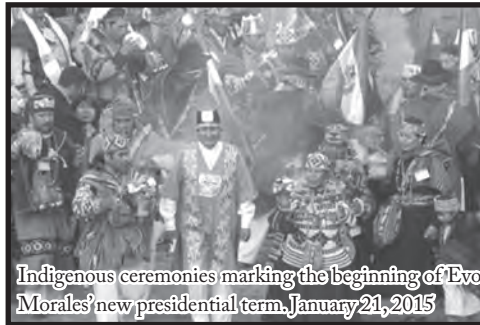
Basically the problem is the supposedly civilizing model that is based on a greedy financial architecture in which wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, producing poverty for the majority of humanity.

I want to tell you, sisters and brothers, that unless we change the centre of gravity of all the financial, economic, political, ecological and social distortions confronting our century and the planet, the search for a consensual agreement will be nothing more than a chimera.

A second root of the problem of climate change is the war politics of the great powers and the huge budget devoted to it. With only a fifth of the money spent on the military by the five major military powers of the world we would be able to resolve 50 percent of our environmental problems....

And the third root of climate change

has to do with the exaggerated industrialization, disproportionate consumption and pillaging of resources that could alleviate the major ills of humanity. The economic model upholding the financial architecture and war politics has as its nucleus the politics of the free market, that is, the voracious capitalist policy that pays no attention to anything other than profit, luxury, and consumerism.... People are treated as things, and Mother Earth as a commodity.



Proposals to preserve the Life of Humanity and of Mother Earth

What are we doing now? Governments and businesses of the major world powers responsible for the climate catastrophe have shown they are unable to slow down this planetary tragedy that is jeopardizing humanity and nature as a whole. Their power and profits are fueled by the irreparable destruction of the environment....

Stopping climate change cannot be left to those who profit from the destruction of nature. That is why we the peoples must directly accept our own responsibility for the continuation of life and society by taking control of governments, and using that power to pressure and force government and businesses alike to take drastic and immediate measures to stop us from falling into this abyss of nature's

destruction.

To defend our life and the existence of future generations it is absolutely necessary that the world's peoples, the hard-working society suffering daily the effects of climate change, take control of states, politics, the economy and use it to preserve humanity and the planet....

We have to put the brakes to capitalist accumulation, the endless accumulation of commodities. We need another civilization, another society, another mentality, other values, another culture that prioritizes the satisfaction of human needs, not profit, that believes in human beings and Mother Nature, not the "money god."...

Either we change global capitalist society or it annihilates the world's peoples and nature itself.

The environment is a common heritage of all the peoples of the world, of the ancient peoples, of the present peoples and the peoples who are to come....

The environment is a common resource.... And that is why it must be administered by us as a community. Nature itself is a community, since it benefits everyone and affects everyone. Our ancient indigenous peoples knew this and that is why they lived as a community. ...

Sisters and brothers, community is the only way to live in equilibrium with nature. Community is salvation of the environment, of life, and accordingly of human beings. Community is life, capitalism is death. Community is harmony with Mother Earth and capitalism is destruction of Mother Earth.

Finally, it is really important to consider how we are to create institutions to judge those who pollute our planet, who injure our Mother Earth. Humanity needs to create an International Tribunal of Climate Justice, so that justice may be done.

Sisters and brothers, that in a nutshell is the experience that the indigenous peoples provide for the good of all humanity.

Thank you very much."

*Translation by Richard Fidler
www.lifeonleft.blogspot.ca*

43 DISAPPEARED AYOTZINAPA STUDENTS IGNITE WORLDWIDE CONDEMNATION!



By Daniel Mendoza & Janine Solanki

On September 26, 2014, news broke that 43 students from Ayotzinapa, Mexico had disappeared. In the following days, the Mexican government claimed that the disappearance of the students was the result of a local dispute and that the fault was with the Mayor of Iguala, the city where the students disappeared. The Mexican people have not accepted this version of events and have shown that they know where the blame lies. #fueleestado or “It was the state” has been broadcast through social media and on signs in massive protests across Mexico and around the world.

On September 26th the students had stopped in Iguala on their way to Mexico City to join a rally, which was to commemorate the massacre of protesters prior to the 1968 Olympics. As reported by John Gibley, an independent journalist and author on Mexican issues, “Scores of uniformed municipal police and a handful of masked men dressed in black shot and killed six people, wounded more than twenty, and rounded up and detained forty-three students in a series of attacks carried out at multiple points and lasting more than three hours. At no point did state police, federal police, or the army intercede. The forty-three students taken into police

custody are now ‘disappeared.’”

Ayotzinapa: Not only Ayotzinapa

The direction being driven by the government of Mexico is in increasing conflict with the people of Mexico. For decades Mexico has faced the plunder of its resources, aided by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which opened Mexico up to US and Canadian corporations as a source of cheap labour and markets.



“It Was the State” written at Ayotzinapa Protest at the Zocalo in Mexico City

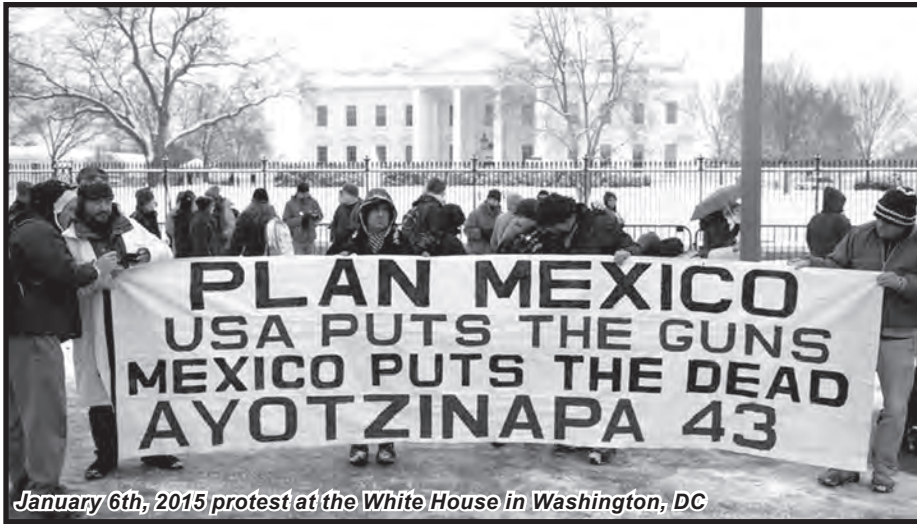
Foreign mining and oil corporations have been especially welcomed with open arms by the government of Mexico. Concessions to foreign investment have been increasingly promoted by the ruling class of Mexico under the leadership of the current Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto. In December of 2012 constitutional reforms were passed to

