

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

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FIRE THIS TIME

In English / En Español



By Shannon Bundock

# 'Help Me! Which way to go?'

A rift has emerged among America's political leaders. Well, perhaps 'emerged' is the wrong term, it is better to say that this rift has deepened. Building up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, there were surely strategic differences among the war planners. Today however, those strategic differences are bathed in a thick soupy quagmire of fear, uncertainty and looming defeat. Needless to say, the US ruling class is in deep, deep trouble in Iraq.

Debates are alive within the US Congress and Senate. The central axis is the question of the US occupation of Iraq. Should they withdraw? When should they withdraw? What will happen if they withdraw? What will happen if they don't?

## Who is at Fault for this whole Mess Anyway?!

The side of the debate headed by President Bush is straining to prove that there has been progress the US's project to stabilize their occupation in Iraq and that the January 2007 "troop surge" strategy will prove to be a success. Bush is begging that the rest of his colleagues in the Congress and Senate wait until September before making any judgments of failure. September is the deadline for a report to Congress on the strategy from General David Petraeus, the US commander in Iraq.



*Iraq will become more lethal, and make our troops fight an uglier battle than we are seeing today."*

On the other side, a mixture of Democrats and Republicans are getting increasingly nervous about the lack of progress. While they all agree that America must "win" the war in Iraq, few are convinced that pummelling the country with more troops, tanks and guns will prove successful.

The alternatives being proposed among this wing of the US ruling class are all variations on reducing troop levels and funding. An amendment to this effect was introduced to the defence appropriations bill. Sponsored by Democrats Carl Levin and Jack Reed, it calls for American troops to start pulling out of Iraq within 120 days, with a goal of complete

## More Pressures, More Problems

On top of their fierce differences on how to win the war in Iraq, other pressures complicate the situation.

Anti-war sentiment in the US is on the rise. This is being acknowledged by everyone from anti-war organizations to CNN. The people who live inside the borders of the US are not happy with the war on Iraq. They see the hundreds of billions of dollars being poured into the occupation. They see the tens of thousands of soldiers being shipped over to Iraq. And they also see money being stripped from the little social security that exists in the US. They see body bags returning – now more than 3,600. What possible reason could people in the US have for supporting such a costly, bloody, senseless

# US ruling class differences deepen over Iraq policy

strengthening.

The Iraqi people know that it is impossible to establish any political stability or civil society under military occupation – Iraq has been living proof of this for the last four years.

According to the January – March 2007 United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) report, an estimated 54% of the Iraqi population is living on less than \$1 US per day, among whom 15% is living in extreme poverty (less than \$0.5 US per day); acute malnutrition rapidly rose from 4.4 to 9% from 2003 to 2005, as per the latest available data. Some 432,000 children were reported to be in immediate need of assistance, while the annual inflation rate in Iraq jumped to an estimated 70% in July 2006. The unemployment

in the draft hydrocarbon law allowing for production-sharing agreements with foreign oil companies, which many Iraqis see as a throwback to an earlier era of colonial exploitation."

A statement was distributed from the rally organizers which said "This law, in fact destroys the achievements of the Iraqi masses and especially the Law number 80 of 1961 and the nationalization of 1973." The statement continued, "To compensate for the military and political failure of the US administration in Iraq, this administration is trying to control the country's wealth... If this is endorsed by the parliament it would abolish sovereignty and hand over the wealth of this generation and the generations to come as a gift to the occupier."

## Self-determination for Iraqi People

Demonstrations such as this one are part of the rising resistance in Iraq. Iraqi people understand what imperialist occupation means for their political and economic rights. As the occupiers attempt to drain Iraq of resources and wealth, they are leaving a wake of destroyed infrastructure and nearly 700,000 Iraqi deaths.

In the US, in Canada and all over the world, peace-loving people must respond to the devastation in Iraq. Since the opening days of the war the government of Canada has acted in full cooperation with the destruction and pillaging of Iraq, primarily by providing logistical and security work as well as arms and advisory military personal. People in Canada must demand

In addition to asking Congress to withhold judgments, Bush is also employing the fear factor. A recent White House document supporting the troop surge entitled "Fact Sheet: The New Way Forward in Iraq" opens with this grim statement:

*"Iraq Could Not Be Graver – The War On Terror Cannot Be Won If We Fail In Iraq. Our enemies throughout the Middle East are trying to defeat us in Iraq. If we step back now, the problems in*

withdrawal by next spring. Bush has already said he will veto this if it passes.

