

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

FIRE THIS TIME



Families of the Cuban 5 Heroes Tour Canada!

Irma González **Elizabeth Palmeiro**

CANADA OUT OF AFGHANISTAN!

**BRING TROOPS HOME NOW!
NATO OUT OF AFGHANISTAN!**

DO NOT FORGET AFGHANISTAN AGAIN
IT CAN BE A GENERAL

Our Hearts Go to Afghanistan
Protesters in the US and the

Iraq: US & UK Ruling Classes Debate Delaying Complete Catastrophe



Anti-Occupation rally in Baghdad.

By Thomas Davies

"That is a fact. I don't say that the difficulties we are experiencing around the world are caused by our presence in Iraq, but undoubtedly our presence in Iraq exacerbates them."

- Sir Richard Dannatt, British Army Chief General

Imagine that! After a 3 year barrage of press clips from top US and UK officials in both business and army suits emphasizing the daily victories and broad public support for the occupation of Iraq - and the newest head of the British military steps up and admits something completely different. He's not the

spend \$505 Billion dollars on the occupation, and what do they have to show for it? Iraq's oil output has fallen to bellow pre-war levels. According, the top US military spokesman in Iraq Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV, armed attacks on occupation forces are also up 43% since midsummer. As the coffins return, along with them come over 30% of US soldiers who suffer "serious mental health problems" within 3-4 months back from Iraq. Support for the Iraq war has plummeted, and 65% of Americans polled in Newsweek thought that the US was actually "losing ground" in its efforts to establish security and democracy in Iraq.

only one. Business and government elites of both countries are currently engaged in an increasingly public debate about how to save their missions in Iraq and around the world. But with all the half-cooked magic military potions they currently offer to do this, none of them will succeed. All of them ignore the most simple of truths: no matter what the combination, no matter whichever uniform, or whatever lies about democracy and reconstruction are mouthed, Iraqi people will never accept a foreign occupation.

Complete Occupational Failure

"Helluva mess"

- James Baker, Former US Secretary of State describing Iraq's



US armoured vehicle burning in Baghdad. May, 2006.

current situation

There doesn't seem to be many people left who dare to say the US and UK are winning in Iraq. In this month of October alone, US forces have already tied their record of 96 casualties. This brings the total US casualties to 2,809, with at least 21,066 more wounded. The US has spent and approved to

Bush press statements about the proven threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction lately? What about the necessity of getting rid of Saddam Hussein? It's a hard story to spin when even former UN chief weapons inspector Hans Blix says that the occupation is "undoubtedly worse" than life under Saddam Hussein. Government officials now

bemoan all the "foreign fighters" and "jihadists" fighting them in Iraq - would it not be logical to say that they are in fact admitting to increasing the amount of "terrorists" they claimed invading Iraq was crucial to wiping out?

Phoney Fight

"The republic is being offered a choice between muck and murk. Neither party is offering a clear path ahead in Iraq."

- David Gergen, professor of public policy at Harvard

As congressional mid-term elections soon approach in the United States, the failure of the occupation of Iraq has been the defining question. Bush has even had to manoeuvre somewhat around his "stay the course to victory" speeches. "I know many Americans are not satisfied with the situation in Iraq," he has recently said. However, he has reminded the world that, "I'm not satisfied either. But we cannot allow our dissatisfaction to turn into disillusionment about our purpose in this war." Despite overwhelming public opinion against the war, Bush still maintains that the United States will be fighting in Iraq indefinitely.

The Democratic Party has pulled out all the stops in trying to

it isn't that either. After all, Bush certainly supports "redeployment" of US troops to fight in other areas around the globe - it's only a difference of strategy and tactics.

The Search for the "Least-Worst Option" in Iraq

As US and UK troops are fighting Iraqi people who are fighting for their lives, the big business rulers of both countries who have wagered the most on the occupation of Iraq have been forced to fight more and

today, as the spirit is evident across Iraq:

"I know the Americans have better weapons. They have better plans. They have uniforms that cost \$3,000, and we have only our clothes. But I have principles. I have holy land to defend. I have family to protect, so I feel stronger than them. The occupation forces are nothing but mercenaries who fight for money, so I feel stronger."

Whether it's Republicans, whether



Demonstration in Baghdad calling for national unity. August 2005.

Complete Human Failure

It only gets worse when you consider the daily reality imposed on Iraqis. The British Medical Journal, *The Lancet*, recently released a report titled, "The Human Cost of the War in Iraq". Researchers concluded that the occupation has wiped out about 655,000 Iraqis or more than 500 people a day since the U.S.-led invasion began. "Since March 2003, an additional 2.5 percent of Iraq's population have died above what would have occurred without conflict," stated the report, which also found that the number of people dying in Iraq has risen each year since March 2003.

A bare minimum of 1.5 million Iraqis have fled the country because of the occupation, trying to escape the rampant misery, malnutrition, and murder which characterize life under US/UK military rule.

What was the Justification?

Has anybody heard any

convince voters that they represent the solution to crisis of occupation in Iraq. But is what they propose really all that different?

Democratic Senators have submitted a huge array of ideas - from withdrawing limited troops to force the Iraqi government forward, to adding more troops to fight better, even to divide Iraq into three semi-autonomous regions for the Kurds, and Shia and Sunni Muslims, with the United States providing a security umbrella... The list of unreasonable ideas is endless, but the most consistent word now put forward is: "redeployment." Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean released a statement in support of it. Hillary Clinton supports it. What is it?

It's not removal. It's not reparations. It's redeployment. The logistics are purposely vague, but redeployment would send unknown numbers of US troops to "other critical areas of potential terrorist conflict around the globe" according to a speech by Democrat Senator Dianne Feinstein. It's not an end to the fighting, simply saying that there are places where the US might have a better chance of winning. Iran? Syria? North Korea? Cuba?

On top of this, they explicitly continue to call on a sustained US military presence in Iraq to provide "training and logistical support to Iraqi security forces." This is the traditional US intervention model has which caused literally millions of deaths from US trained death squads in Latin America.

If it doesn't sound anti-war, it's because it isn't. If it doesn't sound qualitatively different from the Republican Party's line, it's because



Iraqi women & girls protest the US-Israeli invasion of Lebanon. July 2006.

more amongst themselves on how to win the war. Not how to end war. How to prolongue their currently plummeting supremacy, and fight for what's left of their crumbling empires. This was not the fight they expected in 2003, when they all had lists of where they would continue forth from after plowing over Iraq. However, as a recent BBC article said, the search is now on for the "least worst option in Iraq."

What has forced them into this crisis is the Iraqi people and their continued resistance to occupation. The Iraqi people who after three years of brutality still rise again each morning to fight in many different ways - be it strikes, mass demonstrations, or the direct fighting imposed on them by the world's most militarily advanced countries. They have not only become a factor in the strategy of imperialists, they have become the pivotal force. The statement of a Eisa, a young man fighting in Najaf in 2004 carries additional weight

it's Democrats, or whether it's the new British army chief who went on to praise Britain's role in Afghanistan after criticizing the mission in Iraq - they all represent the same thing: imperialist interests to control and make profit around the world. Their only real disagreements are on where to stab their knife, and how hard to turn it at this point in time. Against all odds the Iraqi people have changed the relationship of forces in favour of oppressed people against the governments and militaries of the US and UK. The only solution to the catastrophe in Iraq is simply to listen to what Iraqi people have been saying all along: that all occupation forces leave their country, and their right to self-determination and independent social, political, and economic development be recognized and respected.

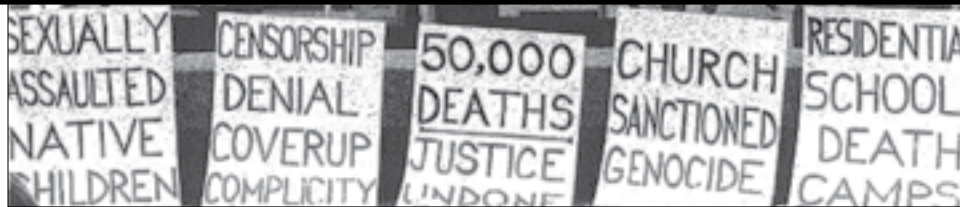
U.S./U.K. OUT OF IRAQ NOW!

TROOPS OUT NOW!

Indigenous Action Movement: Vancouver Rally Exposes Unfairness of the Residential School Process

By Aaron Mercredi

October 23rd marked the final day of the residential school hearings in Vancouver. The Indigenous Action Movement organized a rally about the unfairness of the residential school process, the systemic racism in Canada's justice



nations. Finally, no settlement process will bring justice for those who were murdered, died, or went missing in the residential schools. Along with the residential schools come the historical and daily crimes against Indigenous people in the justice system, which systemically targets and discriminates against them. Whether it is the record high numbers of Indigenous

Finally, the theft of land and resources continues today. The goal of the government of Canada and the reason behind the residential schools is to take away Indigenous people's identity, and make it more difficult for them to resist the taking of their land and resources. Indigenous people's territories continue to be taken and used for resource extraction and big business.

The rally to condemn Canada's oppression of Indigenous people covered these three attacks on Indigenous people that are systemic within Canada. People heard stories of daily



St. Paul's Indian Industrial School, Middlechurch, Manitoba, 1901

system, and the continued theft of Indigenous lands and resources. Over 50 people came out, held signs, and listened to speakers who were survivors of the residential schools, as well as community leaders who covered different aspects of Canada's crimes against Indigenous people.

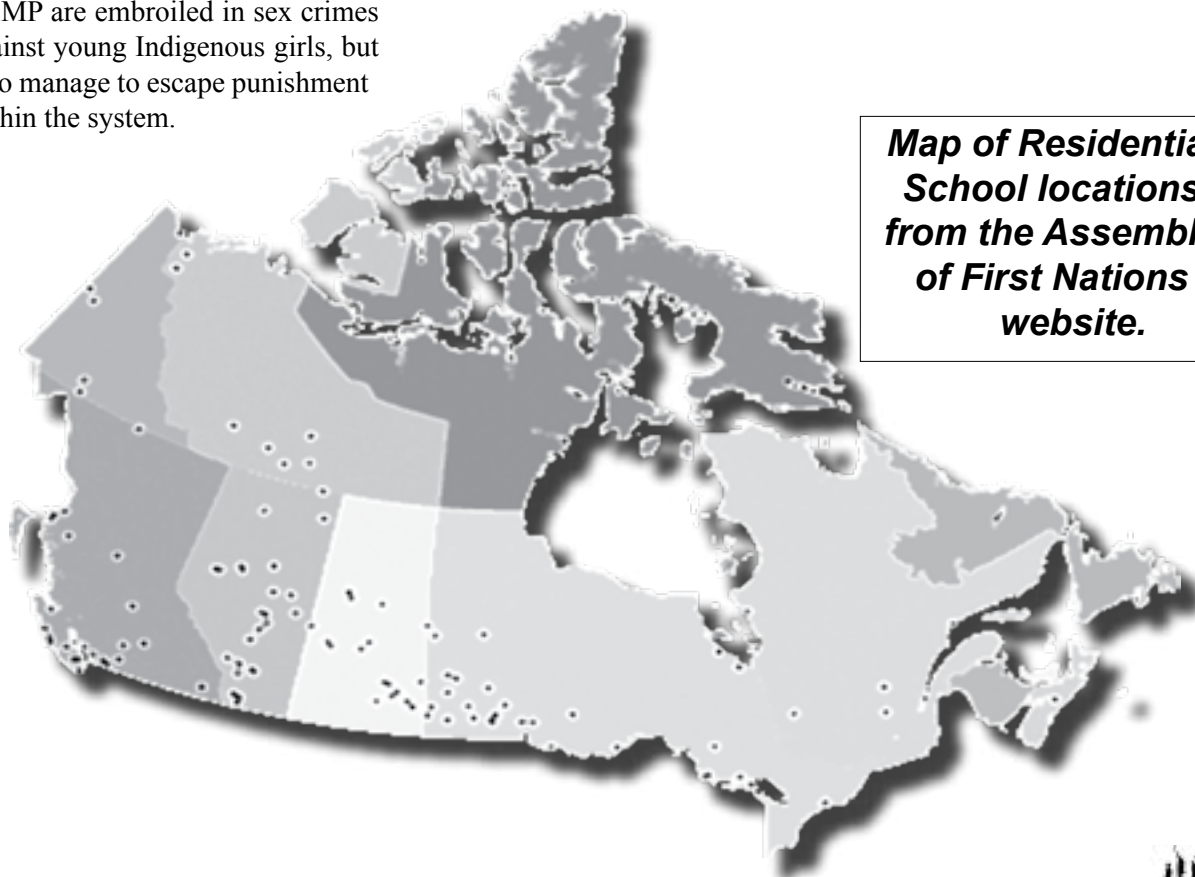
The unfairness inherent in the residential school settlement process was the main spark that ignited the protest. Within the settlement documents, Canada and the Churches are released forever for all the harm that was caused by the residential schools. This allows Canada and the Churches to avoid future claims on behalf of Indigenous nations for the loss of their collective rights to language, culture, and traditional governing structures, which resulted in genocide of Indigenous people. For such a supposedly broad settlement process, the notification process missed many survivors, and hereditary chiefs were not notified or consulted. The settlement process does not address the loss of language and culture, which are collective rights of Indigenous

people who are arrested, convicted and sent to jail every year, the high percentage of Indigenous people in the prison populations, or the racial profiling and targeting of Indigenous people by the police, the justice system is built in direct confrontation with Indigenous people. But the systemic abuses against Indigenous children did not end when the last residential school shut down. Examples of continuing abuse include recent cases in Prince George, where members of the RCMP are embroiled in sex crimes against young Indigenous girls, but who manage to escape punishment within the system.

life and daily abuses at residential schools. Speakers talked about the abuse by the RCMP against Indigenous people, and talked about the daily realities of losing their land to ski resorts and mines. But people also heard about the strength and resolve of Indigenous people facing these battles. From the people who survived the abuse of the residential schools, to the people who continue to stand up against the RCMP and big business,

there was a strong feeling of hope in what can be accomplished when Native people come together and fight for our rights.

Fire This Time had the opportunity to speak with Kat Norris, who is a main organizer with the Indigenous Action Movement that organized the rally against the Residential schools. Please read the interview on the following page for her perspective.



Map of Residential School locations from the Assembly of First Nations website.

We're Still Fighting for Our Rights

Interview with Kat Norris of the Indigenous Action Movement



Kat Norris, MC and organizer of the Oct 23 rally against Residential Schools.

By Aaron Mercredi

Fire This Time: Kat, Can you tell us where you're from?

Kat Norris: I'm Coast Salish from Valdez Island, the Lyackson First Nation.

FTT: Can you talk a little bit about why you organized this rally outside the courthouse today?

Kat Norris: Yeah, I'm the coordinator for the Indigenous Action Movement

are very confusing and a lot of our elders and people with disabilities, or just your average person who hasn't taken post-secondary, doesn't understand it fully. They didn't give us enough time to go through it and study the process. They didn't put together forums to understand the package to say 'yes' or 'no' on whether we agreed or we don't agree. So, there are too many things that more people can go in to more details about, but those are the basics for me.

What really offended me as well was the fact that not a lot of our people weren't notified about this process even happening or the hearings. They don't give enough time. They don't give two days, like in the Inuit territories, the Yukon Territories, the Northwest Territories, they only had two days for that whole area. And those people walked out, they're very upset. Because the terrain that they live in, the transportation issues, the communication issues means that they're just going to push it through

it to trial. That really offends me, especially in the small communities where they can get away with any type of crime against our people. And what caused us to come and organize this is the fact that these girls spoke up for themselves. Therefore they spoke up for a lot of girls who have gone through the same thing. But it takes a lot for anyone, even in the city, to speak up for themselves, much less young girls, and the fact that they were just stepped on despite that. You know, they weren't heard. And I wanted them to know that they had people on their side and we can make change.

FTT: What was offered and what was the result of the proceedings in there today?

Kat Norris: They're looking at continuing more court hearings. So, I don't know what the answer to that is, but that was something that the lawyer for the people was addressing the court by saying that there was too much

FTT: The residential schools have been the biggest attacks on Native people through the fact that it was an attack on children, and meant to destroy our culture and our lives. Today, for people fighting for justice, what do you see in the future?

Kat Norris: Well, I see more of our people standing up. Because whenever there is a rally or an action, a lot of us bring our kids. My mother was an activist as well, but more on a personal level, at schools, because they were racist to us as kids. And we saw her sit in the middle of the lobby of the administration office because the principal wouldn't talk to her. Again, my brothers were kicked out of school for defending themselves against racist kids. I didn't know that I was going to become an activist. My sister's also an activist. You see our nephew here. But you know, what dismays me is that we have to even do this at all. You know, 30 years ago, I was involved with the American Indian Movement and Leonard

and I organized this event to coincide with the last day of the residential school settlement hearing, because a lot of our people are offended by this process. A lot of our people say that we as people weren't notified and that this was done backwards. They should have talked to the people first and then made the decision, but what they did was they went ahead and made the decision, and now they're talking to our people? You know, the thing is already a done deal, and they're making a play at talking to the people, when our people don't truly have a say in this.

What I'm saying is that as a people, I accept that I am a citizen if it means that we can make change, because Canadian citizens can make change and change laws. Because normally I express that I am not a Canadian citizen, but if it works in my favour, I'll use it to that advantage. The residential school process is unfair in a lot of ways. Number one being the fact that a lot of issues are left out, like language and culture. Language and culture are two of the reasons they instituted the residential schools, to beat out the language and our culture and our people's way of life. And the other thing that was left out was our children. Our children are victims of residential schools as well, and they should be included in this package. There's the opt-in/opt-out clauses that



Kat Norris and Bernie Williams carry a banner at the Oct 23 rally in Vancouver.

without notification. How do you do that? How do you treat a people like that? It just really offended me.