grant private companies the rights to oil and gas exploration and exploitation. This “energy reform” is on the road to the privatization of Mexico’s state-owned oil company PEMEX.

What has all this this meant for the people of Mexico? The economic conditions for the majority of the Mexican people is rapidly deteriorating. Poverty not only exists in Mexico – it is on the rise with 53.5 million Mexicans (almost half the population) living under the poverty line as of 2012, half a million more than 2010 according to the Mexican Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy. The Mexican people are also facing increased militarization of their country, with the army and police receiving funding from the “Merida Initiative”, a 2008 agreement between Mexico and the US that has seen over \$2.4 billion from the US funneled into weaponry and training for the Mexican army and police. This has included training Mexican soldiers

at the U.S. Army’s Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation - formerly the School of the Americas which has a long history of training the military forces of some of Latin America’s most notorious dictators, and even some of these brutal dictators themselves.

The increased militarization of Mexico isn’t because Mexico is at war with



January 6th, 2015 protest at the White House in Washington, DC

another country. While the justification is that the military is fighting the “War on Drugs” when the surface is scratched it is apparent that all levels of government in Mexico are involved in behind the scenes dealings with the drug cartels. The war that is being fought is against the Mexican people. This war is being fought when the Mexican military or “private security” is brought in to protect the interests of foreign companies like Canada’s Excellon Resources, which in 2011 had about 300 Mexican army troops, federal and state police surrounding their underground silver-lead-zinc mine in Durango State. This is a war against the Mexican people when anyone who protests against foreign resource extraction is subject to threats, assault and even assassination as was the case for Mariano Abarca, who was assassinated in 2009 when he was leading a campaign against Canada’s Blackfire barite mine in Chiapas.

The 43 students from Ayotzinapa is not the first number of disappeared or murdered in Mexico, and not the first time the state has been implicated. 49 children were burnt to death and 76 were injured in Sonora on June 5, 2009. 22 people were murdered in Tlatlaya on June 30, 2014. 45 Indigenous people were murdered in Acteal on December 22, 1997. 17 people were murdered in Aguas Blancas on June 28, 1995. The horrifying list goes on, amounting to 100,000 murdered and 25,000 disappeared since 2006 under the justification of the so-called “War on Drugs”. Numerous mass

graves have been found in Guerrero, Tamaulipas, Chihuahua and many other states – each with dozens, even hundreds of unidentified bodies. Mexico is also one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist, according to the International Press Institute, or to



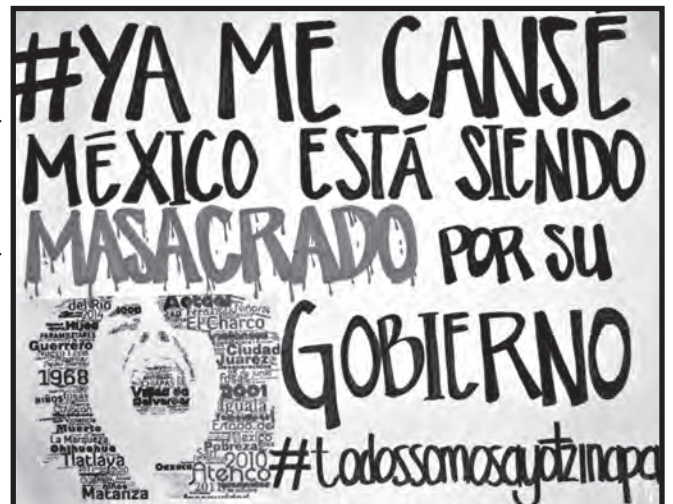
be a woman. Over 100 journalists have been murdered in last 10 years. Seven women are brutally murdered every day in Mexico. In many of these cases, the Mexican state has been implicated. However, nationally 80% of murders in Mexico remain unsolved.

The Mexican people have had enough of the so-called “War on Drugs” and the policies of the Mexican government which are driving Mexico further into poverty and selling off their resources to foreign plunder at the expense of the Mexican

people and the environment. Grassroots movements across Mexico are organizing against the exploitative policies of the Mexican government. Where a foreign mining corporation sets up shop, it is sure to face the organization of people against it. Especially in the state of Guerrero, home of the 43 Ayotzinapa students, for decades communities have been organizing their own social services, means of communication and security. The Normal Rural Raúl Isidro Burgos teachers college where the 43 students were from is part of this community organization outside of the jurisdiction of the Mexican state. The college is part of a network of schools with the purpose of serving the poor and illiterate peasant population of the country, along progressive and anti-capitalist ideas.

“Ayotzinapa Estamos Contigo! Ayotzinapa We Are With You!”