It must be made clear however, that the manoeuvres being made by certain wings in the US government are simply a matter of strategy. These are not calls to end the war on Iraq and respect the self-determination of Iraq. These are calls to re-assess in the midst of a political, economic and military crisis. A clear example of this came from Democrat Ike Skelton of the House Armed Services Committee when he said,

*"...we must responsibly redeploy our troops out of Iraq, handing responsibility for security over to the Iraqis and leaving only those forces required for limited missions, this will allow us to concentrate our efforts on Afghanistan..."*

All wings of the US ruling class are united on one point at least; the occupation of Iraq is part of a larger strategy of expansion of imperialist hegemony and the plundering of oppressed nations of the world. The plans of the US in Iraq include permanent bases, a permanent presence and turning the Iraqi government into a US-proxy. Therefore, the crisis for the imperialist occupation in Iraq is not a small matter – it impacts the entire strategy of the US, their allies and their imperialist competitors in this era of war and occupation.

mission?

While often the US government will barrel ahead with its plans despite the opinions of the people of the US, the factor of mass sentiment cannot be completely ignored. For now the war-leaders are left to paint a picture of great progress in Iraq to attempt to dupe the people in the US. At the same time they are crossing their fingers and hoping the disillusionment with the occupation of Iraq does not reach that critical point where mass anti-war sentiment will turn into mass anti-war action.

Now the US government has found itself in a catch-22 situation. They continue the mass killing and destruction in Iraq and face the consequences of Iraqi resistance and the anti-war movement at home, or they pack their bags and flee - which means a more massive defeat for the US than any they've ever seen before. Neither of these are viable options for the US government. Obviously the tension is rising and the back-and-forth of 'who is to blame?' is reaching a higher pitch.

## Resistance At Home & Abroad

While the US government struggles to turn Iraq into a giant military base, the movement for Iraqi self-determination is expanding and



Iraqi oil workers protest foreign take-over of Iraq's oil resources. July 2007.

rate has risen to around 60%; only 32% of Iraqis have access to drinking water and health facilities lack critical drugs and equipment.

It is no wonder that Iraqis are fighting back. One of the latest fronts in the battle against the occupation of Iraq has emerged in the oil sector. The 26,000-strong Iraqi Oil Workers Union (which is not recognized by the US-controlled occupation government) has been staging a series of actions against the attempts by the occupation forces to turn the Iraqi oil sector completely over to foreign multinationals.

The latest action took place on July 16<sup>th</sup> when hundreds of oil industry workers staged a protest at Iraq's main oil port of Basra.

According to an article released on July 17<sup>th</sup> by Agence France-Presse (AFP), "At issue is a clause

that the government of Canada completely withdraw all support for this criminal and unjustifiable war.

While the US ruling class begins to crack under the pressure of their failures in Iraq, an international anti-war movement can help to expedite the process. A sovereign Iraq is the first step towards the road of rebuilding. It is the first step towards stability, security and the opportunity to address the great needs facing the Iraqi people. Along side and in unison with the Iraqi people, all peace-loving people around the world must demand:

Bring the Troops Home Now!

US/UK Out of Iraq!

End the Occupation, Self-determination for Iraq!

Out Now!



Rally in Najaf against the occupation. April 9, 2007.



Iraqi women confront US soldier. March 29, 2007.



Demonstrators protest against the abuse of Iraqi detainees.

By Mike Chimenti

As the genocidal Canada/NATO occupation of Afghanistan continues unabated, all of the quality of life indicators for Afghan civilians continue to reflect what every Afghan already knows – the occupation is destroying any chance of a decent life in Afghanistan.

Daily reports of civilians killed by NATO bombs or shot by occupying forces are continually downplayed by the government and media. Meanwhile, the Canadian ruling class is becoming increasingly trapped between two fronts – the opposition of the majority of Afghans to Canada's occupation, and the opposition of the majority of people in Canada to the government of Canada's mission in Afghanistan.

#### Deterioration of Life

Despite all of the claims of progress in Afghanistan, reports from the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), UNICEF, and the Red Cross show only deteriorating living conditions for Afghans.

On July 5<sup>th</sup> the FAO reported that more than 6.5 million Afghans continue to face the risk of malnutrition and starvation, and that "3 out of 10 Afghans suffer from chronic food insecurity". A June 9<sup>th</sup> UNICEF report showed that there are more than 60,000 children begging on the streets of Kabul alone, an increase of 62% since 2005. A second report a week later stated that 1 in 4 children in Afghanistan are forced to work in order to survive. The occupying forces of Canada/NATO continue to prove that they are incapable of providing any positive impacts for Afghan civilians.