The catalyst for this action was the RCMP officer, Justin Harris, from Prince George. Nine other officers were implicated in the abuse of our young native girls because they work in the sex trade. And he was the only one who was identified, or named, and a lot of people had said this, but the RCMP and the police should not police themselves, because that system never works. They have their loop hole, which is called the RCMP statute of limitations, which allows them to get away with any crimes that they commit after a year, because after a year it is too late to bring

contention amongst the Aboriginal people around this process. But a lot of our people are aware of the legalities around this issue and more so than Canada would have thought. Canada thinks that we're just going to say 'ok' because they are the ultimate power, but we know that they're not. And you know we see a lot of our elders, a lot of our young people, standing up. I think what is going to happen is that they're not going to push it through, because if they do... In a way I hope that they do because our people are really going to stand up then and society has to see that this isn't fair. This is our land, this is our fight. What happens remains to be seen and we have to hear from our lawyer.

Peltier, and he's still in jail today. Our people are still fighting for him. And it's very disheartening to know that we still have to do this 30 years later. We're still fighting for our rights. And it feels like no one is listening, but what I foresee is continued action, continued fighting for our rights. What I foresee is our people getting stronger and stronger because we're learning through post-secondary education, through workshops, through healing, through treatment centres, even programs in jail, (which aren't perfect, but still our people are learning). A lot of our people are getting involved in spirituality. Our spirituality is coming back, our culture is coming back. Everything that they had taken away from us is coming back. Our language is being taught in schools. My mother is an instructor in the elementary school system. Our bands are hiring their own people to teach language. What I foresee is a continuation of our history, our true history coming back. And with Amnesty International and different human rights organizations coming on side, it's a step in the right direction. But even through that, things aren't done. But, as long as our people strengthen themselves within themselves, they build their self-confidence, self-esteem and spiritual strength, then we can live by our own definitions within society.

FTT: Thank you Kat.

of Afghanistan Troops Home NOW!

Afghanistan on the Record: Why have Canada & NATO Failed in Afghanistan?



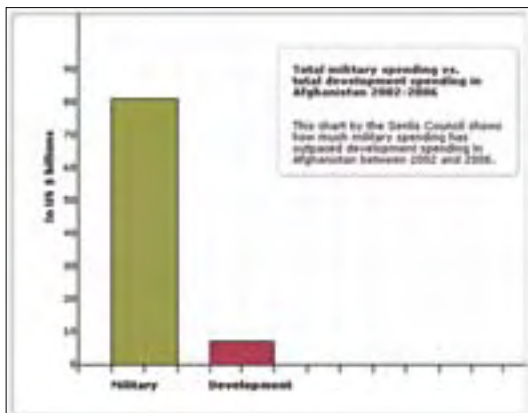
Canada Out

By Nita Palmer

“The airplanes came and were bombing until 3 am. And, in the morning, they started hitting our village with mortars and rockets. They didn’t allow anybody to come to our help.”

– Survivor of NATO bombing of Panjwai, Afghanistan

that anti-occupation sentiment is growing among people in Afghanistan, and the resistance movement is widespread among civilians. Clearly, NATO has failed to “win hearts and minds” of Afghan people. “Everyone is very angry at the government and the coalition... These tragedies just keep continuing,” explained Abdul Aye, a Panjwai area villager.



NATO’s Legacy of Poverty

Although the shocking violence of these bombings exposes the true face of the occupation, Afghans suffer from the occupation in every aspect of their lives. Afghanistan is

NATO’s ruthless bombing campaign against Afghan civilians has torn apart the last shreds of a mask of a “peacekeeping and reconstruction” operation. The October 26 bombings, which killed uncounted scores of civilians, mark the 5-year anniversary of the occupation of Afghanistan with the highest number of civilian deaths by multi-national forces since the October 2001 invasion. NATO’s turn to increasingly ruthless tactics are a result of the fact

ranked 173rd out of 178 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index. In over half of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces, at least 70% of people don’t have access to drinkable water. Sanitation infrastructure is literally non-existent, and sewage often flows into the street or onto the ground, spreading disease and contaminating water. Less than 10% of people in Afghanistan have access to electricity, and bombing campaigns destroy what few sources of electricity there is. In southern Afghanistan, 41%

of children are malnourished, due to the staggering poverty the occupation has created. According to a report recently released by the Senlis Council, “In a time of poverty, many Afghans remember when the Taliban last had control and think they were materially better off. Terribly poor families in villages who have seen no aid have said they would be happy to see the return of the Taliban if they could feed their families.”

Losses in Women’s Rights

Of any group in Afghanistan, women bear the burden of some of the most devastating effects of poverty. In October 2001, the cover of every major news magazine was covered with pictures of Afghan women in burkas. The feature article inside was always a special on how the invasion of Afghanistan would rid people there of the Taliban and save lives of Afghan women. Fast forward to 2006. Afghanistan’s Gender Development Index is the third lowest in the world, at 0.3. Afghan women suffer immensely from the effects of poverty. Only 20% of Afghan women have ever seen a doctor. In part because of this, Afghanistan has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world, and most deaths are from preventable causes. Only 14% of Afghan women have experienced attendants with them during birth. In addition to this, the literacy rate for Afghan women hasn’t improved – it currently stands at 9%. For women in Afghanistan,

the occupation has not been a liberating force – rather, it has been another burden laid on their shoulders, as they now have to struggle against the daily trials of poverty and violence in addition to their struggle as women.

Afghanistan’s Economic Crisis: The Legacy of Imperialism

“It would appear that Afghanistan is uniquely placed to seize upon the increasing affluence of its neighbours, however, amidst this rising tide of prosperity, Afghanistan lingers as a lone shipwreck, threatening to even reverse on a number of key poverty indicators which are nearly a generation behind those of its neighbouring countries.”

– Senlis Council Report

Afghanistan’s per capita gross domestic product (GDP) is about \$200 USD. In contrast, surrounding countries have a per capita GDP of about ten times that, around \$2000 USD. Within this, the majority of the GDP comes from illegal opium production. As such, most of Afghanistan is run by warlords who operate the economy on a feudal system. Desperate farmers and peasants eke out their living by working under these warlords on these poppy plantations.

Afghanistan, despite being landlocked, is a country with immense value in its strategic location between trade markets of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Afghanistan should be a

Continues on Page 5



Canada Out of Afghanistan! continued...

Continued From Page 4

country at least as prosperous as others that surround it. Instead, Afghanistan's long history of foreign occupation has left its economy and society both in pieces, and occupying countries like Canada continue to exploit the country and tear at the fabric of its society.

Warlords and NATO guns: Democracy in Afghanistan

Afghanistan has been hailed as "the Middle East's newest democracy". But "democracy" on whose terms? The majority of people in Afghanistan don't

the occupation forces. As former Afghan MP Omar Zakhilwal explained, "a top U.N. political advisor told me in no uncertain terms that the loya jirga [assembly] was not intended to bring about fundamental political change, such as ridding the government of warlords." The handful of Afghan members of parliament who have voiced their opposition to the current government have noted that the loya jirgas called have simply been a method of officially rubber-stamping decisions about parliament and constitutional reforms pre-decided by the

military in Afghanistan said in an recent interview, "When my brother joined the military, he was a peacekeeper. Now he's killing off Taliban in Afghanistan and it's just opened my eyes and I don't agree with it." (CanWest News Service, Oct 23 2006)

Why, then, with their utter failure in Afghanistan, and rapidly falling support for the mission on the home front, does the government of Canada continue the mission in Afghanistan – and even talk about extending it beyond 2009? The reality is that the government of Canada is in a quagmire in Afghanistan. On one hand, they are fighting an un-winnable war against a growing resistance. On the other, they desperately need control of Afghanistan in a world where imperialist countries like Canada, the US, and the UK are vying for their positions and strategic locations in the Middle East. Canada's International Policy Statement, written in 2005, notes that Canada must break through the "glass ceiling of its middle power status," and learn to compete "in a world of rising giants." Afghanistan is a pivot point that is crucial transit hub between the markets of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, and to control Afghanistan is to have major economic influence in these markets.

This economic interest that benefits the government of



An Afghan family enters Pakistan at the Chaman border post.

feel their government represents them, but rather, the interests of imperialist countries who occupy Afghanistan. The government does not administer essential services like health care or education – they are privatized services – so Afghans don't see much material benefit from supporting one government or another. As well, the government holds only weak influence. Afghan president Hamid Karzai admits that his government's power doesn't extend beyond the carefully secured capital, Kabul. The rest of Afghanistan is left up to the reign of feudal warlords. Things don't get much better in the Afghan parliament. Many members of parliament are themselves warlords or former warlords, being given financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and others in the name of promoting "democracy".

The government of Canada turns a blind eye to this, as the Afghan government works with

occupying countries. While the government of Afghanistan exists simply as a puppet for serving the interests of the countries occupying Afghanistan and the government warlords who support them, there is no democracy in Afghanistan for regular people.

Confronting Canada's War Drive

With each passing day, it becomes more clear that Canada's mission in Afghanistan is an utter failure. The government of Canada has not bettered the lives of people in Afghanistan. Instead, they have destroyed lives, and created an anti-occupation resistance that is growing in strength and size with each passing day. They are failing to win hearts and minds not only in Afghanistan, but in Canada as well. As the number of maple-leaf draped coffins climbs towards 50, people in Canada are demanding an end to the occupation. Soldier's families, seeing their children's and sibling's lives' being put on the



Anti-occupation protest, Kabul, May 2005.

line to fight an unjust war, are beginning to come out against the mission in Afghanistan. A young woman whose brother is with the Canadian



Destroyed building, Kabul.

Afghanistan. We need a chance to discuss and to debate the crisis in Afghanistan among regular people, not in parliament.

People in Afghanistan are fighting for an end to the Canadian and NATO war drive in their country, because they know it is the only path to a better Afghanistan. As the government of Canada sinks deeper into its quagmire in

Afghanistan, we poor, working, and oppressed people are obligated to support their call for self-determination.

CANADA OUT OF AFGHANISTAN!

NATO OUT OF AFGHANISTAN!

CALL FOR AN INDEPENDENT PUBLIC INQUIRY!



The true humanism of Fidel*

Talking with Ignacio Ramonet, author of "One hundred hours with Fidel"

By Rosa Miriam Elizalde
A CubaNews translation by Ana Portela.
Edited by Walter Lippmann.
Juventudrebelde.cu

ONE HUNDRED HOURS WITH FIDEL

Last May 16 you presented the first edition of the book which had 700 pages. A few months later, this second edition, has exactly 800 pages. Shouldn't this new edition be called More than one hundred hours with Fidel?

—Actually, the hours I spent with him are the same. What has been added between the first and second editions are the hours Fidel has employed working over the same questions. The difference between these two editions is that he was only able to rapidly glance over the first due to a lack of time because of his responsibilities. In the presentation of the first edition, he himself realized, on re-reading the book, that it was necessary to add details that only he could do.

Not only details. There are also important new notes.

—They are lengthened details. For example, I'm going to mention three or four which were added and that were important, because, as you say, between the first and second edition there is almost a one hundred page difference, without counting the multitude of modifications he has made, more so in style.

The first version had a more conversational style while in the new edition he wanted to give it a more

written character because, logically, it is a book.

What modifications are there? What added?

—Many modifications have been made in the first part where he improves the description of his childhood in the Oriente countryside during the 20s and 30s. There is an imbalance in the first edition that was my fault because I asked him many questions about his father and very few about his mother. Now he has added some very personal paragraphs, very emotional, about his mother that is not mentioned or written about in previous books.

"Another important addition is in the chapter about the October Crisis where he added his answers to letters written to Nikita Khrushchev. They are not unpublished, but little-known around the world. They were added so people could better understand the circumstances around one of the most serious crises the world has ever lived through in the last 50 years".

The letters written to Saddam Hussein were absolutely



Ignacio Ramonet and Fidel Castro.

unpublished and appear here for the first time.

—When we talk of the crisis of the war in Iraq he told me: "I even sent a message to Saddam Hussein, calling on him to demonstrate that he did not have weapons of mass destruction and prevent an attack". That appears in the first edition. In this version, two letters he sent after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, during the early 90s are included in toto.

"Also, this is the most complete version of the coup against Chavez in Venezuela in April of 2002".

You had a great scoop because it is the first time Fidel gives a detailed explanation of the events of the coup in Venezuela and the return of President Hugo Chavez to Miraflores.

—Exactly. In the first edition it was understood that he had participated but it was lacking more facts. While here are details of the telephone conversations he had with Chavez, with different generals, etc., and it is evident how he lived through

this coup d'etat. I think that his intervention was decisive to changing the course of events in Venezuela in those days.

You have insisted that this is a book of interviews not of interrogations. What, exactly, do you mean?

—Many persons in Europe, mostly in Spain, have told me: "You are not very critical, you don't ask him disturbing questions". I have answered that here are almost all the questions on points that can be discussed and some are controversial in this long experience of almost 50 years of the Cuban Revolution. Only they are not made aggressively or as an interrogation. Interrogations are for the police. A journalist does not interrogate. A journalist asks questions and the responsibilities for the answers are of the interviewee.

"I wanted to have a conversation. I have said it often: he never set any condition. He let himself be taken towards everywhere I wanted to lead the interview. It never occurred to me to make an interrogation because I knew that any question, regardless of

its delicate nature, he would answer with calm and weighty arguments. And that is what happened.

"Any person who reads this book without a formed opinion either in favor or against the Revolution, will find, in Fidel's answers, a reasoning".

In my notes the day the first edition was presented at the Convention Palace, there is a phrase by Fidel: "It was not an easy interview although the weasels have made that accusation". You were also accused of making a false interview, that the photographs were trick shots and other things. Why was this reaction produced?

—In Europe there is a tradition that, before a book is placed on sale, if it is interesting, the journalists asked the editors for an extract to be published before it is released in the bookstores. A great Spanish newspaper (El Pais) asked the editor's authorization. They

published a large fragment of the last chapter, XXVI that is called "What happens after Fidel". The article had a photograph of the interview where Fidel and I were seen talking. Then he was talking about what could happen when he no longer had responsibility for Cuba. The minute that fragment came out hostile criticisms began.

"The first thing that was said was: 'it was a false interview. Ramonet was unable to interview Fidel Castro because he has been dead for weeks.' Second: 'It is false because part of the answers are taken from speeches'. And thirdly: 'Because the photograph is a trick one that has a sitting Ramonet added, sitting in a chair, with another, at another time that includes Fidel!'"

"Before the book came out there was already a debate. The press, especially in Miami, began to speculate. They headlined: "Journalist publishes a false interview with Fidel Castro", and that kind of thing. When the book came out they realized that it was very difficult to invent a 700-page interview. It would be

an extraordinarily difficult thing to do. And on the other hand, I always explained that Fidel gave me authorization —in some questions where the answer was "I have already answered that in such and such an article or speech" — to reproduce these ideas, that he was on top of it and revised it in principle.

"The photographs were obviously real. They could be contrasted with a series of documentaries for television, with seven hours of filming that was broadcast on many European channels before the book came out. "In Spain the book was sold in large stores and bookshops accompanied by a DVD with an hour of the interview. There, Fidel is seen giving the answers that appeared in the newspaper. There are no tricks.

"All these attacks that don't surprise

Fidel has been working very hard on this book, before and after the operation. Have you been aware of the rewriting?

—We have been in constant communication, through the assistance of Fidel. Since the day of its presentation when he committed himself to check the book completely because he hadn't gone as deep as he wanted. He spent time on this task with a lot of energy, with a lot of enthusiasm and I, of course, was in contact. We had planned to present the book for his birthday and I was to come before to work together on the advance of that correction, of that rewriting.

"I hope his effort spent on the book was not a cause of his fatigue, of his illness. I hope not because I would feel guilty. I also know why he has



me because every time you mention Cuba there is always controversy and then they end up falling flat. The book released has been very successful".

But the attacks were not only verbal, but there were also reprisals. At that time you were fired from La voz de Galicia, together with Ramón Chao and the newspaper director.

—That's right. The mere publication of the interview with Fidel caused me the loss of the newspaper contract; a paper where I wrote a weekly chronicle. Although they knew well that I was working on the book since had I worked on the project for three years. Ramón Chao also was left out of the paper because he supported me. Of course, it was a reprisal.

Marvels of a free press.

—These things happen all the time. They accuse Cuba of a diversity of abuses but, in fact, I have been abused because I have been a victim of censure, especially in Spain simply for doing my work as a journalist. This is a book of a journalist. Is this book necessary? Yes, it is necessary. There is much talk about Fidel Castro and Cuba, all the time, but they are never heard.

"In gatherings with readers in Spain, I have talked to people who may not necessarily have a favorable opinion of the Cuban Revolution and have told me: 'At last we have seen the arguments of Fidel Castro and they are solid'.

"Fidel Castro is the most censured person in the mass media, they mention him but his words are not heard. That is not right. I think that it is normal for a journalist to give the right of speech to someone who doesn't want to be heard."

said it, that as soon as he began recovery he took up the book with energy. Although his situation was of care, such as anyone who has undergone an operation like the one he had. He wanted to finish the book at all costs to have it ready for the Non-Aligned Movement".

It was a special present for the Heads of State...

—This effort was admirable. It was proof of the character of a person. Although he was physically diminished — by the operation, of course — he devoted his energy to work very seriously. Anyone can compare the first edition with the second and notice the many modifications he made. He fulfilled his promise and the book was out in time.

When and how did you learn that your interviewee was submitted to a delicate operation and that his life was in danger?

—Imagine, at the time I was pretty isolated. I was trekking in the Alps with my wife and children. He had broken communications with the computer, television and the telephone — well the telephone no, now no one can live without it. But I was in such a high and isolated place the cell phone did not connect. I was walking along a trail and, miraculously, my telephone beeped. It was Radio Caracol, in Bogota, Colombia and they: "Cuban television has informed that Castro has been operated on. What are your comments about this?" That is how I found out. I ran out to find a television and I saw our friend Carlitos Valenciaga — French television and all the televisions around the world

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"WE CAN CALL PEOPLE, IF IT IS A MATTER OF FIGHT, TO THE SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND OF CUBANS WHOM ARE UNEMPLOYED(...); TO THE FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND OF WORKERS WHOM LIVE IN DESPICABLE HUT (...). THAT'S THE PEOPLE, THE ONE THAT SUFFERS ALL THE UNFORTUNES, AND THEREFORE, THEY ARE ABLE TO FIGHT BRAVERLY! ..."