The case of the 43 disappeared students has ignited protests and organizing, mainly led by youth and students, throughout Mexico and around the world. #yamecanse or “Enough, I’m tired” has sprung up to express the sentiments of Mexican people who do not want to see the violence against their people continued under the corrupt hands of the Mexican state. In Ayotzinapa itself the parents of the disappeared students and the surviving students have continued organizing, searching themselves for the disappeared students and demanding “they took them alive, we want them alive.” This is to mean, they will not accept that the 43 students will



“Enough I’m Tired” “Mexico is Being Massacred by their Government” “#WeAreAllAyotzinapa”



"We are all Ayotzinapa" "Enough"

station in San Luis Acatlan. In Vancouver this campaign has been organized by Vancouver Solidarity with Ayotzinapa, who have been organizing events and working to promote the case of the 43 disappeared students to the broader public in Vancouver and beyond. This has been in conjunction with the movement "Global Action for Ayotzinapa" which has been coordinating actions around the world. www.ustired2.com

government that have amounted to cases like the 43 disappeared students becoming a commonplace occurrence. The people of Mexico and supporters around the world will keep organizing and mobilizing for their demands of justice for the 43 students, for an end to US government support of the Mexican government, military and police, and for an end to the government of Mexico's war on the people of Mexico.

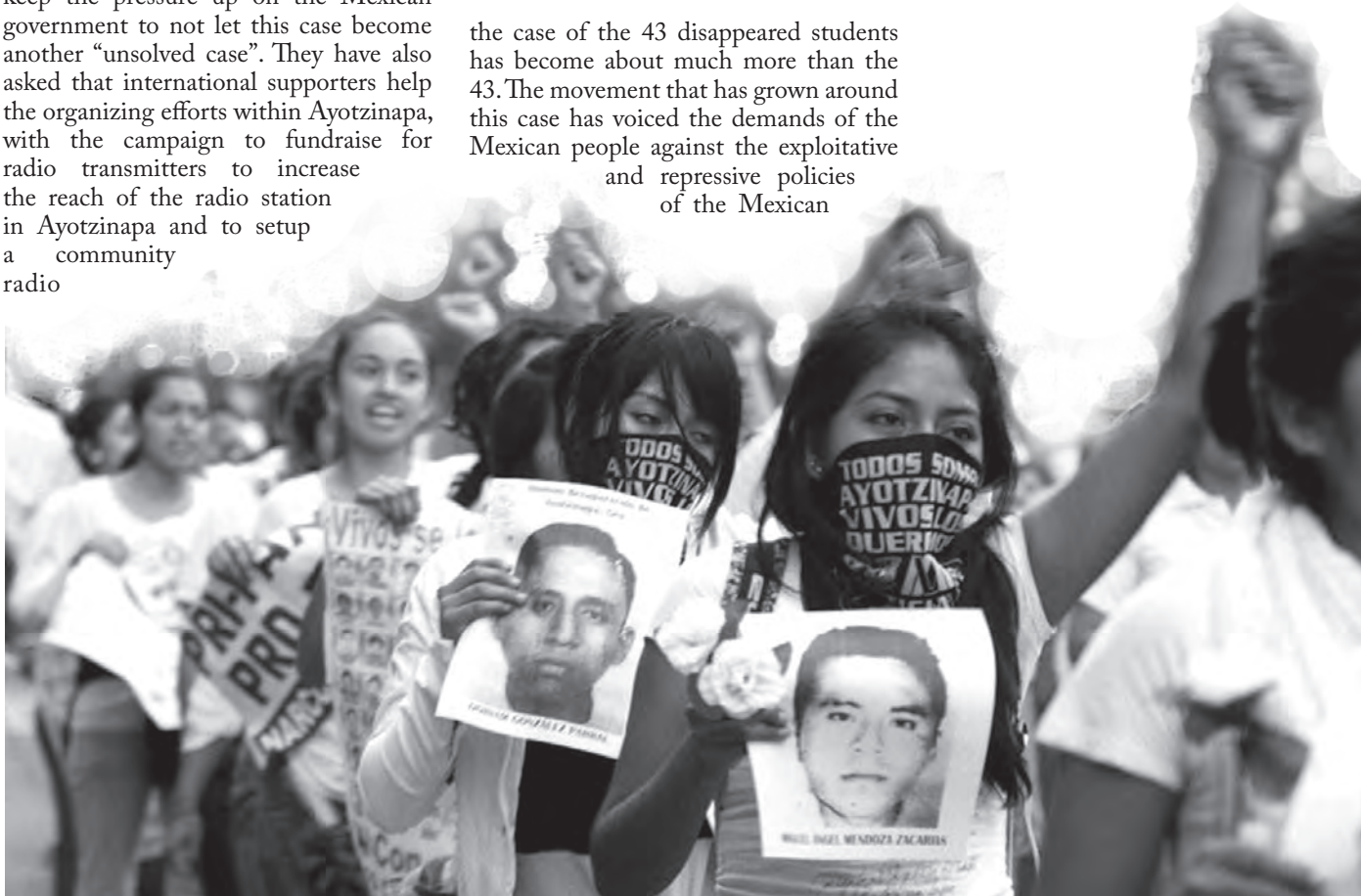
Throughout Mexico and around the world

be yet another unsolved crime. Exactly what has happened to the students must be exposed, and the government of Mexico must be held accountable.

In Vancouver and around the world, committees are working to spread awareness about the 43 Ayotzinapa students. While organizers in Mexico face the dangers of further repression, the Mexican government has less freedom to move against protesters while the support of people internationally is on this case. The parents of the 43 students and the student movement in Ayotzinapa are asking supporters around the world to join protests wherever they are to keep the pressure up on the Mexican government to not let this case become another "unsolved case". They have also asked that international supporters help the organizing efforts within Ayotzinapa, with the campaign to fundraise for radio transmitters to increase the reach of the radio station in Ayotzinapa and to setup a community radio



the case of the 43 disappeared students has become about much more than the 43. The movement that has grown around this case has voiced the demands of the Mexican people against the exploitative and repressive policies of the Mexican



by foreign contracts, is slowing drastically. In fact, without the \$8 billion in foreign assistance the Afghan government currently receives, it will be unable to even pay the wages of its own soldiers, which foreign forces have worked so hard to build up. On the other hand, Afghanistan's underground economy is booming. Opium production increased 36% in 2013, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. The crop is now worth 4% of the country's GDP.