On July 16<sup>th</sup> Ipsos Reid released its latest opinion poll results which showed that at least 50% of

# Canada in Afghanistan:

## A Defeat for the Canadian Ruling Class

people in Canada are opposed to the occupation of Afghanistan, up from 43% in the fall of 2006. In Quebec, that number rises to 70%. Amid this rising opposition to the government of Canada's war drive in Afghanistan, Stephen Harper claimed on July 18<sup>th</sup> that he doesn't "see a kind of a moral opposition to this mission," rather he sees "a growing concern of Canadians of the burden that we are carrying and the level of Canadian casualties." Most people would agree. We are concerned about carrying the burden of fewer schools, hospitals and social programs while military budgets continue to increase, along with the number of deaths in Afghanistan. We are concerned about the deaths of working people in Canada, recruited to the armed forces based on the promise of a steady job and money for post-secondary education, only to die defending the profit interests of the Canadian ruling class.

During the same press statement, Harper went on to say that "if the international community works together we can make progress in that country, to the point where it

becomes ... a functioning nation". Unfortunately, the only progress that NATO and the Canadian ruling class have made in Afghanistan recently is in raising the number of civilian deaths from NATO bombing raids, and the level of anger of Afghan villagers, to progressively higher levels.

#### Military Killing Machine

*"I prefer to join the Taliban forces because Taliban have so far killed only 2 people in my village while the coalition forces killed 63 people in a single day. Now you tell me who is my real enemy, the Taliban or the foreign troops?"*

- Haji Nik Mohammad, Oct. 26<sup>th</sup> 2006, from Panjwaye village of Qandadahar

This was the feeling of many Afghans last fall as NATO carried out its largest bombing campaign in Afghanistan since the invasion and occupation began in October of 2001, dropping more bombs and firing more cannon rounds in 2006 than in the first 3 years of the occupation combined.



Afghan refugees heading for Pakistan.

that civilian deaths resulting from NATO bombs were in a "separate moral category" than civilians killed by resistance attacks. Perhaps de Hoop Scheffer feels the need to differentiate between civilian deaths because the number of civilian deaths in NATO's "separate moral category" is higher than the number from resistance attacks. On July 2<sup>nd</sup> the United Nations (UN) reported that more than 600 Afghan civilians had been killed this year, and more than half of those deaths were at the hands of "pro-government" forces.

#### Is There Any Confusion, Is There Any Release?

Despite the naked oppression and violence of the occupation and the undeniable worsening of living conditions for Afghans, a small section of people in Canada, some of whom consider themselves progressive, remain confused about the government of Canada's intentions in Afghanistan.

However, the argument really doesn't stand up to a logical inspection. The common consensus against withdrawing the troops says that if there are no more Canadian, US and NATO soldiers in Afghanistan - women's rights and quality of life will be "returned" to their previous lows. Children, especially girls, will not be able to go to school, millions of people will face starvation and the fighting between different factions will start anew. The problem with this is that the objective conditions on the ground in Afghanistan concretely show that all of these hypothesized future dangers in Afghanistan are the current daily reality.

Since the occupation began almost 6 years ago, life expectancy in Afghanistan has decreased by 4 years to an abysmal 43 years. And, despite all of the rhetoric about the liberation of women and improvements to the status of women, the lives of women in Afghanistan continue to become more unbearable.



Recently, NATO has been heavily relying on air raids against the Afghan population in order to counter resistance attacks. The indiscriminate bombing of Afghan villagers has reached such desperate proportions that even the Western-backed Afghan PM Hamid Karzai told the BBC that NATO's killings of civilians were "difficult for us to accept or understand".

Desperately trying to cling to some semblance of legitimacy, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer claimed on June 15<sup>th</sup>

A recent article, "Staying the course," by journalist Jared Ferrie, in the Canadian THIS magazine March-April 2007 issue, Ferrie argues that Canadians should support the government of Canada's mission in Afghanistan. I read Mr. Ferrie's article with interest and am convinced that he is trying to raise a genuine, honest and compassionate concern. His central concern seems to be that Afghanistan will suffer a horrific future if the tens of thousands of foreign soldiers in Afghanistan are pulled out. Mr. Ferrie characterizes the call for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan "an odd position for the left, which has always prided itself on a commitment to social justice, to advocate a policy that could result in the suffering of millions of Afghans."

Is it possible to believe that in a country that has been in a state of war for the last 6 years –not to say in the last 30 years- that the living conditions of one of the most oppressed layers of Afghan society would improve? How could it be that in a country that now has the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest infant mortality rate in the world, where 700 children die from malnutrition everyday that the conditions of women could improve? Add to this that one woman dies every 28 minutes during childbirth, and that 1,900 out of every 100,000 mothers dies from pregnancy related causes.