THE HISTORY WILL ABSOLVE ME

By Manuel Yepe*

Human rights and democracy, among other concepts such as governance and human security, are commonly manipulated by the great powers in putting in place mechanisms of domination.

It is both ironic and deceptive that the US, having systematically used the economic blockade as a coercive measure and, in the case of Cuba, violated all sorts of people's rights, portrays itself in the face of world opinion as the principal defender of governance, democracy and human rights.

Such practices are aimed at the underdeveloped countries with

never have police forces used water hoses or wood sticks against protestors.

Cuba is the only country in Latin America nowadays where, in the last 48 years, there have been no paramilitary forces or death squads, no murdered, missing or tortured prisoners; no violence has ever been used against the people.

In Cuba, since 1959, (if you except the Guantanamo US Naval Base), no prisoner has ever been murdered, tortured, rendered to foreign countries to be tortured at a distance, sexually violated, imprisoned without trial or in some cases simply

something that probably many will hear for the first time due to US control of global media) there are no political prisoners in Cuba, if you understand by such persons imprisoned for expressing political ideas contrary to the government.

The fixation with Cuba is almost hypnotic, as shown by the US obsession about obtaining a yearly condemnation of the country by the now extinct UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, a practice that ended up disparaging the authority of this international group as a result of its politicization and



CUBA

the truth about human rights

the intention of questioning and controlling the handling of their domestic affairs. Interference of this nature is unacceptable, much more so linked to conditions on granting financial aid or transfer of technology.

It should be known that the Cuban revolution that came to power in 1959, the struggle that united the Cuban people and brought up their right to self determination, was first and foremost a fight for

made to "disappear" in the style of the brutal US sponsored Latin American dictatorships.

In Cuba, since 1959, only at the Guantanamo US Naval Base will you find civilian and military leaders that encourage or permit to "break" prisoners through the use of techniques like sensory deprivation, isolation, sleep deprivation, forced nudity, fear inspiring military working dogs, cultural and sexual humiliation,

the constant use of blackmail, pressure, fraud, deception and threats.

Nothing similar happens in relation to other Latin American countries where dozens of thousands have died and die every year from political violence and where the murdering of trade unionists and of human rights activists as well as the peasant and indigenous slaughters



human rights and justice.

It should be known that Cuba is probably the only country in the world where never, since 1959, a prisoner has been tortured, where never has an extrajudicial execution taken place, where

mock executions, and the threat of violence or death toward detainees or their loved ones and other profoundly dehumanizing practices - not to mention the physical torture.

As a matter of fact, (and this is

are everyday matters, while the courts acquit the confessed criminals.

In 2003 there was the case of 75 individuals who were presented in Court and found guilty by Cuban tribunals, with unequivocal evidences, of crimes foreseen by Cuban laws, which strictly prohibit paid collaboration by Cuban citizens with foreign governments against national security.

As a part of the intensification of its aggressiveness, the US Interests Office in Havana had increased the profile of these illegal creations to such level that the Cuban government had no other choice but to proceed legally against the lawbreakers.

Most experts think that the intention was to provoke that Cuba would outset US diplomats and therefore create a situation that would favor the closure of the US Interests Office in Havana. But the Cuban government reacted by requesting from the Courts the application of Cuban laws against such citizens acting as mercenaries.

Probably every case of recruitment of these persons must have been a different story, but the majority was undoubtedly based in a conditional for the granting of visas for immigration plus the payment for their services.

US immigration policy in the case of Cuba has been, during the last 48 years, part

of an overall plan based in the expected effect of an economic blockade (euphemistically called "embargo on trade") to encourage Cuban emigration, combined with the denial of visas for legal immigration in the US, the publicized acceptance of illegal immigrants under a so-called Cuban Adjustment Act for the promotion of unlawful emigration; and, finally, the threat of a military reprisal in case a massive exodus of Cubans reaching the territory of the US would occur.

In the United States around 400 convicts have been executed since 1990, an average of 35 a year or three a month. Hundreds more executions have taken place in other countries, and that's without counting the unofficial executions and state-sponsored massacres which in some countries are just part of the landscape.

Ordinarily, the issue passes without comment. Apart from detailed reports and the condemnations by human rights organizations, the execution of human beings rarely makes it onto the news pages, saturated though they are in blood and death.

In contrast to this general trend of silence and indifference, the execution of three hijackers of a passenger boat in Cuba in March 2003 unleashed a political and media storm - with its epicenter, naturally, in the United States.

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School children in Cuba hold a painting of revolutionary leader Che Guevara.

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A wave of hijackings had been unleashed in November 2002 and was already in full development. Hijackers were being received as "anticommunist freedom fighters" in Florida and the planes seized.

Encouraged by the U.S. government stand, common criminals had started to join the party by assaulting boats or airplanes with passengers on board, gravely endangering the lives of innocents and creating the ideal conditions for a military attack on Cuba.

The authorities had no other choice. The wave had to be stopped.

The Cuban government called for the arrest of the mercenaries who served the aggressors and requested their punishment by the courts in accordance with the laws in force.

These three terrorists sentenced to capital punishment were by no means dissidents or any thing of the sort; they were simply common criminals, usual delinquents, mercenaries previously convicted in several occasions. One of them had been tried 19 times for various violent crimes.

In those days, a high State Department official had cynically declared that the continued hijackings in Cuba were a serious threat to the national security of the United States and requested that the Cuban government adopt all the necessary measures to prevent such acts, as if they were not the ones to incite the hijackings. The warning, plus the deliberate provocations by U.S. Interests Section, constituted a "pre-arranged plan" to use the hijackings as an excuse for a naval blockade and eventual war against Cuba,

Cuba supports the principles of objectivity, impartiality and non selectivity in the treatment of issues related to human rights,

were known to always resist until death.

Strict respect of the human rights of the enemies has been probably one of the most effective armrest in the Cuban revolutionary struggle for self-determination and social justice, and Cubans are proud for that.

**Manuel E. Yepe is Secretary of the Cuban Peace Movement, an NGO existing since 1949 with consultative status before the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations Organization. Ex-Ambassador, lawyer, economist and social scientist, he is also Adjunct Associate Professor at the Raul Roa Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana. He served as Director General of Prensa Latina (Latin-American News Agency) and Vice President of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television, as well as founder National Director of UNDP's Technological Information Pilot System (TIPS) in Cuba.*



Hundreds of Cubans gather at the US Interests Section in Havana, for a minute of silence for victims of terrorism. Feb 2006.



LA VERDAD SOBRE LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS EN CUBA

*Por Manuel Yepe**

Derechos humanos y democracia, entre otros conceptos como gobernabilidad y seguridad humana, son conceptos comúnmente manipulados por las grandes potencias en la puesta en práctica de sus mecanismos de dominación.

Es tan irónico como engañoso el hecho de que los EEUU, habiendo utilizado el bloqueo económico como medida coercitiva y, en el caso de Cuba, violado todos los derechos populares, se presenta ante la opinión pública mundial como el principal defensor de

de agua o toletes contra manifestantes. Cuba es en la actualidad el único país en América Latina donde, en los últimos 48 años, no han existido fuerzas paramilitares ni escuadrones de la muerte, ni asesinatos, desapariciones o tortura de prisioneros, ni se ha utilizado violencia alguna contra el pueblo. En Cuba, desde 1959, (si se exceptúa la Base Naval de los EEUU en Guantánamo), ningún prisionero ha sido jamás asesinado, torturado, llevado a países extranjeros para ser torturados a distancia, violados sexualmente, encerrados sin juicio o en algunos casos sencillamente hechos

de su politización y el uso constante de chantajes, presiones, fraudes, engaños y amenazas. Nada similar ocurre con respecto a otros países latinoamericanos donde decenas de miles de personas han muerto y mueren cada año a causa de la violencia política y donde el asesinato de dirigentes sindicales y activistas vigilantes de derechos humanos, así como los asesinatos de líderes campesinos e indígenas son asunto cotidiano, mientras las Cortes absuelven a los criminales confesos. En 2003 hubo el caso de 75 individuos

and the refusal to use them with political dominance purposes. Cuba rejects the growing trend of some countries in the North which seek to set themselves as judges and censors of whatever happens in countries in the South, while trying to hide the countless human rights violations that take place in their own territories.

Cuba has a steadfast commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights. It has not only signed and ratified all international instruments on these issues, but it also maintains a high level of cooperation with the international mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights universally. The only exception to this rule comes when the US and/or its allies try to use this issue as a political tool for its campaigns or in a discriminatory manner against Cuba or other developing nations.

Cubans find particularly groundless and insulting the media and diplomatic campaign addressed against their country based on alleged violations of human rights, because strict respect for the integrity of every individual has been a beacon of the Cuban revolution and a very important standard that has accompanied and served the revolutionary cause during the times of the struggle against the US-sponsored dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista,

While the forces of the tyranny, supported, trained and advised by US military, killed, tortured and abused detained revolutionary suspects, the Cuban revolutionaries strictly respected every member of the governmental police or other armed forces when made prisoner. This conduct ended up introducing in the government forces a marked disposition to surrender the revolutionary forces, sharply contrasting the attitude of the revolutionaries who

la gobernabilidad, le democracia y los derechos humanos.

Tales prácticas están dirigidas contra los países subdesarrollados con la intención de cuestionarles y controlarles el manejo de sus asuntos internos. Interferencias de esta naturaleza son inaceptables, mucho más cuando se vinculan a condiciones para brindar ayuda financiera o transferencia de



Cuban workers rally in support of Fidel Castro. Aug 2006.

tecnología.

Debe ser sabido que, cuando la revolución cubana llegó al poder en 1959, la lucha que unificaba al pueblo cubano en aras de su autodeterminación era, en primer lugar y por sobre todas las cosas, la lucha por los derechos humanos y la justicia.

Debe saberse que Cuba es proiblemente el único país en el mundo donde nunca, desde 1959, ha sido torturado un solo prisionero, donde nunca ha tenido lugar una sola ejecución extrajudicial, donde jamás las fuerzas policiales han usado mangueras

"desaparecer" al estilo de las brutales dictaduras latinoamericanas patrocinadas los EEUU.

En Cuba, desde 1959, solo en la Base Naval estadounidense de Guantánamo encontrará usted dirigentes civiles y militares que promuevan o permitan "partir" prisioneros mediante el uso de técnicas de depresión sensorial, aislamiento, depresión por sueño, nudismo forzoso, miedo inspirado

por perros entrenados, humillación sexual o cultural, ejecuciones simuladas y amenazas de violencia o muerte contra detenidos o sus seres queridos, y otras prácticas inhumanas, para no mencionar

la tortura física.

De hecho, (y esto es algo que probablemente muchos oirán por primera vez a causa del control mediático global estadounidense) en Cuba no hay un solo preso político, si por tal se entiende personas encarceladas por expresar ideas políticas contrarias al gobierno.

La fijación con Cuba es casi hipnótica, como lo demuestra la obsesión por obtener cada año una condena a este país por la ya extinta Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Ginebra, una práctica que acabó por desacreditar la autoridad de esta agrupación internacional como resultado

que fueron presentados a las Cortes y hallados culpables por los tribunales civiles de justicia correspondientes del país, con pruebas inequívocas, de delitos previstos por las leyes cubanas que estrictamente prohíben la colaboración a cambio de pago por ciudadanos cubanos con gobiernos extranjeros contra la seguridad nacional.

Como parte de la intensificación de su agresividad, la Oficina de Intereses de los Estados Unidos en La Habana, había intensificado sus acciones ilegales a tal nivel que el gobierno cubano no tuvo más alternativa que proceder legalmente contra los violadores.

La mayoría de los expertos estima que la intención era provocar que el gobierno cubano reaccionara expulsando a un número de diplomáticos estadounidenses a fin de crear condiciones favorables para el cierre de la Oficina de Intereses de los Estados Unidos en La Habana. Pero el gobierno cubano reaccionó mediante la presentación ante la justicia de los ciudadanos cubanos a quienes se les podía probar el delito de mercenarismo.

Aunque es probable que cada caso sea diferente, es indudable que la mayoría de ellos fue reclutada mediante el condicionamiento de la visa para trasladarse a EEUU, además de un pago, por la prestación del servicio.

La política migratoria de los Estados Unidos en el caso de Cuba ha sido, durante 48 años, parte de un plan general basado en el esperado efecto económico del boqueo (eufemísticamente llamado "embargo comercial") para estimular la emigración cubana, combinado esto con la negación de visas para la inmigración legal en Estados Unidos,

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were broadcasting the proclamation he read —. I was working greatly like many people around the globe.

I was in Spain on July 31. At first the press reacted with morbid fascination and then with amazement: they couldn't understand why there was so much calm and tranquility in Cuba. Then came an avalanche of opinions from the "transitionologists". Where you surprised by the reaction of the Cuban people?

—Of course, I was not surprised. The best proof is that I covered the subject in the introduction of the book, something they have also criticized me for frequently. If you remember, I say that many people speculate about what will happen in Cuba when, for any natural reason, Fidel is not here. Above all, because they compare Cuba with what happened in the Eastern European nations when the Soviet Union collapsed. And I add in the introduction that they are wrong. Nothing like this will happen in Cuba because, simply, Cuba is not an eastern country where soldiers of the Soviet Union brought the revolution. It did not rise from the roots of these societies although there were persons who wanted this revolution. In Cuba, on the other hand the Revolution was an endogenous phenomenon; it developed here, linked to its history.

“On the other hand, no matter how much people speculate about unrest here, the majority of the population supports this system. When an accident of health happens here, when, institutionally, there is a provisional transition of responsibilities, what happens is that we could predict what happens. I was not surprised, as it did not surprise you and many people. It was the most natural thing in the world.

“To speculate about the opposite, it comes from people who are deceived by their own lies. They end up believing their own lies and losing ability to make an objective analysis, to see reality. This is the country where, in 47 years, there have not been popular insurrections, like those that occurred in the Eastern countries. That is significant and cannot be explained with an argument of repression. In spite of repression, the people of Poland rose up, in the

German Democratic Republic, in Rumania and Czechoslovakia. In Cuba the reaction of the people has nothing to do with repression.

“The ‘transitionologists’ should read the book. At one point Fidel asked me: ‘Are you talking about transition?’ And I answer him: ‘Yes, of transition. Talk to me about it’. And he discusses it in a most natural manner. ‘In this country we have had to talk about it since the beginning,’ he says. ‘Because there have been 600 attempts on my life. Since the beginning we have had to think what would happen if I weren't here’. The manner this transition would follow is more than institutionalized. Therefore, the surprise was for those who did not want to know the reality.”

Is it true that you were a member of a “Castroist” cell in Tangier?

—Not really a cell, because I created the group. When I was a 12 or 13 year-old boy in 1956, I used to go to a barber in Tangier. The barber was a man who had been to Cuba many times; he was a Spaniard very fond of the Island. The magazine he set out for his clients was Bohemia. With curiosity I began to read Bohemia in its salmon-colored pages, the red chronicles relating repressions of the dictatorship. One thing led to another: I discovered the personality of Fidel Castro, the 26th of July Movement. The press did not report this yet. Cuba was not even known. It was too far away for international concerns. But, in the Institute I formed a small group of Castro sympathizers and of the 26th of July Movement. We had followed the kidnapping of Fangio, about which little was said. We followed its progress until the triumph of the Revolution which was an event covered by the international press.

Why have you said that from an early age you sympathized with this Revolution and not other?

—I lived in Tangier, Morocco and what interested me as a child — like many people of my generation — was decolonization. I was born in 1943. I do not belong to the generation whose real battle was fascism-antifascism. That was my parent's generation: my father participated in the Spanish Civil War and my mother was a union militant.

“The central battle of my generation, during its adolescence and early adulthood was colonialism-anti-colonialism. Specially the liberation of colonized countries. In the first place, about Morocco that obtained independence in 1956 after an internal battle. And, also, Algeria, a neighboring country where I have lived, that began its struggle against colonialism in 1954. When Cuba appeared in my life were in full swing with the war in Algeria. And in my school, some of my classmates were Algerian refugees in Tangier because of the repression in their country.

“Within this context, what happened in Cuba we saw it as a fight for liberation of one form of colonialism, that in this case was imperialism or neocolonialism. That is why the Cuban Revolution seemed to us as something very original — it wasn't in the Soviet style nor did was it like the Chinese revolution. It was and is unique and emerged from an historical tradition, although with Marxist-Leninist tendencies. It had the importance of Marti that, at that time, I could not identify and that gave it that gave its characteristic roots with the liberation movement of Latin America; that Fidel clearly explains in the first chapter of the book. He says that the Cuban Revolution is linked to the liberation of Latin America and the wars of independence and is inscribed along this route. And no other.”

Today Ramonet knows more about me than I do myself”, Fidel said. Is that true?

—No, not in the least. He says it because he is very generous. I have only shared a few days in his long life, in that conversation. I have tried show how I see him, his daily professional life and tried to write about it honestly and objectively. He is like that, the way he is described in the book. There is no duplicity, not one way one moment and another way another moment. I think that if one sees him regularly for a week or for ten days continuously, you are absolutely aware that that's the way he is, without hidden or different, or contrary behaviors. Of course, there are many people who know him better than me because they have known him throughout the years during his long life.

“The interest shown for the book is that, during

this long conversation, he talks about his life. A life seen from within. The book almost seems like the plot of a detective novel that is: How did this boy from Biran become Fidel Castro? How did a boy born in a small hamlet, that isn't even a town, in a rural environment and scarcely developed — without electricity, without anything—, in a relatively conservative family, educated in conservative Catholic religious schools, how, I repeat, did this boy become one of the main revolutionaries of the 20th century? That is the mystery and the thread of the conversation.”