After fourteen years of war, the US/NATO mission in Afghanistan is certainly not being brought to a 'responsible conclusion'. In fact, rather than preventing it, fourteen years of war has now turned Afghanistan into a failed state: the government has little control over much of the country, is unable to provide the most basic services to the majority of its citizens, and corruption runs



rampant.

Fourteen years of war have not brought human rights or democracy, nor have they even rid the country of the Taliban. Terrorist attacks on Western targets, both within Afghanistan's borders and in Western countries themselves, have increased.

Even by their own measure, US and NATO countries have failed Afghanistan. This failure has come at an unacceptable price: tens of thousands of Afghan lives, and many thousands more maimed. Hundreds of thousands have displaced by the fighting, many more forced into poverty. US and NATO forces have not simply failed Afghanistan; they have destroyed it.

That being said, the most important question that remains for Afghanistan is: which way forward?

On one hand, foreign forces have proven that they are a force only of destruction in Afghanistan. On the other, if foreign troops leave it will be both difficult and dangerous for Afghans to rebuild the country on their own.

Which path is the right one? Having spent over a decade researching not only the war in Afghanistan, but also the beautiful, rugged country itself, I must conclude that Afghanistan must be left to the Afghans.

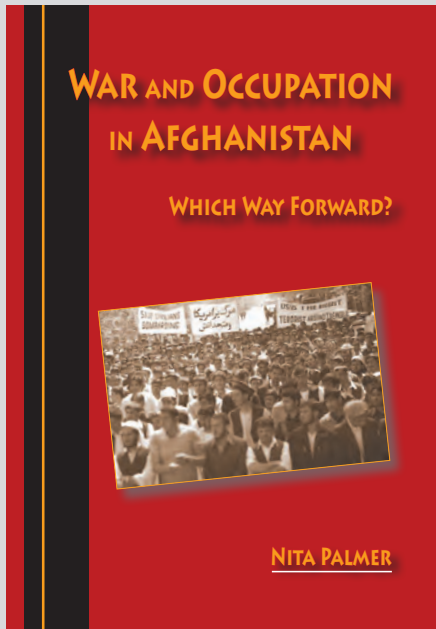
Throughout the long and rich history of their nation, Afghans have driven out every foreign occupier – and proved time and again that they are more than capable of building a thriving nation on their own. Let us not forget that it was only a few decades ago – before foreign intervention tore the country apart – that Kabul was a bustling modern metropolis, known as “the Paris of Central Asia”.

The articles in this book form a sort of chronicle of the Afghan war. My hope is that they can present to the reader a perspective of the war in Afghanistan which is too often silenced: the voice of the Afghan people calling for an end to this injustice.

Finally, I hope you will join me – along with millions in Afghanistan and around the world – in demanding an end to this brutal war.

Battle of Ideas Press

WAR AND OCCUPATION IN AFGHANISTAN WHICH WAY FORWARD?



“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 one bit after eight years of occupation. Under the watchful eye of the occupation forces, corruption has become rampant in Afghanistan, from the local level all the way up to the highest levels of government. Afghanistan has gone from producing less than 10% of the world’s opium in 2001 to producing a staggering 93% of the world’s opium in 2008, according to the UN World Health Organization.”

BY NITA PALMER

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

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Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) is an organization working to build solidarity and support for Cuba in Vancouver, Canada and internationally. To do this, we organize frequent educational events, cultural events, conferences, mobilizations and actions in support of Cuba's sovereignty against Imperialist attacks and in defence of the gains of the Cuban revolution.

We also support campaigns:

-1- Against the US Blockade on Cuba

FREED! WE WON! -2- To Free the Cuban 5 held in US Jails ★ ★ ★

-3- To Extradite anti-Cuban Terrorist Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela

Throughout the lower mainland, at events, actions, festivals, high schools and campuses, we engage with thousands of people about Cuba. Our work aims to bring Cuba, as a country making important social gains, to youth, students, women, Latin American people, people of the third world and other working and oppressed people in Canada, as an example of building a better world.

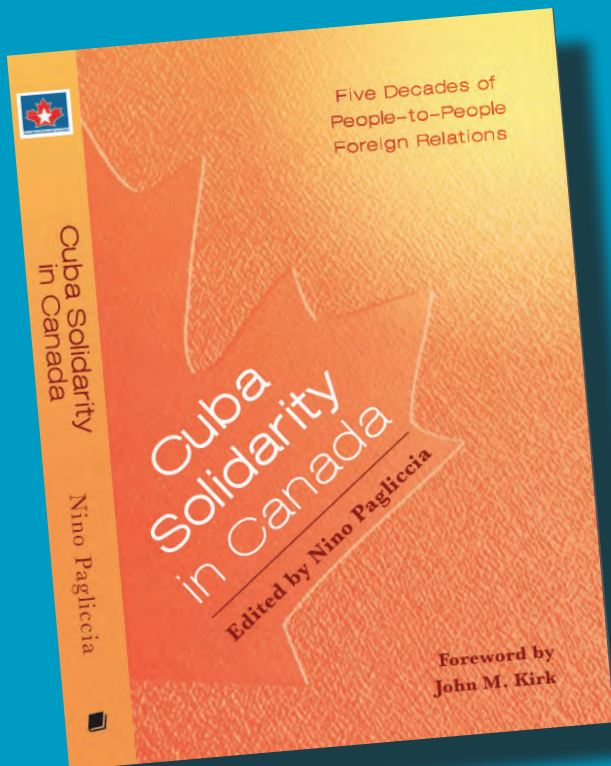
We welcome new members and encourage everyone to get involved with VCSC to build a larger, stronger Cuba solidarity movement in Canada!