In Afghanistan, it is estimated that there are 2 million war widows (a number which is increasing daily), the number of these widows who have children to support is unknown. In a country with a minimum of 40% unemployment, with most people working as day labourers, for a widowed mother to find employment is almost impossible. This situation has forced millions of mothers to send their children to work in order to survive. According to a UNICEF report published June 18<sup>th</sup> almost 1/4 of all Afghan children between the ages of 7 and 14 are working, and the majority of these children are girls.

#### Anti-War Principal and MAWO

The Western media and the spokespersons for imperialist countries constantly claim that Afghan women and girls now have access to education, but according to Saifal Maluk, head of education in Helmand province, 330 mixed schools had been closed in Kandahar, Zabul and Helmand provinces since NATO expanded its presence in the south of Afghanistan in 2006.

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# YOU CANNOT SELL WHAT IS NOT YOURS: INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND THE QUESTION OF PRIVATIZING WATER IN BC

By Aaron Mercredi

"If you want a piece of the river, you better get running 'cuz its moving fast"

These words were spoken by an Anishnabe woman at a forum I attended a few weeks ago on the privatization of BC Hydro and its effect on Indigenous communities and citizens in this province. At this event, speakers from different backgrounds presented on what is happening with the process of selling off of the rivers and waterways in British Columbia (BC) and what kind of economic, social and cultural impact this will have on people in the area.

BC Hydro, a provincial crown corporation, is being gutted by the BC Liberal government and gradually sold off to what are called Independent Power Producers (IPP), who will be able to dam the rivers and sell power to the highest bidder. 535 rivers across the province have already been sold off and more are planned. 28 rivers are already making power for private owners, 30 rivers have been dynamited as of April and 200 more have been given the green light.

Chief Stewart Phillip from the Union of BC Indian Chiefs attended the event and spoke specifically about what the privatization of water will do to the many First Nations communities spread around

*Only after the last tree has been cut down,  
Only after the last river has been poisoned,  
Only after the last fish has been caught,  
Only then will you find money cannot be eaten.*

*-Cree Prophecy*



governments.

When they began their second term in office, the BC Liberal government adopted a 'New Relationship' with Aboriginal people in BC, which was a big public relations campaign they used to cover their sordid record of dealing with Indigenous people by announcing a 'fresh start.' This new relationship is still based on colonial foundations of stealing from Native people, and throwing activists and people who resist in jail. But hey, they can throw a few parties, and put on some moccasins to show that at least they're trying. Their plan for privatizing the rivers in BC violates the three basic principles that they

Indigenous people in the process.

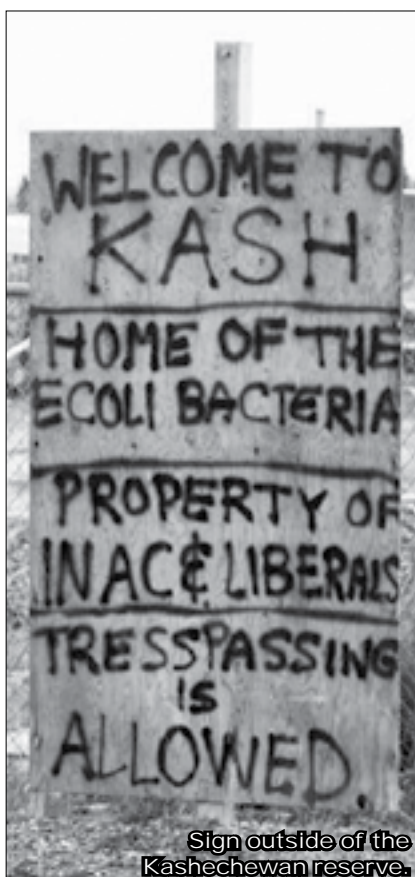
Not just a BC problem

The issue of clean running water goes beyond the sell-off of rivers currently happening in BC. Look at any statistic related to water in Indigenous communities all across Canada and you'll see the problem. In 2002, a study by the First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey (RHS) found serious concerns among Indigenous communities of low water quality and found 21 communities to be at high risk. It also found that about one third of First Nations adults consider their household water unsafe to drink and that 7 out of 10 resorted to

the province. We live in a province where the majority of land has never been surrendered by Indigenous people through treaties or a war. 97% of the land has no written agreement between the federal government and the Indigenous nations whose territory BC claims as its own. This means that, according to the Royal Proclamation signed in 1763, the land legally belongs to Indigenous people. So, in dealing with any issue around land or resources, there is an unspoken and cruel contradiction that exists in this province. They are selling what is not theirs to sell. Chief Stewart Phillip touched on this issue, when explaining what kind of changes will come about with the acceleration of privately owned rivers.