During the presentation of the book in Spain, a writer that I greatly admire, Belen Gopegui, assured that “in the darkest days and brightest ones, the story told in this book will be there”. We Cubans well know that this story will, in fact, live on. And the book? Will this edition last, a book that will soon be in the hands of Cubans?

—I would like the book to live on and give the reader the possibility of approaching him more intimately and more personally, approach Fidel Castro. Someone who, being a very public figure, is also very reserved. A timid person who doesn't like to talk about himself. The readers are going to follow the conversation where he talks about himself, although referring to international politics, of the great politics and the Revolution. When he refers to apparently foreign issues one feels that he is, in fact, talking of himself, of his views on essential processes in which he has been involved.

“The importance of this book is this following, this closeness to one of the most marked personalities of the second half of the 20th century and early 21st. A person who is not arrogant and who often tries to reduce his own role; that does not reduce him —quite the contrary—. Someone who acknowledges that he has had doubts. Honestly, I believe that the personality and true humanism of Fidel Castro is reflected in this book.

Ignacio Ramonet is a specialist in geopolitics and international strategy and UN consultant. Currently he offers classes in La Sorbonne, Paris. Since 1999 he directs Le Monde Diplomatique.

*From <http://www.walterlippmann.com/>

LA VERDAD SOBRE LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS EN CUBA continuado...

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la muy publicitada aceptación de los inmigrantes ilegales al calor de la llamada Ley de Ajuste Cubano para la promoción de la emigración ilegal, y, finalmente, las amenazas de represalia militar en caso de que ocurra un éxodo masivo de cubanos que se dirijan al territorio de los Estados Unidos.

En los Estados Unidos, alrededor de 400 convictos han sido ejecutados desde 1990, un promedio de 35 por año o tres por mes. Cientos de ejecuciones han tenido lugar en otros países, sin contar las ejecuciones extrajudiciales o las masacres patrocinadas por los gobiernos que en algunos países son algo así como parte de la cotidianidad.

Regularmente, esto pasa sin comentarios. Aparte de infirmes detallados y declaraciones de condena por parte de organizaciones defensoras de los derechos humanos, las ejecuciones de seres humanos rara vez alcanzan las páginas de los periódicos, no obstante lo saturados que siempre están de sangre y muerte.

En contraste con la tendencia general al silencio y la indiferencia, la ejecución de tres secuestradores de un barco de pasajeros en Cuba en marzo de 2003 desató una tormenta política y mediática — con su epicentro, naturalmente, en los Estados Unidos.

Una ola de secuestro que se había desatado desde noviembre de 2002 estaba ya en pleno desarrollo. Los secuestradores estaban siendo recibidos en la Florida

como “anticomunistas luchadores por la libertad” y los aviones era confiscados.

Animados por la posición de Estados Unidos, criminales comunes habían comenzado a sumarse al festín asaltando aviones u barcos con pasajeros a bordo, poniendo en grave peligro las vidas de inocentes y creando ideales condiciones para un ataque militar de Estados Unidos contra Cuba.

Las autoridades no tenían alternativa. La ola había que detenerla.

El gobierno cubano llamo al arresto de los mercenarios que servían a los agresores y pidió el castigo por las cortes según la legislación vigente.

Esos tres terroristas sentenciados a la pena capital no eran de ninguna manera disidentes ni nada que se le parezca, eran simplemente criminal3es comunes. Delincuentes habituales, mercenarios previamente convictos en varias ocasiones. Uno de ellos había sido procesado anteriormente por crímenes violentos en 19 ocasiones.

En esos días, un alto funcionario del Departamento de Estado había declarado cínicamente que los continuados secuestros en Cuba constituían una seria amenaza para la seguridad nacional de los Estados Unidos y solicitado al gobierno cubano la adopción de todas las medidas necesarias para prevenir tales actos, como si no fueran ellos mismos los que incitaban a esos secuestros. La advertencia, unida a las deliberadas provocaciones de la Sección de Intereses estadounidenses en Cuba, eran parte de un plan preconcebido para utilizar los secuestros como excusa para un bloqueo naval y eventualmente una guerra contra Cuba.

Cuba apoya los principios de la objetividad, imparcialidad y no selectividad en el



tratamiento de los casos relacionados con derechos humanos, y el rechazo de su uso con propósitos de dominación política. Cuba rechaza la creciente tendencia de algunos países del Norte a situarse como jueces y censores de cuanto ocurre en los países del Sur, mientras tratan de esconder las violaciones de los derechos humanos que tienen lugar en sus propios territorios.

Cuba tiene un firme compromiso con la promoción y protección de los derechos humanos. No solamente ha firmado y ratificado todos los instrumentos internacionales sobre la materia sino que ha mantenido un elevado nivel de cooperación con los mecanismos internacionales para la promoción y protección de los derechos humanos universalmente. La única excepción a esta regla surge cuando Estados Unidos y/o sus aliados tratan de usar esta cuestión como arma política para sus campañas o de manera discriminatoria contra Cuba u otras naciones en desarrollo.

Los cubanos encontramos particularmente infundadas e insultantes las campañas mediáticas y diplomáticas dirigidas contra su país basadas en supuestas violaciones de los derechos humanos, porque el más estricto respeto de la integridad de cada individuo ha sido el faro de la revolución cubana y una exigencia que ha acompañado y servido a la causa revolucionaria durante los años de lucha contra la dictadora patrocinada por EEUU

de Fulgencio Batista.

Mientras las fuerzas de la tiranía, apoyadas entrenadas y asesoradas por militares de EEUU, mataban, torturaban y cometían abusos contra los detenidos sospechosos de ser revolucionarios, nosotros, los revolucionarios, respetábamos estrictamente la integridad de cada miembro de la policía gubernamental y otros militares que hacíamos prisioneros. Esta conducta acabó por introducir en las fuerzas gubernamentales una marcada disposición a rendirse a las fuerzas revolucionarias que, por su parte, era conocido que siempre resistían hasta la muerte.

El estricto respeto de los derechos humanos del enemigo ha sido probablemente uno de los más efectivos recursos en la lucha de los revolucionarios cubanos por la autodeterminación y la justicia social. Y los cubanos estamos orgullosos de esto.

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By Ivan Drury

On Sunday October 22nd, a group of activists in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) occupied an empty and derelict hotel, named it the “Northstar Squat” and declared it a protest for social housing. The protest-squat lasted for only two days, coming to an end with the removal of the occupiers from the building one-by-one in handcuffs

The protest-squat was organized by the Anti-Poverty Committee (APC), the Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA) and other activists, social service and advocacy groups that are active in the Downtown Eastside. The occupation part of the squat helped to expose the crisis of homelessness and the need for social housing in the DTES and was made up of just a half-dozen activists. Unlike the Woodward Squat of 2002, the actual squat-occupation of the Northstar was closed to homeless people and other supporters from joining in. The squatters dropped a massive orange banner from the top floor of the abandoned hotel that said, “Homes Now!” – and with this flag flown from the open wound of homelessness on a street lined with empty buildings, they drew the attention of the media, an all sorts of public attention follows; and the local government responded.

The day that the squat began, Sam Sullivan, the mayor of Vancouver said, “It’s accepted by most observers that the real responsibility for housing

of the capitalist ruling class for the homeless, saying, “It’s also time for politicians at all levels to work together to provide solutions. [...] This will require the feds, the province and the city to work together. But if they continue to pass the buck instead, the prospect of more squats unfortunately appears increasingly likely.”

Crisis, “Solutions” – and failures The housing and homelessness crisis in Vancouver is now well recognized by all sections of society in Vancouver. In part this is because of the readily available and obvious evidence in the form of homeless people on the streets, and in part thanks to warnings of impending disaster and reports like the recent Pivot Legal Society report on homelessness “Cracks in the Foundation”. (See Fire This Time Vol. 3 Is. 5 for more on this report and the homeless crisis in Vancouver) With the revelation of this problem, the politicians “solutions” have been quickly prescribed.

The first of these new remedies came from the Provincial government – the same government that killed necessary social housing construction by cutting all funding for social housing starts when they came into office in 2001. On October 3rd 2006, Housing Minister Rich Coleman announced a new program called ‘Housing Matters BC’ and boldly declared in his unveiling speech, “We are making a huge shift in British Columbia today,” and with a straight face he added, “one that

is provincial and federal governments.” And, “I hope that the [squatters] can work positively with us to solve these problems.”

The Vancouver Sun, in an editorial the day after the squatters were led from the building in handcuffs, wrapped up the “sympathies”

starts to say we actually believe in people.” The plan? To offer rental subsidies to the poorest working families in BC to the tune of, according to the CBC on October 3rd, “a family of five living in the Vancouver area with an annual income of less than \$20,000 and a monthly rent of \$875 would receive about \$110

APC: HOMES NOW! SOCIAL HOUSING NOW!

Squat Re-Focuses public attention on homelessness & social housing

in subsidies.” The problems with this “solution” should be obvious. Which “Vancouver” does Rich Coleman know where a five bedroom house or apartment could be rented for \$875? According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), the average rent for a *one bedroom* apartment in Vancouver is \$837!

This subsidy will do nothing to help alleviate the greatest problem facing people and families who live in homes they cannot afford: insecurity of housing via the ravages of the market. This subsidy plan not only leaves the real estate market intact, it buttresses the boom and bust of this chaotic market. It is a band-aid that that will fall off when brushed by the slightest renovation re-development. Oh... and people on welfare are not eligible for this program.

In this same “Housing Matters BC” strategy, Coleman also revealed his governments promise to commit \$10.7 million to the construction of 450 subsidized housing units for the homeless. When Rich Coleman called this prescription “oversubscribed” in his October 3rd statement,



Anti Poverty Committee squat action. Vancouver BC, Oct 22, 2006.



Eviction via tear gas. Squatter in Victoria BC, Oct 23, 2006.

he failed to mention that this “new goal” fails to meet the government’s own official target of constructing 800 non-market housing units a year for four years. This 450 unit promise without timeline fails to meet even *one* year out of the four year target by nearly half.

In the face of this abstention from seriously approaching the housing crisis by the Federal or Provincial governments, the Municipal government in Vancouver has improvised its own “solutions” – like the creation of high-density 100-square-foot housing units with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. Piggybacking this city hall motion to basically create more Single Resident Occupancy (SRO) units, city council has also tabled a motion on SRO conversions into tourist hotels. Hotel conversions created a massive rise in homelessness in the build-up to Expo 86 in Vancouver, and Council is anxious to avoid adding any more dynamite to the market explosives that are already destroying the stock of homes that are affordable for working and especially poor people. But their efforts are hardly a solution.

We need social housing – not “sympathy”

There is a reason that the “sympathies” of the Vancouver Sun, and all three levels of government ring hollow. The APC squat took place at the close of the Canada-wide

“homelessness awareness week” and the politicians that responded to the squat did so with “awareness” of the homeless on their minds. The Vancouver Sun editorial waxed, “The weather is getting colder and wetter. For those without shelter, many of whom suffer from mental illness or addictions or both, this is not an inconvenience; it’s life-threatening,” and called for a continued moratorium on the conversion of residential hotels.

But the problem is not that there are not enough homeless shelters or squalid rodent and insect infested hotel rooms, the problem lies in the real estate market, in the capitalist boom-and-bust / supply-and-demand economy that is in the throes of an international crisis. The problem lies in the rule and law of private property that demands to sit empty until “profitable” use can be made of it. This system does not care that people sleep on the street or that children are hungry in Afghanistan or Vancouver. The so-called “solutions” proposed by these governments that propose to “care” about the poor and homeless are only flailing maneuvers of damage control, to minimize the visible, negative effects – economically and from the perspective of the capitalists – of the growing numbers of homeless and under-housed people in Vancouver.

Mayor Sam Sullivan cannot mediate a solution to this problem, and no level of

government can be asked politely to create social housing. The problem is not either contained in the DTES. Homeless, and underhoused, and people and families at risk of homelessness, and people paying far too much rent for far too little with far too little pay, all exist in all parts of Vancouver, Surrey, Burnaby, Richmond, and everywhere in the Lower Mainland. In 2001, more than 56,000 households in Vancouver paid more than 50% of their income to rent. Ratios of rent-to-wages in all of the Lower Mainland have only widened since then.

Social housing is part of the solution

The cancer of homelessness and poverty is built into the capitalist system. It can only be confronted by a united and active class of working, poor, and oppressed people mobilized in a mass collective movement to tear this precious private property from the hands of the greedy landlords and convert it into the homes that every body needs to live.

The first step is to raise awareness of homelessness as an issue; and then as a struggle that needs to be fought by all working and poor people. From there we must build a movement of these same people that is capable of tackling the crisis of poverty and homelessness by taking it out at its knees – private property and capitalism as a whole – and take down the governments that stand in the way.

HANDS OFF KOREA!

By Ivan Drury

On October 8th North Korea announced that they had successfully completed a nuclear weapons test. On October 9th, the new attacks on North Korea began.

In a short statement issued the day after the test's announcement, US President Bush warned, "The United States condemns this provocative act. Once again North Korea has defied the will of the international community, and the international community will respond."

By October 10th the US had been joined in their condemnation by all the partners of the "diplomatic" 6 party talks aimed at stomping out Pyongyang's nuclear program – South Korea, Japan, Russia and even North Korea's traditional ally, China. Backed by an international chorus of

condemnation from throughout the European Union and Canada too, the White House announced their intent to attack. On October 11th, US Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice said that North Korea's pursuit of nukes meant that it would face "international condemnation and international sanctions unlike anything they have faced before."

Canada lines up for another Korean War

Jumping into step, Canadian foreign affairs minister Peter MacKay supported the sanctions initiative and wouldn't rule out "sending the navy" to enforce a blockade. He said, on October 14th, "Well, we're not there at this point but let's not forget that we are a Pacific nation and we do have a direct interest in ensuring that nuclear proliferation, a further arms race if you will in the region could have dire impact on the Pacific coast of Canada." Prime Minister Stephen Harper said "[t]his irresponsible and dangerous act seriously undermines both regional peace and stability, and global efforts to halt the spread of nuclear weapons." He later added that the test was intended as a threat to Canada and all Canada's allies and that the international community must make a "meaningful and substantial response."

Using a weapon from the "Patriot Act" arsenal, the US labeled "Banco Delta Asia," a bank in Macao "a primary money laundering concern" for Pyongyang. According to the New York Times on October 11th, the US

"declared that any bank doing business on American soil – virtually every big bank in the world – could not do business with [Banco Delta Asia]."

The stage was set for a lynching of "Kim Jung Il's one-man dictatorship". The New York Times called for immediate action from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Japan banned all North Korean imports and streamlined their government's discussions on re-arming for "self-defense". When the US brought their motion forward in the UNSC on October 14th, resolution 1718 passed with hardly any discussion and no opposition whatsoever. Suddenly, the 56 year old US embargo on North Korea has been extended – in at least a limited way – internationally.

"Provocation?" or Self-Defense...

According to the wisdom of George

W. Bush, Condoleeza Rice, Peter MacKay, Stephen Harper, and a handful of others, North Korea's nuclear weapons test was a provocation against the rest of the world. Pyongyang does not see it that way, and neither will history – which tends to see developments through a longer view than in days or weeks.

Korea was divided into North and South by imposition of the imperialist powers – and especially the US – after World War II. In one of the first military operations of the newly constituted United Nations, Canada participated in the imperialist war to hold back Korean self-determination, maintain the division of Korea and hold a seat for imperialist influence and interests on the East Asian doorstep of the USSR and China. In this war, Canada deployed 26,000 soldiers and lost 516.

The Korean war never officially ended, despite a ceasefire treaty signed in 1953. This treaty saw the maintenance of US trade sanctions on North Korea, and the "permanent" stationing of 30,000-plus US troops in South Korea. Despite agreements to the contrary, the US has maintained a presence of nuclear weapons equipped warships in waters around North Korea.

Faced with more than 50 years of aggression, encirclement and threats, North Korea's development of nuclear weapons should not come as a surprise

to anyone.

Who's got Nukes?

The "six party talks" led by the US with the aim of "stopping North Korean nuclear proliferation" is not a "nuclear disarmament" campaign. Really, all the talk against North Korea's nuclear program has nothing to do with nukes, and everything to do with North Korea.

On October 3rd, when announcing their plans to test nuclear weapons, the foreign ministry of Pyongyang explained, "the US extreme threat of nuclear war and sanctions and pressure compel the DPRK to conduct a nuclear test... as a corresponding measure for defense." Pyongyang pointed their finger directly at the US through their base of operations in South Korea and said that they were willing and hopeful to "make positive efforts to denuclearize

creation

Japan is a former rival imperialist power to the US but is now a close associate and ally that broke with more than 50 years of "pacifism" to send troops to Iraq. Just weeks before North Korea's nuclear test, a new Japanese prime minister, Shinzo Abe, was elected with the express assignment of re-building Japan's military capacity and influence in East Asia. This move, completely backed and encouraged by the US, directly targets North Korea and China and spells the re-awakening of aggressive Japanese imperialism.

An editorial in the *Investor's Business Daily* on October 9th said, "A nuclear test by Pyongyang may lead to the last gasp of Japanese pacifism. The transformation of Japan from Asia's Switzerland to Asia's Britain - a strategic partner with teeth - is underway."

North Korea's test has been carried out against the backdrop of the re-arming of Japan, the bloodlust of the US war machine as brutally demonstrated in Iraq and Afghanistan, and, of course, the straightforward targeting of North Korea in George Bush's infamous "Axis of Evil" speech and consistently since then. For North Korea, the question of nuclear weapons is a question of self-determination, self-defense, and survival.

Of course, this is not enough to stop the US from destroying North Korea with its unlimited supply of nuclear bombs. Condoleeza Rice has been clear about where the US stands in the advancement of Japan against North Korea and China. On October 18th



South Korean rally against US threats to North Korea.



the peninsula." For North Korea, what is missing is that, the weaker they are, the more their security as a sovereign nation compromised – because of the very real threat that the US poses against them.