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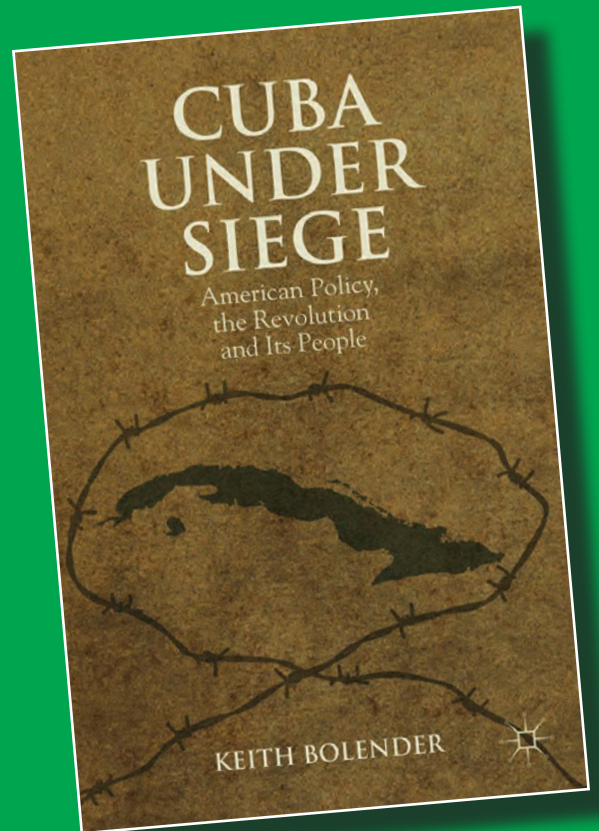
**Five Decades of
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Edited by Nino Pagliccia

www.cubasolidarityincanada.ca

Cuba Under Siege American Policy, the Revolution and Its People



Written by:

Keith Bolender

www.boloblog.com

THE CONFRONTATION | WILL BE WITH DIFFERENT RULES

By Manuel Yepe*

“The challenges that exist between Havana and Washington reflect a very asymmetrical relationship in terms of scale, resources and energy. But after more than 56 years, this uneven confrontation –incredible as this may seem– did not bring the failure of the Cuban experience. From now on we will only witness the continuation of this confrontation, but hopefully under different rules of combat.” Such is the conclusion reached by US-based Cuban journalist Domingo Amuchástegui after a documented analysis of the simultaneous December 17 announcements made in their respective countries by Presidents Raul Castro and Barack Obama, and the broad impact that these have had in the two countries and the world.

After years of systematic refusal, the Obama administration gave in to the prisoner exchange that the Cuban authorities, over and over again, had offered both publicly and privately. Washington insisted on imposing the unconditional release of Allan Gross, presenting him as an innocent victim of an unlawful arrest when, being Jewish himself, he supposedly had tried to help the Jews in Cuba to gain access to information technologies.

American journalist Tracey Eaton revealed in detail how, being fully

aware of the many risks involved, Gross worked in the program of “regime change” that the USAID was trying to implement in Cuba, by distributing sophisticated technologies to counter-revolutionaries in the island. The leaders of the small Jewish community in Cuba, which receives all kinds of assistance from Jewish institutions in the UK, Canada and Israel, strongly denied any connection with Gross.

But the exchange of prisoners between the US and Cuba, is just a small part of what was announced, said Amuchástegui. “The Obama administration was ready to begin a process of normalization with its permanent enemy of more than 56 years after a series of successful negotiations over 18 months when officials from both countries met in Canada and in the Vatican, with the effective support of Pope Francis and the Canadian authorities reached an understanding on ways and means for such a normalization. The day before the announcement, Presidents Obama and Raul Castro spoke for 45 minutes.”

Obama’s key initiatives, according to the journalist, involve : a. Establishment of normal diplomatic relations; b. Opening of an embassy in Havana; c. Asking the Secretary of State, John Kerry, to review and consider withdrawing Cuba from the list of states that sponsor terrorism; d. Taking the necessary measures with the aim of lifting the US embargo, including the prompt implementation of measures through the Treasury and Commerce Departments to allow all kinds of financial and commercial transactions; e. Expanding the current twelve categories of licenses to expand people to people contacts; f. Cooperating with Cuban authorities in various fields such as migration, environmental

problems, drug trafficking, natural disasters, human trafficking and others; g. Negotiating with Mexico and Cuba a final agreement on the boundaries and frontiers in the section of the Gulf of Mexico where there has been no agreement after 30 years of fruitless negotiations.

According to Amuchástegui, the effects are already very visible. The European Union (EU) can forever discard the archaic “Common Position” and proceed to finalize its new framework for normal relations and cooperation with Cuba. Threats, illegal extra-territorial practices and the huge fines against potential or actual partners of Cuba within the EU will come to an end, and those who are interested in investing in Cuba can feel safe and confident that, as never before, in a very different atmosphere, than that of doing business with a state that “sponsors terrorism”.

On his part, US journalist and Marxist thinker Zoltan Zigedy, referring to the presidential agreements between Cuba and the United States this December 2014 and to the preceding series of editorials published by the New York Times, believes that they reveal strategic changes in the US ruling class way of thinking (which is not the same as the government or either of the two parties which alternate in power in the United States).

December 27, 2014

** Manuel E. Yepe is a lawyer, economist and social scientist. He is an Associate Professor at the Raul Roa Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana. He served as Ambassador, Director General of the Prensa Latina News Agency, Vice President of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television, founding National Director of UNDP’s Technological Information Pilot System (TIPS) in Cuba and Secretary of the Cuban Peace Movement*

A CubaNews Translation
Edited by Walter Lippmann
<http://www.walterlippmann.com>



LA CONFRONTACIÓN | SERÁ CON REGLAS DISTINTAS

Por Manuel Yepe *

“Los desafíos que existen entre La Habana y Washington reflejan una relación muy asimétrica en términos de escala, recursos y energía. Pero, después de más de 56 años, esta confrontación desigual – por increíble que pueda parecer – no trajo el fracaso de la experiencia cubana. Desde ahora solo vamos a presenciar la continuación de esta confrontación, pero esperemos que sea bajo diferentes reglas de combate.”