The new nuclear renaissance in Asia did not begin with North Korea's tests either. There is no area on earth that is more familiar with the horror of nuclear weapons than East Asia. After all, Japan is the only victim in history of a full-on nuclear attack; and the US is the only mass-murderer in history to use nuclear bombs. Besides the presence of nuclear weapons capable and equipped US warships around the Korean peninsula, the US also has upwards of 50,000 troops stationed in Japan. On top of the US encirclement of North Korea through permanent bases on land held since previous wars in Japan and South Korea, Japan itself has spent the last year writhing over the question of nuclear re-arming.

Arms race in East Asia – a US

she assured Japan's foreign minister, "The United States has the will and the capability to meet the full range – and I underscore the full range – of its deterrent and security commitments to Japan."

Sanctions = preparation for war?

According to US undersecretary for political affairs Nicholas Burns, United Nations Security Council resolution 1718 are "very tough sanctions. They're among the toughest ever imposed on any country by the United Nations."

According to CTV News on October 15th, the main points of resolution 1718 are:

- That North Korea immediately return to the table for six party talks designed to convince Pyongyang to dismantle its nuclear program.

- It orders Pyongyang not to import or export material or equipment that

Continues on Page 12

HANDS OFF KOREA

continued

Continued From Page 11

could be used to make nuclear weapons or ballistic missiles, and orders all nations to ban travel and freeze the assets of anyone who actively supports North Korea's weapons program.

- Restricts the import of major military machinery such as tanks and combat aircraft to North Korea.

- Allows the inspection of cargo entering or exiting North Korea to prevent the smuggling of weapons of mass destruction.

Pyongyang's ambassador to the UN responded to resolution 1718 and then walked out of the room: "The DPRK totally rejects the unjustifiable resolution. It is gangster like for the Security Council to have adopted today a coercive resolution whole neglecting the nuclear threat and moves for sanctions and pressure of the United States against the DPRK."

Although the implementation of the sanctions has not yet been worked out, the use of resolution 1718 has already begun. As of October 26th South Korea's

Unification minister Lee Jong-seok stated that they would take steps against the North beyond the wording of the UNSC sanctions. "The government will ban the passage and stay [in the South] of persons and their family designated [to be involved in North Korean weapons production by the UNSC] sanction committee." According to the New York Times, "Lee said Seoul would also invoke a maritime agreement with the North to search North Korean ships that make port calls in the South."

At the same time, Japan has announced that they will refuse access of any North Korean ships to

their ports, are banning all North Korean imports, will deny entry to Japan to all North Korean citizens, and will assist the US in naval inspections of North Korean ships.

China has been hesitant to carry out the inspections "like a quarantine, searching every ship going in and out of a country [because] most countries consider that an act of war." But regardless of Beijing's hesitations of helping to advance the US war against their supposed allies, they have also begun inspections of North Korean cargo passing through their shared 1,400 Km border.

In fact, UNSC resolution 1718 grants the US and their new "coalition-of-the-willing" in formation to impose a virtually unlimited naval blockade on North Korea. Pyongyang has very accurately called this blockade an "act of war". Certainly if any country on earth attempted to stop and search US ships on the open seas – and seize whatever cargo they determined to be "military" or "luxury goods" – the US would consider this an act of war. It is only the hypocrisy of US imperialist rule and the ferocity of their own 10,000 piece strong nuclear arsenal that allows the US to hold such double standards against all oppressed nations in the world.

In the days that followed the passing of resolution 1718, US officials made



Anti US occupation billboard near Pyongyang train station, North Korea, reads: "You've No Reason to be There! Get Out!?"



Protesting US Troops in S. Korea

it clear that they are seeking to form a NATO-esque "security" alliance in Asia, and that they see the blockade on North Korea as a step in the formation of this alliance. Condoleezza Rice said, "We finally have the right coalition of states to put enormous pressure on North Korea to reverse its course. We believe that there may be other steps that will be necessary given North Korea's behaviour."

STOP ALL ATTACKS ON NORTH KOREA!

In the days leading up to North Korea's nuclear test, Bush and company stated over and over that they will not tolerate a nuclear North Korea. In the days

following Pyongyang's nuclear test, they changed their tune... slightly. In the New York Times on October 19th George Bush was quoted as saying that if the US learned that North Korea was about to transfer a nuclear weapon to Iran... "I'd just say it's a grave consequence."

The US's ramped up actions against North Korea, culminating in their UN approved naval blockade sanctions, are a declaration of war. Not only a declaration of war against North Korea, but a declaration of the extension of the era of war and occupation of East Asia, using North Korea as the flint to spark the fire. The arming and assembly of a new "coalition of the willing" is a tragic omen of wars to come. It would be a

stretch to state or assume that the US is preparing to invade North Korea today, but Washington's so-far successful maneuvers to divide China and Russia from North Korea while uniting Japan and South Korea in a blood-pact is a blow against the unity of oppressed nations against imperialism.

The presence of US bases, weapons, and soldiers in South Korea, Japan and in the seas throughout the region are the greatest threat to all people and nations in Asia. The US alone maintains nearly 100,000 troops in the region and enough nuclear firepower to destroy all of Asia, killing literally billions of people. The US is the threat in Asia, not North Korea.

The anti-war movement, and all working class, progressive, and peace loving people must see these "sanctions" against North Korea for what they are: a declaration of war on North Korea. They are also a threat against Iran and all oppressed nations that must prepare to defend themselves against the very real threat of war and occupation that is posed against them by imperialism, and especially US imperialism.

US Hands off North Korea!

End the Sanctions / Blockade on North Korea!

US out of South Korea and Asia!

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El humanismo verdadero de Fidel

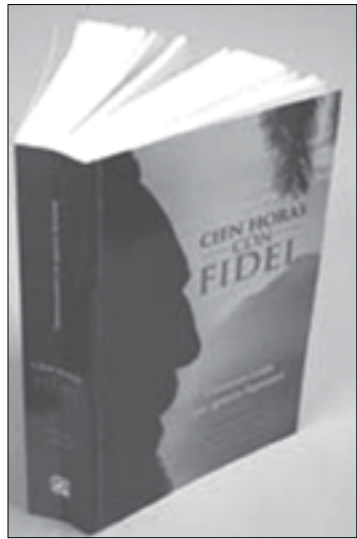
Conversamos con Ignacio Ramonet, autor de “Cien horas con Fidel”

Por: Rosa Miriam Elizalde

Juventudrebelde.cu

CIEN HORAS CON FIDEL

—El pasado 16 de mayo usted presentó la primera edición del libro, que tenía unas 700 páginas. Pocos meses después, esta segunda edición tiene exactamente 800 páginas. ¿No debería llamarse ahora este volumen Más de Cien horas con Fidel?



—En realidad, las horas que yo pasé con él son las mismas. Lo que ha aumentado entre la primera y la segunda edición son las horas que Fidel ha pasado trabajando sobre sus mismas respuestas. La diferencia entre las dos ediciones es que en la primera él solo había podido ver rápidamente el volumen por falta de tiempo y por sus obligaciones. En la presentación de la primera edición, él mismo se dio cuenta, al releer el libro, que era

unos párrafos muy personales, muy emotivos, sobre su mamá, que no se encuentran en declaraciones y libros anteriores a este.

«Otro añadido importante está en el capítulo de la Crisis de Octubre, donde incorporó a su respuesta las cartas que él le envió a Nikita Jruschov. No son inéditas, pero no todo el mundo las conocía. Él las entrega para que la gente pueda entender mejor las circunstancias en que se produjo una de las crisis más graves que haya vivido el mundo en los últimos 50 años».

Absolutamente inéditas son las cartas que Fidel le envió a Saddam Hussein, y que aparecen por vez primera aquí.

—Cuando hablamos de la crisis de la guerra en Iraq, él me dijo: «Yo hasta le mandé un mensaje a Saddam Hussein, incitándolo a demostrar que no tenía armas de destrucción masiva y a que evitara el ataque». Eso aparece en la primera edición. En esta versión figuran, por primera vez y de manera integral, dos cartas que le envió después de la invasión de Iraq a Kuwait, a inicios de los '90.

«También, está la versión más completa que haya dado él del golpe de Estado de abril de 2002, contra Chávez en Venezuela».

Usted tuvo una gran primicia, porque es la primera vez que Fidel hace el relato detallado de los hechos relacionados con el golpe de estado en Venezuela y el retorno del presidente Hugo Chávez a Miraflores.

—Exacto. En la primera edición se entendía que él había participado, pero con muchos menos elementos. Mientras que aquí reproduce en

libro sin una opinión decidida, a favor o en contra de la Revolución, encuentra en las respuestas de Fidel una argumentación. No se excluyen muchos aspectos de la experiencia cubana que pueden considerarse problemáticos, a los que él siempre da una respuesta, a mi juicio, honesta y documentada».

Entre mis notas del día en que se presentó la primera edición del libro, en el Palacio de las Convenciones, aparece esta frase de Fidel: «No fue una entrevista complaciente, a pesar de que las sabandijas lo han acusado de ello». También lo acusaron de que la entrevista era falsa, las fotos eran trucadas y de otras cosas. ¿Por qué se produjo esta reacción?

—En Europa existe la tradición de que, antes de salir el libro a la venta, si este es considerado interesante, los periódicos le piden al editor un extracto, que se publica días antes de la aparición del texto en librerías. Un gran periódico español (El País) le pidió la autorización al editor. Se publicó un fragmento amplio del último capítulo, el XXVI, que se llama «Después de Fidel qué». El documento iba ilustrado con una fotografía de la entrevista, en la que estamos Fidel y yo, conversando. Allí él habla de lo que podría ocurrir el día en que deje de tener la responsabilidad que tiene en Cuba. Apenas salió este fragmento, inmediatamente empezaron las críticas hostiles.

«Lo primero que se dijo fue: “Es una falsa entrevista. Ramonet no ha podido entrevistar a Fidel Castro, porque él lleva semanas muerto”. Segundo: “Es falsa, porque una parte de las respuestas

ataques verbales, sino también represalias. En esos días usted fue expulsado de La voz de Galicia, junto a Ramón Chao y el director de ese diario.

—Exacto. La simple publicación de la entrevista con Fidel me valió que me cerraran el contrato en ese periódico, donde yo publicaba una crónica semanal. A pesar de que era muy conocido que estaba trabajando en ese libro, pues me pasé más de tres años sobre ese proyecto. Junto conmigo, salió del diario mi amigo Ramón Chao, que tenía una posición solidaria. Fue una represalia, claro.

Maravillas de la libertad de prensa...

—Se da continuamente esta situación. Acusan a Cuba de tal o cual abuso, pero en realidad el abuso yo lo he padecido, porque he sido víctima de censura, en particular en España, simplemente por

a revisar el libro completamente, porque no lo había podido hacer a fondo, como quería, él se dedicó a esa tarea con mucha energía, con mucho entusiasmo, y yo, por supuesto, estaba al tanto. Teníamos proyectado presentar el libro en ocasión de su cumpleaños, y yo iba a venir antes para trabajar juntos en el avance de esa corrección, de esa reescritura.

«Espero que el esfuerzo que él hizo para escribir el libro no haya sido en parte la causa de su fatiga, de su enfermedad. Lo espero, porque me sentiría culpable. Conozco, también, porque él lo ha dicho, que apenas empezó a recuperarse consagró mucha energía al libro. A pesar de que su estado era de cuidado, como el de cualquiera después de una operación como la que él padeció. El quería terminar a toda costa este libro para que estuviese listo para la Cumbre de los No Alineados».



Fidel Castro.

necesario añadir precisiones que solo él podía hacer.

No solo precisiones. Hay también importantes novedades.

—Son precisiones alargadas. Por ejemplo, voy a citar tres o cuatro que son importantes añadidos, porque como dice usted entre la primera y la segunda edición hay casi cien páginas de diferencia, sin contar las mil y una modificaciones que ha hecho, más bien de estilo. En la primera versión, se había conservado el tono conversacional, mientras que ahora le ha querido dar un carácter más escrito, porque se trata, lógicamente, de un libro.

¿Qué modificaciones hay? ¿Qué añadidos?

—En la primera parte ha incluido múltiples modificaciones que describen mejor aún la infancia de un niño en el campo de la provincia del Oriente de Cuba entre los años 20 y 30. En la primera edición había un desequilibrio, que era un poco culpa mía, porque le hice muchas preguntas sobre el padre y pocas sobre la madre. Ahora añado

detalle las conversaciones telefónicas que sostuvo con Chávez, con diferentes generales, etc., y se ve muy bien cómo él mismo vivió ese golpe de Estado. Creo que su intervención fue decisiva para que los hechos cambiasen en Venezuela en aquellos días.

Usted ha hecho énfasis en que este libro de entrevistas no es un interrogatorio. ¿Qué quiere decir exactamente?

—Muchas personas en Europa, en España especialmente, me han dicho: «Usted no ha sido muy crítico, no le hace las preguntas molestas». He contestado que aquí están casi todas las preguntas sobre aspectos que se pueden discutir y algunos controvertidos en esta larga experiencia de casi 50 años de la Revolución cubana. Lo que no están hechas con un tono agresivo, ni con un tono de interrogatorio. El interrogatorio es para la policía. Un periodista no interroga. Un periodista hace preguntas, y la responsabilidad de las respuestas la tiene el entrevistado.

«Quería que tuviésemos una conversación. Lo he dicho otras veces: él jamás me planteó ninguna condición. Él se dejó llevar por donde yo decidí conducir la entrevista. Y no se me ocurrió jamás el interrogatorio, porque yo sabía que cualquier pregunta, por delicada que fuera, él la iba a contestar, con argumentos serenos y de peso. Y fue lo que ocurrió.

«Cualquier persona que lea este

está sacada de discursos”. Y tercero: “La fotografía es un montaje; se ha pegado una fotografía de Ramonet sentado en una silla, con otra, de otro momento, donde está Fidel”».

«Sin salir aún el libro, ya había un debate. La prensa, particularmente la de Miami, comenzó a especular. Titularon: “Periodista publica falsa entrevista con Fidel Castro”, y ese tipo de cosas. Cuando salió el libro, se dieron cuenta de que era muy difícil inventarse una entrevista de 700 páginas. Hubiera sido un trabajo extremadamente complicado. Y por otra parte, yo siempre expliqué que Fidel me autorizó —en algunas preguntas donde su respuesta era “Eso ya lo he contestado en tal artículo o tal discurso”— a reproducir esas ideas, de lo cual estuvo al tanto y en principio revisó.

«Las fotografías eran tan evidentemente reales, que se podían contrastar con una serie de documentales para la televisión, con siete horas de filmación, que se difundieron en muchos canales en Europa antes de la salida del libro. «En España se vendió el libro en grandes almacenes y librerías, acompañado de un DVD, con una hora de la entrevista. Se ve a Fidel dando las respuestas que estaban en el periódico. No hay trucos.

«Todos estos ataques, que no me sorprendieron, porque siempre que se habla de Cuba hay polémica, acabaron por derrumbarse. El libro ha circulado con mucho éxito».

Pero no solo hubo

hacer mi trabajo de periodista. Este es el libro de un periodista. ¿Es necesario este libro? Sí, es necesario. De Fidel Castro y de Cuba se habla mucho, todo el tiempo, pero nunca se le da la palabra.

«En encuentros con lectores en España he conversado con gente que no necesariamente tiene una postura favorable a la Revolución cubana, y me ha dicho: “Por fin hemos podido ver los argumentos de Fidel Castro, y son sólidos”.

«Fidel Castro es una de las personas más censuradas en los medios de comunicación: se habla de él, pero no se le da la palabra. Eso no es correcto. Me parece que lo normal es que un periodista le dé la palabra a quien no la tiene. Si a esa persona además se le critica o se le hacen reproches, lo lógico es que pueda explicarse».

Fidel ha estado trabajando duramente en el libro, antes y después de la operación. ¿Ha seguido usted al tanto de la reescritura?

—Constantemente nos hemos estado comunicando, a través de los asistentes de Fidel. Desde el día de la presentación en que él se comprometió

Fue su regalo especial para los Jefes de Estado...

—Ese esfuerzo es admirable. Testimonia el carácter de la persona. A pesar de que estaba disminuido físicamente, por la operación clara, su energía la consagró a trabajar, de manera muy seria. Cada uno podrá comparar la primera edición con la segunda, y verá las miles de modificaciones que hizo. Cumplió lo prometido, y el libro salió a tiempo.

¿Cuándo y cómo se enteró de que su entrevistado había sido sometido a una operación muy delicada y su vida corría peligro?

—Fíjese, yo estaba en aquel momento bastante aislado. Hacía senderismo en Los Alpes, con mi esposa y mis hijos. Había cortado el ordenador, el televisor y el teléfono —bueno, el teléfono no, ya uno no vive sin él. Pero estaba en una zona tan alta y tan aislada, que el teléfono celular no tenía cobertura. Iba por un senderito y de pronto milagrosamente mi teléfono sonó. Era Radio Caracol, de Bogotá, Colombia. Y me dicen:

continuado en la página 16



By Tamara Hansen

The Conservative government has proclaimed its cut to funding for the Status of Women agency and completely eliminated the Court Challenges Program.

Announcing a severe cut of 38.5% of the agency's budget, removing "women's equality" from the goals of the agency,



Conservative Government of Canada Says to Women: "Be Good Girls, Be Quiet"

pulling all funding for advocacy, lobbyists, or general research around women's issues, and finally chopping the head off of the Court Challenges Program, this announcement was a big attack on women in Canada.

Who are these groups? The three main focuses of the Status of Women are, "improving women's economic autonomy and well-being, eliminating systemic violence against women and children, and advancing women's human

rights." They do this by offering funding to different groups working on women's issues. The Court Challenges Program of Canada provides financial assistance to court cases that advance language and equality rights guaranteed under the Constitution of Canada.

Why is this an attack on women?

First, the Status of Women agency will no longer demand equality for women, but instead will work to "facilitate women's participation in Canadian society by addressing their economic, social and cultural situation through Canadian organizations."

Secondly, because the Status of Women Minister, Bev Oda, believes that the government of Canada has spent enough money on researching women's problems and has not done enough to solve these problems. She says, "We can all articulate and identify the issues [facing women], which I think has been clearly done for many many years... What we're saying is now's the time to perform actions."

Honestly, we agree with you Ms. Oda-actions speak louder than words- but what kind of action do you expect us to believe you will perform with 38.5% of your budget cut?

Oda explains that the Conservatives are on the move, according to her, "unlike the Liberal government who received multiple reports and recommendations and did nothing." Somehow we doubt that any of the reports on the status of women in Canada recommended taking money AWAY from women's rights advocacy and research groups.

... Well except maybe one:

"REAL Women is especially pleased that the Status of Women's budget will be reduced by \$5 million in these cutbacks. This is a good start, and we hope that the Status of Women will eventually be eliminated entirely." By the way, who are REAL Women? A right-wing lobby group, which does not believe in: easier divorce legislation (because it increases the number of divorces), women's right to choose abortion, or affirmative action for women in the work place. This is who the government wants to listen to about facilitating "women's participation in Canadian society"?

Bloc Quebecois MP Maria Mouran's

reply to Bev Oda and her cuts was, "your judgment, guided by your conservative ideology, is that systemic discrimination doesn't exist. In other words: fend for yourselves."

What is the situation of women in Canada?

It is true that report after report that comes out reestablishing many of the same facts. These facts show that today in Canada, women continue to be systemically discriminated against. Is cutting funding the government of Canada's way of improving the situation?

The most recent Statistics Canada report on women from 2005 explains these facts:

1) In 2001, 20% of all families with children were single-parent female-headed families.

2) Single-parent families headed by women have, by far, the lowest incomes of all family types in Canada.

3) In 2003, single-parent families headed by women had an average income of only 38% of the figure for double-parent families and less than 60% that of single-parent families headed by men.

4) In 2003, the average annual pre-tax income of women was just 62% the figure for men.

According to the BC Federation of Labour, "Women in Canada still only earn 72.5 cents for every dollar earned by a man."

How is this a move to silence women?

"The only reason the Conservatives are making this move is to silence women from drawing attention to these cuts and the Conservative's disastrous policy decisions for women."

- Angela Schira, Secretary-Treasurer of the BC Federation of Labour.

In a recent article in the Winnipeg Free Press, journalist Frances Russell argues that these cuts are an important mark in the government of Canada's neo-conservative, anti-democratic, anti-women agenda. Russell says that Harper and a fellow group of University of Calgary graduates, "follow the teachings of German-American political philosopher Leo Straus."

Russell goes further saying, "University of Calgary law professor Kathleen Mahoney, known internationally for her work on equality issues, says another Straussian diktat is that women must be kept inferior and certainly can never be part of the intellectual governing elite. Maintaining women's inequality drives

the opposition to abortion, Mahoney continues. Once women control their own reproduction, they can't easily be held subservient to the male power structure."

What are the conservatives spending money on?

The 2006 Budget presents:

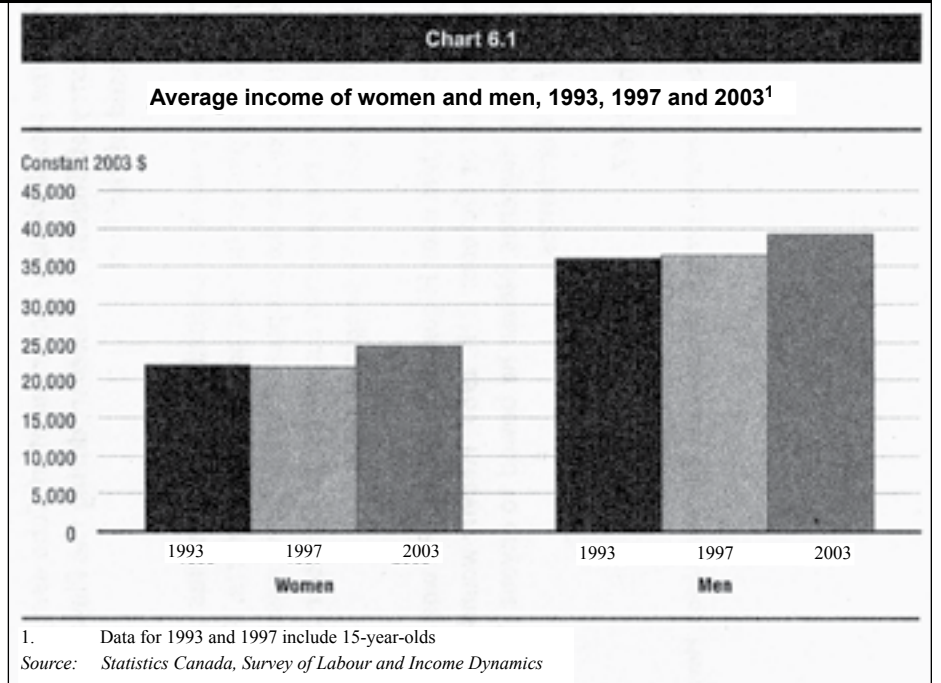
-\$20 billion in tax relief over two years.

-A one-point reduction to the GST.

-The Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) - Canadian parents receive a monthly cheque of \$100, for each child under six.

meant that women were dependant on their partners to provide them with money, food and resources for life.

Women in Canada have begun to break that cycle. We have fought for the right to vote, we have fought for our right to choose abortion, we have fought for our right to divorce and leave our partners, we have fought against violence against women, and we have fought for equal pay to men. We have even won many of the fights we have waged. However, the win is always bittersweet because after hundreds of years of fighting for equality, it is still one of our central demands. The government of Canada is still leaving



-Expanded eligibility for Canada Student Loans.

-\$1.1 billion extra (\$5.3 billion over five years) to the Canadian Forces

This budget proudly announces more than twice as much tax relief as new spending. What is happening to social spending? Who benefits from social spending? Will cuts to social spending help reduce the gap between rich and poor? Men and women? 'Canadians' and immigrants and refugees? Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada? We don't think so.

Women Unite!

For centuries women were only child bearers. Women raised children without pay or income, meaning the government did not have to pay for childcare initiatives or pre-schooling. This also

women behind.

Women in Canada have a long way to go in fighting to protect and advance their equal rights to men. We must oppose all attacks by the government of Canada on programs aimed to protect and advance the rights of women. We must also expose the anti-women agenda of this right-wing government. A better world is possible, but it will not come through any of these political parties, for sure not through Harper's right wing government. Women's rights have always been something that we must unite to win for ourselves.

Women Unite, Lets Fight For Our Rights!

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What We Have Seen & Learned in Cuba!

Eleven Vancouver Activists Bring Friendship & Solidarity to Cuba



Pastors for Peace Caravan

By Sophie Ziner, Alison Bodine & Noah Fine

Over 50 people who gathered at the Mt Pleasant Neighborhood House on Saturday September 9th left with a new twinkle in their eyes. That evening, ten of eleven (one brigadista was still in Cuba) young solidarity activists from Vancouver presented a glimpse of the life changing experience they all had this summer, traveling to Cuba. The event was organized by Vancouver Community in Solidarity with Cuba-VCSC.

Seven of the participants had traveled with the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade, and three with the Pastors for

Solidarity with Cuba, the group which organized the event. "Because Cuba is a place that shows us that a better world is possible." The event is sure to have inspired even more travelers for 2007!

Summary by Alison: Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba

Sophie, Nicole and I (Alison) joined the 17th Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba June 17th in Vancouver, looking down the road from a yellow school bus, to the Cascades, the Rocky Mountains, the US/Mexico border and in the distance, Cuba. We spent 2 weeks in the US on a bus full of young people, students, Cuban-



Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade

meetings were arranged for us with Cuban government officials to discuss healthcare, education, the incredible women's movement. We also discussed and learned about the US Blockade against Cuba and breaking through the lies constructed by the US government about Cuba.

A meeting with the families of the 5 Cuban Heroes was organized where we heard from the mothers, wives, daughters, sisters and brothers of these 5 brave



Brigadista, Janine Solanki, doing volunteer work in the fields in Cuba. Aug 2006.

Peace Caravan to Cuba, and all compared and contrasted their experiences traveling to Cuba for a month this summer.

Presenters explored what they saw and what they learned about the revolutionary history

Americans and activists, all of them on the caravan to stand against the unjust and criminal blockade on Cuba.

The first victory of the trip was at the Canada/US border where we were sent along our way

On the reverse challenge we crossed the border back into the US, openly declaring that we had all traveled to Cuba, but refusing to answer any of the US border officials' interrogations. The questioning took many hours, but all of us made it back into the US and to Vancouver, full of inspiration and ideas for continuing to defend Cuba and the gains of the revolution.

Summary by Noah: Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade

Every year for the past 14 years, people from all across Canada have gathered to learn, share, and volunteer in Cuba.

This summer 50 people, mostly young, from many different backgrounds in Canada traveled to Cuba to experience the country in a way that can only be experienced on the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade. The theme of this year's brigade was the history of the Cuban Revolution.

With the tour organized by the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), the travelers from Canada were able to learn about every aspect of life in Cuba. We were taught the history of Cuba starting from the great social justice revolt led by Jose Marti against Spanish colonialism, the triumph of the current revolution in 1959, to the many gains celebrated today in Cuba because of the revolution. Many different and exciting

men held illegally in US prisons. With the truest of compassion they were thanked by the Brigade for their tremendous struggle to free the 5 heroes from the US. We also scaled the Sierra Maestra mountain range, to where Fidel, Che, Camillo, and many of the initial revolutionary fighters for the great advancements present in Cuba today lived and fought before the revolution.

Each year, in the spirit of Ernesto Che Guevara, the Brigade takes part in volunteer work alongside Cuban people. This year the work was done on a farm that supplied

food to a nearby art school. The people on the Brigade had the incredible honor of working with students of this school ranging from 15-18 years old who had volunteered their summer to work with us.

If you are looking to experience much more educational and exciting experience in Cuba, the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade is the trip of a lifetime. You can truly understand the greatness of the Cuban people and of the process of the Cuban revolution on this trip.



Pastors for Peace press conference prior to border crossing, July 2006.


of Cuba, about the huge gains Cuba has made in human rights, health care, education, science and technology, social services, agriculture. The also shared what they learned about democracy in Cuba, and about the effects of the cruel and immoral blockade of Cuba by the US. Through stories that were sometimes funny and sometimes moving, they drew a picture of a very inspiring country, and worked hard to show people of the urgency of defending its people and their gains.

"Why does Cuba have such a strong impact on us, as young social justice activists?" asked Tamara Hansen, Che Brigade participant and coordinator of Vancouver Communities in

with chants and a rally alongside Cuba solidarity and social justice groups from Vancouver, Victoria and Washington State. After this we held events in 10 cities along our route, aptly named "Desafio", which means "challenge" in Spanish. Each event, whether at a church, in a community centre, at a University, or in a bookstore, had different dynamics and discussion. But all had one thing in common; they brought out people living in the US interested in learning more about Cuba, the Blockade and the Cuban 5.

At 6 am on July 6 we crossed the US/Mexico border with a white flag from the US Government; they had chosen not to fight the Caravan this year.

Touching down in Cuba, the entire



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«La televisión cubana ha informado que Fidel Castro ha sido sometido a una operación. ¿Qué comentario le merece a usted esto?». Así me enteré. Salí inmediatamente a buscar la televisión, y vi a nuestro amigo Carlitos Valenciaga —la televisión francesa y todas las televisoras del mundo transmitieron la proclama que él leyó—. Tuve una gran preocupación, como mucha gente en todo el mundo.

Yo estaba en España ese 31 de julio. La prensa allí reaccionó primero con morbo y después con estupor: no entendían por qué había tanta serenidad y tranquilidad en Cuba. Junto a todo eso sobrevino una avalancha de opiniones de los «transiciólogos». ¿A usted le sorprendió la reacción del pueblo cubano?

—Desde luego que no me sorprendió. La mejor prueba es que yo abordo el tema en la introducción del libro, algo que también me ha sido reprochado con frecuencia. Si recuerdas, digo que mucha gente especula sobre lo que ocurrirá en Cuba el día en que Fidel, por cualquier razón natural, ya no esté. Sobre todo, porque comparan a Cuba con lo que pasó en los países del Este, cuando se hundió la Unión Soviética. Y añadido en la introducción: se equivocan. En Cuba no pasará nada de esto, porque sencillamente Cuba no es un país del Este, donde la Revolución fue traída por soldados de la Unión Soviética. En Europa no surgió del interior de esas sociedades, aunque hubiese personas que deseaban esa Revolución. Mientras que en Cuba la Revolución fue un fenómeno endógeno, surgido aquí, ligado a su historia.

«Por otra parte, por mucho que la gente especule sobre el descontento que pudiera haber, la mayoría de la población se adhiere a este sistema. Cuando aquí se produce este accidente de salud, cuando de manera institucional hay una transmisión

provisional de responsabilidades, lo que está pasando era lo que podíamos predecir que iba a pasar. A mí no me sorprendió, como no le sorprendió a usted, y a muchísima gente. Era lo más natural.

«Especular lo contrario proviene de la gente que se engaña con sus propias mentiras. Que acaba por creer sus propias mentiras y pierde la capacidad del análisis objetivo para ver una realidad. Este es un país donde, en 47 años, no ha habido insurrecciones populares, como las ocurridas en los países del Este. Esto tiene alguna significación, y no se puede explicar con el argumento de la represión. A pesar de la represión, se sublevó la gente en Polonia, en la República Democrática Alemana, en Rumania y en Checoslovaquia. En Cuba, la reacción de la gente no tiene que ver con la represión.

«Los “transiciólogos” deberían haber leído el libro. Fidel en un momento dado me pregunta: “¿Usted me está hablando de la transición?”. Y yo le respondo: “Sí, sí, de la transición. Hábleme de ella”. Y lo aborda de la manera más natural. “En este país hemos tenido que hablar de eso desde el principio”, dice. “Porque ha habido 600 tentativas de atentado contra mí. Hemos tenido que pensar desde el principio qué pasaría, si yo no estuviera aquí”. La manera en que se va a dar esa transición está más que institucionalizada. Por tanto, la sorpresa solo fue para la gente que no quería ver la realidad».

¿Es verdad que usted fue miembro de una célula «castrista» en Tánger?

—Tanto como célula no, porque el grupo lo creé yo. Cuando yo era niño, tendría 12 o 13 años, en 1956, frecuentaba una peluquería en Tánger. El peluquero era un señor que había estado mucho tiempo en Cuba, español pero apegado a la Isla. La revista que él ponía para entretener la espera de los clientes, era Bohemia. Curiosamente yo empecé a leer en la Bohemia, en sus páginas color salmón,

las crónicas rojas con testimonios de las represalias de la dictadura. Una cosa llevó a la otra: descubrí la personalidad de Fidel Castro, las acciones del Movimiento 26 de Julio. La prensa no hablaba de esto aún. Cuba ni se conocía. Estaba demasiado lejos de las preocupaciones internacionales. Pero yo creé en el Instituto un pequeño grupo de simpatizantes castristas y del Movimiento 26 de Julio. Habíamos seguido el rapto de Fangio, del que se habló un poco. Seguimos los progresos hasta el triunfo de la Revolución, que sí fue un suceso que recogió la prensa internacional.

¿Por qué ha dicho que muy tempranamente fue simpatizante de esta Revolución y no de otra?

—Yo vivía en Tánger, Marruecos, y lo que me preocupaba, siendo todavía niño —como a muchas personas de mi generación— era la descolonización. Nací en 1943. No pertenezco a la generación cuya verdadera batalla ha sido el fascismo-antifascismo. Esa fue la generación de mis padres: mi padre hizo la guerra de España; mi madre era militante sindical.

«Pertenezco a una generación cuya batalla central, durante su adolescencia y los primeros años de la edad adulta, es el colonialismo-anticolonialismo. En particular, la liberación de los países colonizados. En primer lugar, de Marruecos, que se independizó en 1956, después de una lucha interna. Y también de Argelia, país vecino donde yo había vivido, que comenzó su lucha por la descolonización en 1954. Cuando apareció Cuba en mi vida, estábamos en plena guerra de Argelia. Y en la clase donde yo estaba estudiando, algunos compañeros míos eran argelinos refugiados en Tánger por la represión en su país.

«En ese contexto, lo que ocurría en Cuba lo valorábamos como la lucha por la liberación de un tipo de colonialismo, que se traducía en el imperialismo o el neocolonialismo del régimen que tenían ustedes aquí. Por eso la Revolución cubana nos parecía

algo muy original —no era del tipo soviético y tampoco se parecía a la china. Era y es muy singular, y surge a partir de una tradición histórica, aunque hay influencias marxista-leninistas. Estaba la ascendencia martiana, que en aquel momento yo no podía identificar, que le da un carácter de entroncamiento con el movimiento de liberación latinoamericano, cosa que está muy bien explicada por Fidel en el libro, en el primer capítulo. Dice que la Revolución cubana tiene mucho que ver con la liberación de América Latina y las guerras de independencia, y que se inscribe en ese tipo de trayectoria. Y no en otra».

«Hoy Ramonet me conoce más a mí que yo mismo». Lo dijo Fidel. ¿Es verdad eso?

—No, en lo absoluto. Lo dice porque es muy generoso. Solo he podido compartir con él unos días de su larga vida, en esa conversación. He tratado de dar mi visión de él, de su vida cotidiana profesional, e intenté traducir eso de manera honesta y objetiva. Él es así, como se describe en el libro. No es un ser doble: no es de una manera en un momento, y otras veces de otra. Creo que si uno lo ve regularmente durante una semana o durante diez días seguidos, se da perfecta cuenta de que él es así, sin comportamientos ocultos, o diferentes, o contrarios. Por supuesto que hay muchísima gente que lo conoce más que yo, porque lo han frecuentado durante años a lo largo de su vida.