Tal es la conclusión a que llega el periodista cubano radicado en Estados Unidos Domingo Amuchástegui, tras un documentado análisis de los anuncios simultáneos hechos en sus respectivos países el 17 de diciembre del año que culmina por los presidentes Raúl Castro y Barack Obama, y la amplia repercusión que éstos han tenido, tanto en los dos países como en el ámbito global.

Tras años de sistemática negativa, la administración Obama cedió al intercambio de prisioneros que las autoridades cubanas, una y otra vez, habían ofrecido tanto públicamente como en privado. Washington insistía en imponer la liberación incondicional de Allan Gross, presentado como víctima inocente de una detención ilegal cuando, como judío, trataba de ayudar a que los judíos en Cuba tuvieran acceso a tecnologías de la información.

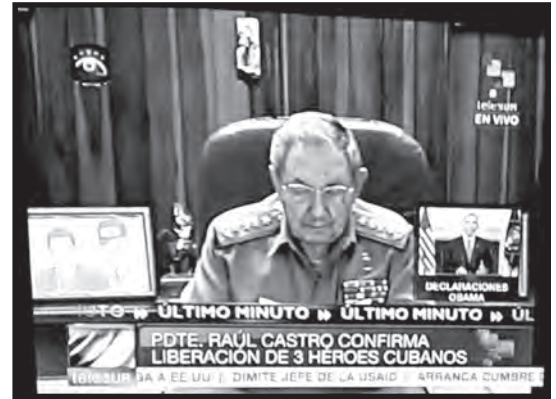
El periodista estadounidense Tracey Eaton reveló en detalle cómo, plenamente consciente de los muchos riesgos involucrados, Gross prestaba servicios en el programa de “cambio de régimen” que USAID implementaba en Cuba, distribuyendo sofisticadas tecnologías a elementos contrarrevolucionarios en Cuba. La pequeña comunidad judía de Cuba -que recibe todo tipo de asistencia de las instituciones judías del Reino Unido, Canadá e Israel- por boca de sus líderes negó enérgicamente cualquier conexión con Gross.

Pero el intercambio de prisioneros entre Estados Unidos y Cuba, es tan sólo una

pequeño parte de lo que fue anunciado, señala Amuchástegui. “La administración Obama estaba lista para iniciar un proceso de normalización con su enemigo permanente para más de 56 años después de una serie de exitosas gestiones durante 18 meses en que los funcionarios de ambos países se reunieron en Canadá y en el Vaticano, con el patrocinio efectivo del Papa Francisco y las autoridades canadienses, habían llegado a un entendimiento sobre los medios y formas de llegar a esa normalización. El día anterior al anuncio, los presidentes Obama y Raúl Castro hablaron durante 45 minutos”.

Las iniciativas claves de Obama, según el periodista, implican: a. Establecer relaciones diplomáticas normales; b. Abrir una embajada en la Habana; c. Pedir al Secretario de Estado, John Kerry, que revise considere la retirada de Cuba de la lista de Estados patrocinadores de terrorismo; d. Adoptar las medidas necesarias al objetivo de levantar el embargo de Estados Unidos, incluyendo la pronta implementación de medidas a través de los departamentos del tesoro y de comercio para permitir todo tipo de operaciones financieras y las transacciones comerciales; e. Ampliación de las doce categorías de licencias vigentes, para ampliar los contactos pueblo a pueblo; f. Cooperar con las autoridades cubanas en varios campos tales como la migración, la lucha contra los problemas del medio ambiente, el tráfico de drogas y los desastres naturales, el tráfico humano y otros; g. Negociar con México y Cuba un acuerdo final sobre los límites y fronteras en la sección del Golfo de México donde no se ha alcanzado ningún acuerdo después de 30 años de negociaciones inútiles.

Según Amuchástegui, las repercusiones ya son muy visibles. La Unión Europea (UE) puede desechar para siempre la arcaica “Posición Común” y proceder a finalizar su nuevo marco para las relaciones normales y de cooperación con Cuba. Las amenazas,



las prácticas ilegales extraterritoriales, y las multas multimillonarias a socios potenciales o reales de Cuba dentro de la UE llegarán a su fin y aquellos que estén interesados en invertir en Cuba podrán sentirse seguros y tranquilos como nunca antes, en un clima muy diferente del que se presenta para tratar con un estado que “patrocinador del terrorismo.”

Por su parte, el pensador y periodista marxista estadounidense Zoltan Zaguely, al referirse a los acuerdos presidenciales entre Cuba y Estados Unidos del presente mes de diciembre de 2014, así como a la serie de artículos editoriales publicados en las páginas del The New York Times que los precedieron, revelan cambios estratégicos en el pensar de la clase dirigente de Estados Unidos (que no es lo mismo que el gobierno o alguno de los dos partidos que se alternan en el poder en la superpotencia).

Diciembre 27 de 2014.

**Manuel E. Yepe Menéndez es abogado, economista y científico social. Se desempeña como Profesor Adjunto del Instituto Superior de Relaciones Internacionales de La Habana. Fue Embajador de Cuba, Director General de la Agencia Latinoamericana de Noticias Prensa Latina, Vicepresidente del Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión, Director Nacional fundador del Sistema de Información Tecnológica (TIPS) del Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD) en Cuba y Secretario del Movimiento Cubano por la Paz y la Soberanía de los Pueblos.*

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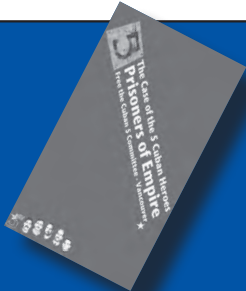


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¡Venceremos!