«El interés que despierta el libro se debe a que, a lo largo de esta conversación, él cuenta su vida. Una vida vista desde el interior. El libro tiene un argumento casi de novela policiaca, que es: ¿cómo este niño de Birán se transforma en Fidel Castro? ¿Cómo un niño nacido en un pueblo que ni siquiera es un pueblo, en un contexto rural y poco desarrollado —sin electricidad, sin casi nada—, en una familia relativamente conservadora, educado en escuelas religiosas católicas conservadoras; cómo ese niño, repito, se transforma en

uno de los principales revolucionarios del siglo XX? Este es el misterio y el hilo conductor de la conversación».

En la presentación de su libro en España, una escritora a la que admiro muchísimo, Belén Gopegui, aseguraba que «en los días más oscuros, como en los días más claros, la historia que se cuenta en este libro va a permanecer». Los cubanos sabemos muy bien que esta historia, efectivamente, perdurará. ¿Y el libro? ¿Qué perdurará de esta edición que pronto tendrán en sus manos los cubanos?

—A mí me gustaría que quedase de este libro la posibilidad que tiene el lector de acercarse, de manera muy íntima y muy personal, a alguien como Fidel Castro. Alguien que siendo una persona muy pública, es también muy reservado. Un hombre tímido, al que no le gusta hablar de sí. El lector y la lectora van a seguir una conversación en la que él habla de él, aunque se esté refiriendo a la política internacional, a la gran política, y a la Revolución. Cuando se refiere a hechos aparentemente ajenos, uno siente que está hablando en definitiva de él mismo, de su visión de procesos esenciales en los que ha estado involucrado.

«Lo trascendente del libro es este acompañamiento, esta cercanía a una de las personalidades que más ha marcado la segunda mitad del siglo XX y el principio del XXI. Una persona que no es nada arrogante, que por momentos trata de reducir su propio papel, sin que esto lo disminuya —todo lo contrario—. Alguien que reconoce que ha tenido tal o cual duda. Honestamente, creo que la personalidad y la verdadera humanidad de Fidel Castro están en este libro».

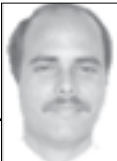
Ignacio Ramonet es doctor en Semiología e Historia de la Cultura y catedrático de Teoría de la comunicación. Especialista en geopolítica y estrategia internacional, y consultante de la ONU. Actualmente imparte clases en La Sorbona de París. Desde 1999 dirige Le Monde Diplomatique y Manière de voir.

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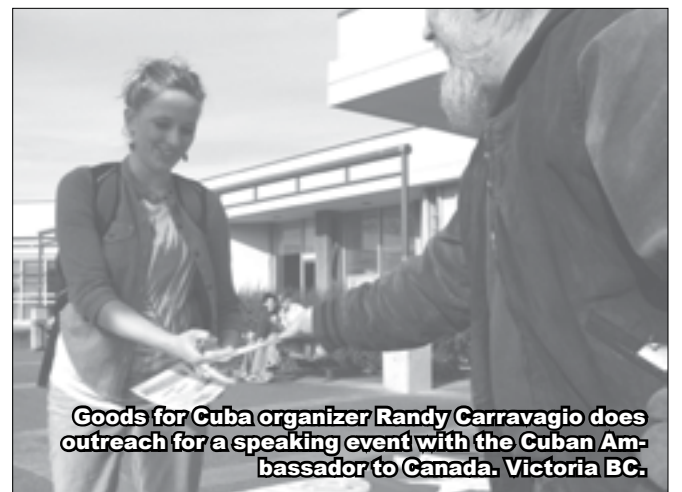


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VICTORIA IN ACTION



Contact Randy for more info or to get involved with the Victoria Goods for Cuba Campaign:

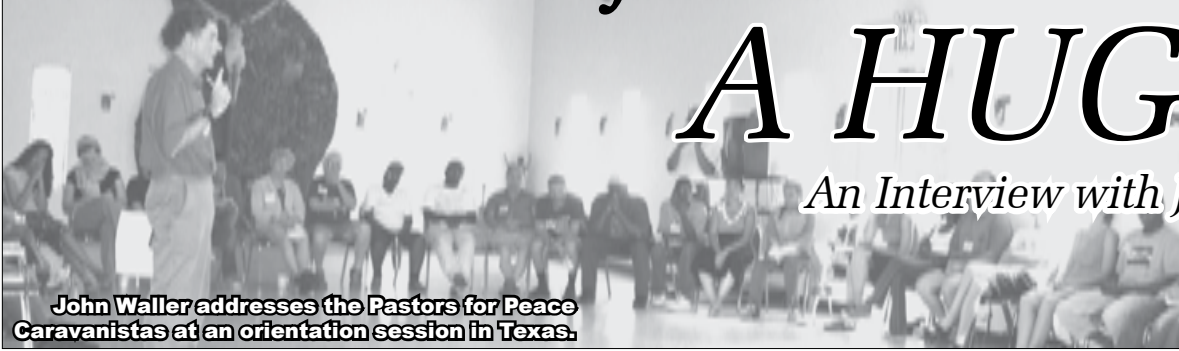


Goods for Cuba organizer Randy Carravagio does outreach for a speaking event with the Cuban Ambassador to Canada, Victoria BC.

P. 250-743-2994 E. vicc@telus.net

2006 Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba: A HUGE Success

An Interview with John Waller from Pastors for Peace



John Waller addresses the Pastors for Peace Caravanistas at an orientation session in Texas.

By Shannon Bundock

In 1992, the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) launched the Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba. Armed with 15 tons of humanitarian aid, 100 'Caravanistas' faced off with the US government at a US/Mexico border crossing. It didn't take long before images of IFCO organizers, including priests being arrested, were splashed across television screens throughout the US. The media coverage prompted an outrage from people in the US. Thousands of telephone calls in support of Pastors for Peace flooded Washington, and finally, the Caravan was allowed to cross.

Pastors for Peace challenged the US Blockade against Cuba for the 17th time this past summer. The Caravan again brought aid and US and Canadian people to Cuba, in flagrant violation of the unjust US law. Fire This Time had the opportunity to sit down with John Waller, one of the core organizers of Pastors for Peace to discuss the work of the Caravan, escalating threats from the US government, and Pastors for Peace plans for the future.

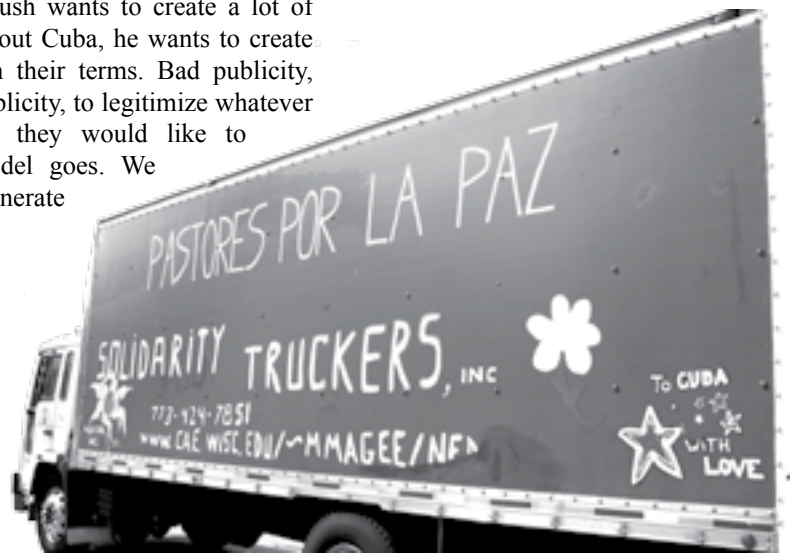
the successes of Cuba and the Blockade in South Dakota, or Idaho, is a big deal. We're the only people who do it. That public education throughout the country is important.

Thirdly, we took maybe 70 US citizens. Maybe 2/3 of those had never been before. The education role continues. They talk about Cuba in an organized way in public meetings, to their local media. They talk to their friends and colleagues, and many of them will remain active in Cuba solidarity work. Some of them won't, but they will have taken ideas from Cuba, which will impact other campaigns that they are involved in.

Finally, there is the aid. We always say, 60 tons of aid is not going to solve the economic problems of Cuba, it's symbolic. But I think sometimes when we say that it's symbolic, we're overstating that. For the hospital that now has the x-ray machine that is 10 years old, whereas previously it was 25 years old, that matters. The symbolism that is most important to the Cuban people is that this is not just any old aid. This is aid from the United States, from the country that is trying to

of a vacuum. Cuba wasn't in the news at the time. We were hoping that Plan Bush II would come out before we went so that we could react to it and get counter publicity, as we did in 2004. But it came out after. If they move to crack down harder on us, if they move to once again stop aid from going, maybe stop all the aid from going, then that is a challenge to us and we've got to rise to the challenge. But it is an opportunity to get publicity. Although Bush wants to create a lot of publicity about Cuba, he wants to create publicity on their terms. Bad publicity, negative publicity, to legitimize whatever dirty tricks they would like to do once Fidel goes. We need to generate

another kind of publicity, which is exposing how brutal this blockade is, how



Buses full of aid line up at the border.

destroy them.

FTT: How do you think growing threats to Cuba - for example the US's Plan for "Assistance to a Free Cuba" or "Plan Bush" - will impact the work of Pastors for Peace?

John Waller:

There are two paragraphs in the latest "Plan Bush" that were as if written for us. One talks about an increased crack down on people who organize un-licensed

travel to Cuba. It says that for the organizers no longer could it just be civil penalties, but criminal penalties. They haven't done it yet, but they're upping the ante.

The other paragraph says that they don't like the aid going from the US to Cuban NGOs, in particular the Cuban Council of Churches. They say that they are going to stop aid going to the Cuban Council of Churches or similar organizations. We deliver to a similar organization. So they are moving towards a position of taking us on. So that's their decision, we'll see what they do. That could be good.

I think the main weakness of the Caravan this year is that we got very little national publicity. We got a lot of local publicity, but not national. We were working in a bit

malevolent their intentions are. Our hope is that through our caravan that's an important way of generating that publicity. So if they want to take us on, we're not being bravado or macho about it, we're just saying that this is an opportunity and we'll respond.

FTT: How has the Cuban government responded to the Pastors for Peace Caravan?

John Waller: Very positive. It always has been. Another part of the symbolism that the first Caravan was in 1992, when the impact of blockade hit Cuba the hardest. The relationship with the Soviet Union was over, the economy was in freefall, the Torricelli law had just been passed, everybody was saying, 'Cuba is finished'.

To have a group of people from the United States, as Fidel said - walk through the wall of the blockade and come to Cuba and say 'we're with you' was very important then.

On a governmental level there is tremendous respect for what we do. People may ask if there is an issue because we are a church organization, so let me explain. Yes we are 'Pastors for Peace', the organization has a religious base, but many of the people who support it are not religious. We work with people of all faiths and persuasions. I personally am not religious. We have fed into a debate in Cuba, about the role of religion in Cuba. Initially, in the 60's the Catholic Church, which was then the principle Christian church, adopted a stridently anti-revolution position. The Protestant churches in Cuba have demonstrated over

the years that you can have a church in Cuba that is in support of the revolution.

Our aid goes to an Ecumenical distribution committee of principally Protestant churches. Their role has been to show that there isn't necessarily an inherent conflict between the church and the state. That has been part of a process, which led in 1992 to Cuba moving from being an Atheist state to being a secular state. There really is freedom of religion, totally. The Cuban state is neutral on religion.

Also, in 1992, for the first time, faith believers could become members of the Communist Party. Fidel would

now say that it was a mistake that they didn't allow it. We welcomed that changed position, and we think that there now is a much more appropriate and healthy relationship between the Cuban state and the Cuban church.

FTT: What's next for Pastors for Peace?

John Waller: Practically, we will have another Caravan in July 2007. Preparations are not yet underway for that, however, we want to make it as large numbers as possible with as many routes and events as possible. Principally of US citizens, but we welcome the participation of Canadians, Europeans, and Latin Americans. But as I said earlier, the qualitative step up that we hope for is not in numbers, but is in breaking through the media blockade. To say to people that it's not just about coming on the Caravan or even just coming to an event, if they do seize aid at the border, which they may do, then we're going to protest. We're going to make an ongoing protest. We're going to be looking for supporters around the US and Canada to participate in that protest. To keep publicity going.

I'd also like to add that part of the success of this year is that we had participation from virtually every member group of the Canadian Network on Cuba. In hosting Caravan events - all of them. In sending aid to Cuba - some of them. That is important for us. We look forward to an even higher level of participation this year. Although our main focus is in the US, anything that we do that helps strengthen Cuba solidarity work in Canada, that's a valuable byproduct.

Thank you John.

FTT: Last summer Pastors for Peace organized its 17th caravan to Cuba. 60 tons of aid was delivered - none of which was blocked - and dozens of people from the US, Canada and other parts of the world had the opportunity to travel to Cuba and build friendship and solidarity. Can you elaborate more on the success of this caravan for Pastors for Peace?

John Waller: I think that it has been successful in four different ways. Firstly, we defied the Bush administration. They are trying to stop US citizens from going to Cuba or trying to stop US citizens from taking aid to Cuba - and we did it.

Secondly, the Caravan is 13 routes throughout almost the entire continental US and southern Canada and 125 different stops. Every stop we're talking in a public meeting. At many stops we're talking to local media. It's no big deal to have a positive meeting about Cuba in New York. But to have a meeting talking about



Loading the Pastors for Peace buses with material aid for Cuba.

SEPT 23: International Day of Action



By Jane Ivanova

On September 23rd 2006 the demands for the immediate release of the Five Cuban Heroes held in U.S. jails ruled the streets of downtown Vancouver. As this September marked the 8th anniversary of the unjust imprisonment of the five men who were jailed for their attempt to stop anti-Cuban terrorism coming from Miami, over 250 people gathered at the Vancouver Art Gallery to express their support and solidarity with Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labanino, Rene Gonzalez, Fernando Gonzalez and Antonio Guerrero. The rally was organized by the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver.

The five men were sentenced, ranging from 15 years to 2 life sentences, on charges of conspiracy to commit espionage and murder. Due to countless flaws in judicial process, the

five were granted a new trial in Aug. 2005, however this decision was overturned a year later. And now the fight for their freedom continues and is gaining strength.

The diverse and exciting program of the rally was opened by Tim Louis, former Vancouver City councilor and a long-term supporter of Cuba and the Cuban revolution. Tim spoke about the case in the context of the ongoing wars and occupations all around the world led by the U.S. government.

The rally was continued by a dynamic speech by Colleen Glynn, member of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and President of the Richmond NDP. Colleen emphasized on the brutality of the terrorist acts, carried out by Miami-based right-wing terrorists and sponsored by the CIA.

Participants of the rally expressed their solidarity with loud, energetic chants “Free the Cuban Five now!” “U.S. hands off Cuba!” started by the rally’s MC’s Sophie Ziner and Jane Ivanova.

Antonio from Vancouver Bolivarian Society spoke on behalf of May 20th Coalition about an upcoming free all day long conference “Celebrating the Gains – Confronting the Challenges” featuring a special section on the Cuban Five and discussing the great progress made by Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia.

Charles Boylan from the Vancouver Internationalist Bolivarian Circles “Bob Everton” denounced the well-known terrorist Luis Posada Carriles, responsible for ruthless terrorist acts. He pointed out that while the Five Heroes remain in jails, terrorist Posada is

given shelter in the U.S.

This dynamic action for freedom of the Five Cuban Heroes attracted people from different backgrounds and generations. The experience and energy of the anti-war movement in the sixties was presented by David Whittlesey, who is now an organizer with Mobilization Against War and Occupation.

Before the protesters left on a march, Andrew Barry, a student anti-war organizer at UVIC and an organizer with Victoria Venezuela Solidarity, spoke on the significance of the example that the Cuban Five and the Cuban revolution set for all people in the world.

The crowd marched to the U.S. consulate with banners and loud chants, where an organized procession delivered a message of anger and commitment to continue the fight.

Back at the Art Gallery the rally was closed by Noah Fine, the coordinator of Free the Cuban Five Committee in Vancouver with a clear resolution to expand this campaign for humanity to all parts of Vancouver and beyond.

Please check our website for upcoming actions to Free the 5 Cuban Heroes: www.vancubasolidarity.com/freethefivevan.html



A solidarity event with

Irma González

(Daughter of Cuban Five Prisoner René González)

&

Elizabeth Palmeiro

(Wife of Cuban Five Prisoner Ramón Labañino)



Oct - Nov 2006
Cross-Canada
Tour:

- Montreal
-
- Ottawa
-
- Kingston
-
- Toronto
-
- Hamilton
-
- Windsor
-
- Vancouver
-
- Victoria



Free the Cuban Five Held in US Jails!

Join the world-wide campaign to demand the release of the Cuban Five. These five heroes are beginning their ninth year in US prisons for monitoring groups planning terrorist attacks against Cuba. Support the campaign against their unjust imprisonment!

Capilano College Thursday Nov. 2nd 12:30pm



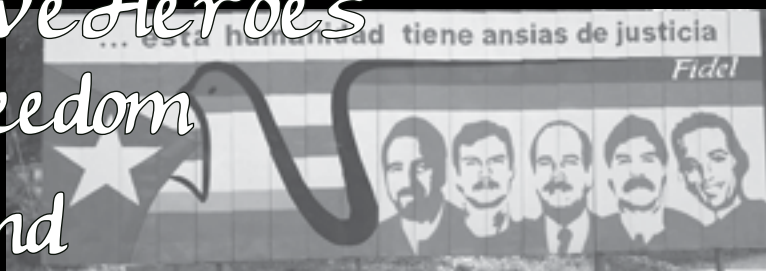
Free the Five Cuban Heroes Now!

Library Room: 322

Sponsored by:
Capilano College Latin American Working Group, Capilano College History Department, Capilano College Political Studies Department, Capilano College Global Stewardship Program, Capilano Students' Union, Free the Cuban 5 Working Group- Capilano: freethe5@csu.bc.ca Canadian Cuban Friendship Association - Vancouver: (604) 940-0420 Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver: cuban5_van@yahoo.com Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba: www.vancubasolidarity.com

www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca

Five Heroes Freedom Fund



Since the imprisonment of the 5 Cuban Heroes in 1998, the biggest roadblock for the case has been a complete media blackout. The National Committee to Free the Cuban Five in the U.S. has launched a \$250,000 fund for a mass national media campaign. They are asking all individuals and organizations to do whatever possible in the raising of

this urgently needed money.

To make a donation or to find out more about the “Five Heroes Freedom Fund” please check out

www.freethefive.org or

www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca

STUDENT WEEK AGAINST WAR and OCCUPATION



By Kira Koshelanyk

From October 16-27, 2006, Vancouver and area college, university and high school campuses were hit with a major wave of antiwar activity—Mobilization Against War & Occupation’s 5th Student Week Against War & Occupation (SWAWO). This major event, taking place at the beginning of each fall and winter term, was once again met with energy from on-campus student antiwar groups and positive reception from the wider student population. More than 500 signatures were added to MAWO’s “Canada Out of Afghanistan!” petition campaign

d u r i n g
SWAWO Fall
2006!
SWAWO this
fall took place
on-campus at
five community
colleges, both
major Lower
M a i n l a n d
universities,
(UBC and SFU),
the University
of Victoria on
Vancouver Island,



Young women march in antiwar rally, San Francisco.

and four different Lower Mainland high schools, reaching thousands of students with the demand for “Canada Out of Afghanistan!”, “US/UK Out of Iraq!” and “Self Determination for All Oppressed Nations!”

While Canada’s military occupation

in Afghanistan is quickly digging itself deeper into crisis, as the US and UK have been doing for the last three years in Iraq, people’s resistance and fight for their country’s liberation and self-determination is growing stronger, heartened by their successes and unity. This message and the need for students and young people in Canada to stand beside them in active solidarity was presented strongly during this fall’s Student Week Against War & Occupation. Vision, energy and also human sensitivity of students and young people to fight against the crime of the imperialist war drive has made the SWAWO campaign successful in garnering more support for the international movement against war and occupation. This has strengthened the leadership of the antiwar movement on-campus and off, and holds the key for building a strong and effective antiwar movement!

**FREE THE CUBAN FIVE
HELD IN US JAILS!**

¡Libertad Los Cinco Cubanos Presos en Los E.U.!

**PICKET ACTION!
¡Acción de Protesta!**

**Thursday
November 2
3:30 - 4:30pm
U.S. Consulate**

(1075 West Pender @ Thurlow St.)



Organized By:
Free the Cuban Five Committee - Vancouver
<http://www.vancubasolidarity.com/freethefivevan.html>
cuban5_van@yahoo.com | 604-719-6947

Sept 16 Anti-War Anti-Occupation Rally

Vancouver Demands: **End the Criminal Occupation of Afghanistan NOW!**

By Kira Koshelanyk

On the eve of the deployment of 450 additional Canadian soldiers and 15 Canadian Leopard tanks to the occupation of Afghanistan, over 300 protesters gathered in Vancouver at the September 16, 2006 rally organized by Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) to show their opposition to the Canadian war drive.

The rally featured speakers from diverse backgrounds, including

Indigenous people, elders and youth, and members of the Muslim and Lebanese communities in the Lower Mainland, representing the wide variety of people in Canada coming out vocally against the occupation. Speakers who addressed the crowd also included MAWO high school and university organizers who condemned Canada's criminal attacks on people in Afghanistan.

Sentiment against the occupation is



growing in Canada. This development is aided by ongoing antiwar organizing, like the September 16 action. While opposition to the occupation coming from within Canada is not yet uniform in its demands, it is a sign that the military and government of Canada's strategy to justify the occupation to

people at home is failing. The antiwar movement is now charged with developing and solidifying people in Canada's criticism into a strong and unified movement that will say "Bring the Troops Home Now!" "Canada Out of Afghanistan Now!" and "Money for Education, Not for War!"

VANCOUVER ANTIWAR ACTION CANADA OUT OF AFGHANISTAN!

MAWO Bi-Weekly Picket Actions Against Canada's Involvement in Afghanistan Get Big Attention

By Nicole Burton

With 15 soldiers and more than 1500 Afghan people killed in the last two months alone, opposition is growing to the Canadian occupation of Afghanistan.

Lower Mainland antiwar coalition Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) has confronted the increasing imperialist aggression of Canada with regular picket actions in front of the Canadian Forces Recruitment Center in downtown Vancouver.

On the coattails of Canada's launch of "Operation Medusa"—consisting of bombings, house-to-house raids, and massacres in search of "Taliban" and "insurgents" in Southern Afghanistan—

five Canadian soldiers were killed in less than 24 hours. On September 7, MAWO responded with a picket demanding Canadian troops out of Afghanistan and an end to the criminal occupation. MAWO also calls for an independent public inquiry into the Canadian war drive, highlighting the fact that Canada's occupation of Afghanistan has gone ahead without public consultation, and against the interests of people in Canada.

The picketing continued on



Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) Picket Actions at the Canadian Forces Recruitment Centre Sept & Oct 2006



September 21, as 450 more soldiers left Canada to be deployed to Kandahar, and the bodies of four Canadian soldiers returned in flag-draped coffins. Students, youth, seniors, and workers picketed together, shouting, "Canada Out of Afghanistan!" "Self-Determination for Afghanistan Now!" Banners and dozens of signs rose to the beat of the chants as cars drove past honking their horns in support.

Protesters returned on October 5, this time in even greater numbers, in response to the October 3 deaths of two more Canadian soldiers. Activists picketed as MAWO spokesperson Nita Palmer addressed the media, saying, "We are seeing more Canadian soldiers dying, more Afghan people being killed, in a military operation that most people in Canada are against. As a sign of this widespread opposition, MAWO has collected over 12,000 signatures in the Lower Mainland alone calling for an immediate end to Canada's occupation of Afghanistan."

Through immediate response, emergency action, and consistent campaigning against the Canadian war drive, Vancouver anti-war activists have made their message clear: they, alongside millions in Canada and around the world, will continue in the fight until Canada's occupation of Afghanistan ends, every imperialist troop is brought home, and Afghans are free to determine their own future.



A solidarity event with

Irma González

(Daughter of Cuban Five Prisoner René González)

&

Elizabeth Palmeiro

(Wife of Cuban Five Prisoner Ramón Labañino)



Oct - Nov 2006
**Cross-Canada
Tour:**

**Free the Cuban Five
Held in US Jails!**

Montreal
★
Ottawa
★
Kingston
★
Toronto
★
Hamilton
★
Windsor
★
Vancouver
★
Victoria

Join the world-wide campaign to demand the release of the Cuban Five. These five heroes are beginning their ninth year in US prisons for monitoring groups planning terrorist attacks against Cuba. Support the campaign against their unjust imprisonment!

Thursday
Nov. 2nd
SFU Harbour Centre
515 W. Hastings St
7:30pm



Free the Five Cuban Heroes Now!

Sponsored by:

Canadian Cuban Friendship Association - Vancouver: (604) 940-0420

Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver: cuban5_van@yahoo.com

Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba: www.vancubasolidarity.com

www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca



Vancouver Conference a Big Success

Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia

By Lindsay Clarke

There has been excited talk of a “new dawn” in Latin America. Talk of the continent shaking off foreign exploitation and taking the future into its own hands. The weekend of September 30th saw the first Vancouver solidarity conference focusing on the developing partnership of Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia – and proved that the positive changes happening in Latin America are more than just excited words. Support and anticipation surrounded this conference which was organized by the May 20th coalition - composed of 75 organizations and endorsed by several departments of study at Capilano College, Langara College and the University of British Columbia. Featuring honorable guest speakers, films, and serious debate this conference was not to be missed as the gains and challenges of the three countries were explored.

The Unitarian Church in Vancouver was set abuzz for this free day-long conference which was broken down into four interesting sections; Venezuela, the case of the Cuban 5, Bolivia

Celebrating the Gains Confronting the Challenges

and Cuba. Tamara Hansen, MC and the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba opened the conference by emphasizing that there is need of more and more educational events on the particularly these three countries for the experience and accomplishment they have had for setting alternative to capitalist and imperialist exploitation. The featured speaker was Wilson Munoz, Chair of the Social Justice Committee of the Unitarian Church of Vancouver. He invited all participants to take advantage of the event to discuss, debate and exchange their experience and knowledge on problems that people of Latin America are experiencing as well as the great examples of Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia as

Cuba. However when their evidence was presented to the FBI the five heroes, who were fighting against terrorism, were arrested.

3) Bolivia: Claudio Vidal, a professor at Kwantlen University College, spoke about Bolivia where the government is currently nationalizing many of its industries to take from the rich and give to the poor.

4) Cuba: Cuban Consul General in Toronto, Laureano Cardoso, presented the final and highly anticipated segment on Cuba. “Did you



Gloria LaRiva, Coordinator of US Nat'l Ctte to Free the Cuban 5.



Tamara Hansen, Conference MC. Claudio Vidal, Professor of Sociology.



Samira Amndan, Representative of the Venezuelan Consulate. Esteban Gonzalez, translator.



Laureano Cardoso, Cuban Consul General in Toronto.



Wilson Munoz, Coordinator of the Unitarian Church Social Justice Cttee.



three dynamics of changes in Latin America. Antonio Ortiz from of the Bolivarian Society of Vancouver, a Vancouver Venezuela Solidarity group and one of the organizing groups of the May 20th Coalition then introduced the first speaker, Samira Amndan. The program follows below:

1) Venezuela: Samira Amndan, a representative from the Venezuelan Consulate in Toronto was the guest speaker. An interesting fact we learned is that under the leadership of President Hugo Chavez, Venezuela is implementing a program to pay single stay-at-home mothers for the work they do in their homes.

2) The Case of the Cuban 5: Long time activist and coordinator of the National Committee to Free the Five in the US, Gloria La Riva spoke. What is the case of the Cuban 5? If you have been in Vancouver in recent months you have probably seen the monthly pickets held in front of the US consulate organized by the Free the Cuban Five Committee Vancouver demanding the release of the Cuban 5. Gloria explained how these five Cuban men were sent by the Cuban government to investigate right-wing anti-Cuban terrorist groups in the US. They collected evidence and stopped terrorist attacks from the US towards

know that Cuba has the largest number of doctors per capita of any country in the world?” he asked. We also learned that in Cuba post-secondary education is free. Don’t you wish this was true for Canada?

The conference was closed by featured speaker Wilson Munoz, “Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia are three countries struggling to change the situation for poor and oppressed people not only in their countries, but around the world” he said. “They are an

example of a leadership that is fighting for real human rights and dignity for all people. While the United States is bombing other countries, Cuba and Venezuela are sending doctors free of charge. Unlike George Bush’s axis of evil, these countries are our axis of hope.”

The day would not have been complete without the Latin-flavored cultural night and fundraiser after the conference featuring performances by: Solidarity Notes Labor Choir,

Peruvian guitarist Hugo Sanchez, and Latin American hip hop sensation El Esquadron. The room was packed with people inspired to celebrate the gains of Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia and to continue the struggle for humanity that these countries represent. The evening closed on a particularly exciting note, as the day-long silent auction featuring mementos directly from Cuba, came to an end - with all proceeds benefiting the Free the Five Freedom Fund.



Sept 30, 2006.

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EVENTS and ACTIONS

VANCOUVER

Saturday October 28
Bring the Troops Home!
 12 Noon - Waterfront Station
 March: 1PM
 Rally: 2PM - Vancouver Art
 Gallery, Georgia @ Howe
 Org'd by: Stopwar.ca

Sunday October 29
**Imperialist Aggression & the
 Era of War and Occupation**
 ALL DAY CONFERENCE
 10AM-7PM
 Britannia Community Centre,
 1661 Napier St @ Commercial
 Dr.
 Org'd by: Mobilization Against
 War and Occupation (MAWO)
 For more info: www.
 mawovancouver.org
 info@mawovancouver.org |
 604.322.1764

Thursday November 2
**Free the Cuban 5 Held in US
 Jails!**
 Forum with:
 Irma González (Daughter of Cuban
 Five Prisoner Rene González)
 Elizabeth Palmiero (Wife of Cuban
 Five Prisoner Ramón Labañino)
 7:30PM
 SFU Harbour Centre
 515 W Hastings, Downtown Vancouver.
 Org'd by:
 Canadian Network on Cuba
 www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca
 Sponsored by:
 Vancouver Communities in
 Solidarity with Cuba, Cuban
 Canadian Friendship Assoc. and
 Free the Cuban 5 Cttee Vancouver,

COMOX

Saturday October 28
**Bring Them Home, Keep Them
 Home!**
 2PM - CFB Comox Ryan Road
 Gates
 Org'd by: Comox Valley Peace
 Group
 For more info: 250.897.3916

TORONTO

Monday October 23
**Picket the Intercontinental
 Hotel!**
 Protest Action - 11am-1PM
 Bloor @Bedford
 Org'd by: Coalition of Concerned
 Taxi Drivers and Ontario
 Coalition Against Poverty

Tuesday October 24
**Defend Homeless Shelters
 Against Closure!**
 Protest Action - 9:30AM-1PM
 Meet at ALL SAINTS Drop In
 Org'd by: Ontario Coalition
 Against Poverty

Saturday October 28
Troops Out of Afghanistan!
 March & Rally - 1PM
 U.S. Consulate, 360 University
 Ave.
 Org'd by: Toronto Coalition to
 Stop the War
 For more info: www.nowar.ca |
 stopthewar@sympatico.ca

Thursday October 26
**A Matter of Conscience:
 Resisting War**
 Forum - 7:30PM
 U.S. Consulate,

360 University Ave.
 Org'd by: War Resisters Support
 Campaign
 For more info: tel: 416 778-7872
 judygilbert@sympatico.ca

Thursday November 2
**Grassy Narrows Blockaders
 Speak**
 Forum - 7:00PM
 Steel Workers Hall 25 Cecil St.
 Contact: Forest Ethics
 tel: 416-597-1904
 kimf@forestethics.org

Wednesday November 1
**Boycott, Divestment and
 Sanctions (BDS) Against
 Israeli Apartheid**
 Info night - 7 PM
 Ontario Institute for Studies in
 Education (OISE)
 252 Bloor St. W Room: 4426
 Org'd by: The Coalition Against
 Israeli Apartheid

Thursday November 9
**Night March On The Pope
 Squat**
 6:00PM
 Masaryk-Cowan Park (corner of
 Cowan and Queen Street)
 Organized by Ontario Coalition
 Against Poverty

Sun Nov 5 to Sat Nov 11
**Peace Week at the University
 of Toronto**
 Downtown, Mississauga & Scarborough
 7 Hart House Circle
 For More Info:
 "The Peace Week Conspiracy"
 tel: 647-868-3966
 info@peaceweek.com

VICTORIA

Saturday October 28
**Bring the Troops
 Home!**
 March & Rally
 12 Noon
 Centennial Square
 For more info:
 Andrew Barry - 250.885.2210

WINNIPEG

Saturday October 28
**End Canada's War on
 Afghanistan!**
 Rally! March! People's Forum!
 1PM
 Gather @ Central Park
 March to forum @ University of
 Winnipeg - Bulman Centre
 Org'd by: Peace Alliance
 Winnipeg
 For more info: www.
 peacealliancewinnipeg.ca

Fri Nov 3 & Sat Nov 4
**4th Annual Global Justice
 Film Festival**
 7:00PM
 University of Winnipeg 515
 Poratge ave.
 For More Info:
 tel: 1-204-389-4141
 winston1@mts.net

OTTAWA

Saturday October 28
**Troops Out of Afghanistan
 Now!**
 RALLY - 1PM
 Peacekeeping Monument
 (Sussex Dr.)
 Org'd by: NOWAR-PAIX
 More info: www.nowar-paix.ca



Saturday October 28
**Student Anti-war Action
 RALLY**
 11AM at Human Rights
 Monument (Elgin & Lisgar)
 March to join the City-wide rally
 @ Peacekeeping Monument
 Org'd by: Student Coalition
 Against War
 For more info: scaw.ottawa@
 gmail.com

EDMONTON

Tuesday, October 24
**TROOPS OUT OF
 AFGHANISTAN:**
 Teach-In
 3:30pm
 239 Central Academic Building
 (CAB)
 University of Alberta
 Org'd by: Muslim Students'
 Association
 and the Edmonton Coalition
 Against War And Racism

Saturday, October 28
**CANADA OUT OF
 AFGHANISTAN:**
 RALLY
 1PM
 Corbett Hall
 University of Alberta
 Org'd by: Edmonton Coalition
 Against War And Racism

Distribute Revolutionary Change in Your Area!

For distribution of Fire This Time
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 internationally, please contact:

Mike Chimenti
 Publicity and Distribution
 Coordinator
 Phone: (604) 518-5009
 Email: distro@firethistime.net



Also Available from FIRE THIS TIME



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 Mike Chimenti (604) 518-5009 distro@firethistime.net
 Or view all available titles at www.firethistime.net

Sunday, October 29th

MAWO'WEEN 3

Halloween
 Party
 &
 MAWO's
 3rd
 Anniversary
 Celebration

WEAR A COSTUME!
 ENTRY BY DONATION



FEATURED PERFORMERS

jb the first lady - influents - dj deebz
 dj c-lo - happy kreter- the floor fillas

PLUS MAWO Birthday Multimedia Presentation

el cocol restaurant doors @ 8pm
 1037 commercial drive show @ 9pm

Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO)
mawo.org

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IMPERIALIST AGGRESSION AND THE ERA OF WAR + OCCUPATION

International Weekend Of Action
ANTIWAR + ANTI-OCCUPATION
FREE ALL DAY **CONFERENCE**



Sunday October 29th 10am-6pm

Breakfast & Registration 10am-11am
Britannia Community Center
(1661 Napier St @ Commercial Drive)

Workshops on:

- Roots & Causes Of War And Occupation In
 - 1 Iraq
 - 2 Afghanistan
 - 3 The Growing Imperialist Threat To Iran
 - 4 Building An Effective & Broad Antiwar Movement

Multimedia Presentation On The Israeli Invasion And Assault On Lebanon And Palestine



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