OUR STRUGGLE

G77 and China Condemn U.S. Sanctions on Venezuela, Say They Must Be Repealed

The G77 group, an international forum of developing countries, and China have expressed their firm rejection of unilateral sanctions imposed by the U.S. against Venezuela and asked for them to be rolled back, said Bolivian President Evo Morales.

Speaking in Cochabamba on Monday, Morales said that G77 and China's position was expressed in a resolution approved by the bloc in the United Nations that same day.

The U.S. recently passed a law to freeze assets of, and deny visas to, Venezuelan officials accused of violating human rights in their country.

"The Group of 77 plus China reiterates the urgent need to repeal the legislative measure taken against Venezuela which undermines the Charter of the United Nations and international law, especially the principles of non-intervention in internal affairs and equal rights and self-determination of peoples," said the text read by Morales.

Morales also expressed the bloc's solidarity and support to the Venezuelan government in the face of what it considers to be "violations of international law that in no way contributes to the spirit of political and economic dialogue between the two countries."

The group also urged the international community to adopt urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of coercive unilateral economic measures against developing countries, Morales concluded.

The G77, made up of developing and emerging countries, in addition to China, was founded in 1964 and currently includes 133 nations of Latin America, Africa and South Asia.

Published on Dec 23rd 2014

Cuba is set to tell the United States to remove Havana from its list of state sponsors of terrorism before reviving diplomatic ties, a senior Cuban Foreign Ministry official says.

"We cannot conceive of re-establishing diplomatic relations while Cuba continues to be included on the list," the official said on Tuesday, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"It doesn't make any sense that we establish diplomatic relations and Cuba continues [to be on the list]."

The two sides will hold talks in Havana on Wednesday and Thursday in a bid to restore ties.

US Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta Jacobson will negotiate with Cuban officials to kick-start negotiations over a wide range of issues.

A six-member delegation of congressional Democrats, led by Senator Patrick Leahy, began a three-day visit to Cuba on Saturday to discuss expectations for the normalization of relations between Washington and Havana.

US President Barack Obama and his Cuban counterpart Raul Castro announced a historic thaw in Washington-Havana relations on December 17 last year.

A senior official from the US State Department said on Monday the country would move quickly to remove Cuba from the list.

"There was no indication that the Cuban government provided weapons



We Will Win!

AROUND THE WORLD

Muslims continue their rallies all over the world to protest against French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo's sacrilegious depiction of the Prophet of Islam.

On Wednesday, Muslims took to the streets in the besieged Gaza Strip, Iraq, and Kashmir to show their anger at the cartoon of the Prophet published in the French magazine.

Palestinian protesters held a rally in Gaza in condemnation of the blasphemous cartoon.

Similarly, thousands of people took part in a demo in the Iraqi capital Baghdad to vent their anger at the magazine's disregard of Muslims' feelings, saying the publication of the offensive picture of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is in fact a declaration of war against Islam.

Muslims in the Indian-administered Kashmir also took to the streets over the sacrilegious cartoon, chanting slogans against the French government. The protesters also lashed out at New Delhi for suppressing Muslims in the disputed territory.

The Kashmir rally turned violent after the Indian police used tear gas to disperse angry protesters.

Last week, five million copies of the new edition of Charlie Hebdo hit the newsstands, depicting a cartoon of Prophet Muhammad on the cover amid warnings that the move is provocative.

The French magazine has repeatedly provoked Muslim anger by publishing cartoons of the Prophet.

On January 7, the magazine's offices in Paris came under an attack, during which 12 people were killed.

or paramilitary training to terrorist groups," the US State Department said in its latest annual Country Reports on Terrorism.

"We welcome the instructions to review the list but we don't know what is going to happen," the Cuban official noted.

Cuba and the United States have not had diplomatic relations since 1961. However, Washington has maintained an interest section on the island.

They became ideological foes soon after the 1959 revolution in Cuba that brought Fidel Castro to power.

The United States imposed a partial trade embargo on the Caribbean island nation in October 1960.

Washington imposed a full trade embargo on Cuba in February 1962.

CHE GUEVARA CONFERENCE

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January 23–25 in Vancouver, BC, CANADA

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>> ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CHE GUEVARA CONFERENCE <<

Since the triumph of Cuba’s 1959 revolution to today, the vision and political ideas that shape the Cuban revolution remain a source of inspiration, discussion and debate around the world. Through the ideas of Fidel, Che, the Cuban socialist project, and the dynamics of the mass revolutionary movement, Cuba has become a country renowned for its achievements in health, education, culture, science and many other aspects of social and human progress. The Cuban socialist project and the Cuban revolutionary leadership, despite 50 years of an inhuman and criminal blockade by consecutive US administrations, have never wavered to imperialist pressure.

The International Che Guevara Conference is an opportunity to discuss and debate the ideas of the Cuban revolution, its dynamism and how it has impacted Latin America and the world.

The first International Che Guevara Conference in 2008 was on the theme, “Che Guevara, Thinker & Fighter: Are His Ideas Relevant for the 21st Century?” The Second International Che Conference in 2009 was on, “50 Years of Dynamism of the Cuban Revolution.” The Third International Che Conference in 2010 was on, “Cuba &

Revolutionary Internationalism.” The Fourth International Che Conference in 2011 was on, “Cuba Today – The Gains and the Challenges.”

The 2012 International Che Guevara Conference discussed the most importance changes Cuba has seen in the last 50 years since Fidel’s Second Declaration of Havana, in 1961. This conference, titled “Cuba’s Reforms: Capitalism or Socialism” investigated, with the participation of 6 Cuban guests including Aleida Guevara, daughter of Che Guevara, the roots of the current reforms and their future prospects and challenges.

In 2015 the Che Conference returns with, “Cuba, A Socialist Project in Progress” which aims to delve deeper into what has made the Cuban Socialist Revolution successful move forward and how it is evolving today.

This year’s conference we will also discuss the recent developments in US/Cuba relations. This includes the historic victory of the return to Cuba of all 5 Cuban Heroes who were unjustly imprisoned for over 16 years in US jails. As well, we will examine the announcements by Cuban President Raul Castro and US President Barack Obama that new steps towards normalization of relations would occur between the two countries. This announcement has come over 50 years after the US broke diplomatic relations and imposed a cruel and ongoing blockade on Cuba. What has changed?

We look forward to having you join us for this special event!

Organized by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC)

**FOR MORE INFO OR TO REGISTER VISIT >>>
WWW.CHEGUEVARACONFERENCE.CA**



By Aaron Mercredi

On Monday, January 26th, the International Che Guevara Conference will be travelling more than 350km from Vancouver through the coastal mountains to Kamloops, BC, for its final day of lectures, debate and discussion. The TRUSU Socialists Club will be co-organizing this evening event with Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) at Thompson Rivers University at 7pm in the Irving K. Barber Centre.

For more than a month, the TRUSU Socialists Club has been making preparations for the conference. Advertisements are in the student newspaper, both on-line and print editions. Posters line the university hallways, and a giant banner advertising the conference hangs in the Old Main building. The campus internal TV network is displaying the colourful digital conference banner. The club has also reached out in to Kamloops community as well, letting everyone know about the dynamic conference that is coming to town.

Dr. Aleida Guevara, world renowned lecturer on Cuba, pediatrician, author and daughter of the legendary revolutionary, Ernesto Che Guevara, is one of the featured guest speakers from Cuba in Kamloops. Jose Luis Rodriguez Garcia, author of “Notes on Cuban Economy”, researcher and professor at the University of Havana, as well as a former Cuban Minister of the Economy and Planning, and a former Vice President of the Cuban Council of Ministers will also be one of the guest speakers from Cuba. They will be joined by Alberto Prieto, coordinator for North and Central America for the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, as well as a former secretary of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, DC. Javier Domokos, the Cuban Consul General to Canada in Ottawa, will also be joining the delegation of speakers for what will interesting, dynamic presentations.

This will be the second time that the TRUSU Socialists Club will be hosting the International Che Guevara Conference in Kamloops. In 2012, the 5th International Che Guevara Conference attracted students, faculty and community members to come out, listen and debate the Cuban Revolution, its impact on Latin America and the world, and the relevance of the Che Guevara’s ideas in the 21st century. Let’s get ready for another round!

TRUSU Socialist Club activists hang banner University.



**International
Che Guevara
Conference
is coming to
Kamloops!**

continued from page 3

France, England, the U.S. and their associates have no standing among human beings who seek justice, peace, civil and democratic rights and an end to imperialist wars across the globe. We stand without equivocation with the millions who mobilize against them.

We refused to hail their slaughter, as with their “humanitarian war” against Libya that was perversely promoted by their kept media. Tens of thousands of Libyans were murdered while the corporate “free press” remained silent. The imperialist air and naval forces that pulverized Libya were employed with impunity, while on the ground imperialism’s paid jihadists were called into service to “liberate” Tripoli on the bombed ruins of that nation. They remain today, grotesquely fighting each other over Libya’s oil and for scraps of “aid” from the various imperialist-backed oil corporations who are the real “victors.”

Today’s modern-day crusaders continue to join in the catastrophic destruction of Iraq. Twenty-four years of saturation bombings, mass murder, starvation sanctions and U.S.-installed dictators were and continue to be employed in the name of a war against non-existent “weapons of mass destruction.” One and a half million Iraqis have been slaughtered by imperialist weapons. The slaughter continues – a classic colonial-era oil war for control of the very fossil fuel resource whose continued use spells doom for humankind. And yesterday’s U.S. allies in this venture are today’s “enemies” – at least for now!

The United States, with French support, has brought about the death and immiseration of hundreds of thousands of Syrians through its backing, covert and otherwise, of “moderate” and fundamentalist combatants, the latter mustered with the aid of the allied Gulf States. The current U.S. bombing of Syrian sites continues the slaughter of civilians.

We heard no cry of outrage from the imperialist nations when Mubarak’s military heirs in Egypt, financed, to the tune of \$1.1 billion annually, slaughtered tens of thousands of Muslims in a U.S.-backed coup that overthrew the elected Mohamed Morsi government. The 30-year Mubarak dictatorship was always a U.S. favorite, as are his successors today – democratic elections notwithstanding!

We heard no cry of outrage last year when racist, Zionist Israel once again slaughtered over 2000 Palestinians in Gaza. Indeed, the U.S. and its imperialist allies remain Israeli’s chief supporters, granting it the largest “aid” package of any nation to maintain its world-repudiated historic occupation.

We stand in solidarity with all victims of imperialist oppression and exploitation everywhere on earth – for free speech, the right to assembly, democratic rights and the right to be free from intervention and occupation.

Never with their oppressors!

Never with their oil wars!

Never with their police state measures!

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The world is being ravaged by endless U.S. wars, both open and secret, life-threatening global warming and environmental destruction, devastating poverty and disease.

Here at home we face unprecedented attacks on labor, immigrants, the poor and oppressed; a massive and racist prison industrial complex; the increasing militarization of the police and an epidemic of police abuse as in Ferguson, Mo.; widespread domestic spying and an expanding “national security state”; trillions of dollars spent on the military to police the world and bail out the corporate 1 per cent while we face severe attacks on the basic necessities of life.

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For details contact:
 United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC)
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Never with their ceaseless racist “wars on terror!”

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Statement from the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) in the United States
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