The most important issue is the effect that this sale has on Indigenous sovereignty. First Nations in BC have been engaged in a long battle with the provincial and federal governments for recognition of their inherent rights to their land and resources. Indigenous people have been going to jail repeatedly for simply exercising their rights to fish, to hunt, and to use their land. Selling off a portion of a river to a private company is an attack on Indigenous people's sovereignty because it is privatizing their river and, in many cases, their livelihood. The fine print in these agreements notes that the sale of rivers includes the land that the riverbed sits on. This is a very big deal when Indigenous people are fighting to retain what little they have left and will deeply impact the land claims that are filed with the provincial and federal

set as the foundation for this new relationship. First, that Aboriginal rights and title exist. Second, that First Nations have the ability and authority to make decisions with respect to territories. And third, that there be shared decision-making between government and First Nations. Not only has the government denied Indigenous people's inherent right to their rivers and are making their claim over the land more difficult by selling it to a private company, but they have not consulted or really involved



alternate sources for drinking water. Bottled water was the most common alternative.

The crisis of water in Indigenous communities was brought to TV screens all around the world when the Cree community of Kashechewan in Northern Ontario was evacuated in October 2005 because they were being poisoned by the water they were drinking. Over 800 people crammed into dorm rooms and friends houses throughout the province because the conditions in their own community were so bad. The water problem there began when E. Coli was discovered in the water system, as a result of the Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC) building a water treatment plant just downstream from a sewage treatment plant. When this was discovered, the community was put on a boil-water advisory and encouraged to add more chlorine to the water. This resulted in not only E. Coli poisoning, but also severe burns and lacerations from chlorine poisoning and a medical emergency in the community.

The example of Kashechewan is important because it shows what happens to a community when their water, their resources, are not in their own hands. It was Canada who poisoned their water and didn't bother to fix the problem because the government of Canada's interests do not include the well-being of Indigenous people. Another study by the Assembly of First Nations has found that over 100 Indigenous communities in Canada are on a permanent boil-water advisory.

Water is life

"From the teachings of the Elders we learn that: Water is life; and Water is sacred; Water is the life breath of the Creator. Water is no ordinary element—water is power. Water is important to us emotionally, physically, spiritually, and mentally. Water connects all living things. Understanding the meaning of water helps us to understand our interconnectedness."

- Darlene Sanderson, Cree

Fresh water is a source of life. It flows through the veins and enriches every square inch of the land we live on. For the environment, for humans, it is a necessity. There is no question about this. It is inconceivable a resource that should be available to everyone be held and controlled privately for

profit. Unfortunately it is the nature of capitalism to turn everything into a commodity to be bought and sold, even those necessities of life.

The private ventures on the rivers around the province will undoubtedly leave a huge mark on the environment as these companies only have their revenue in mind, and it is an issue that affects not only Indigenous people, but all people in BC. This is why it is important to stand together to demand that the government not only stop the privatization of water in the province, but acknowledge and respect the inherent rights that Indigenous people have to their land and resources in order for us all to maintain this land for future generations.

## Afghanistan

Continued from Page 2

Other vain attempts to justify the occupation include building democracy, free elections and representative government. But according to Jarrett LeBlanc, a visiting scholar at the US Institute of Peace at the Council on Foreign Relations, free elections under occupation are impossible.

When asked during an interview with Radio Free Europe —an absolutely pro US, pro imperialist

Kandahar, now in ruins, were once the leading centres of trade and civilization in Central Asia. This history is not unknown to people in Afghanistan. As well, the Taliban was not the first form of government that Afghanistan ever had, and it most certainly would not have been the last, regardless of the US invasion. But with the present occupation of Afghanistan, Afghans are faced with a struggle against occupation and subjugation. Not only must the Afghan struggle

institution— "Is it possible to have free and fair elections in conflict zones like Iraq and Afghanistan?", he answered, "No. The idea is almost necessarily paradoxical..." Later in the interview he said, "... 70 percent of the votes cast in the parliamentary election went to candidates who didn't win. So only 30 percent of the votes went to winning candidates."

Part way through making his case for the continuation of the occupation, Mr. Ferrie says that, "the call for withdrawal continues to grow as activists attack Canada's role in the NATO mission. Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) is one of Vancouver's most active groups, having collected more than 12,000 signatures on a petition to withdraw troops. But MAWO appears to oppose Canadian military intervention on principle."

I agree with Mr. Ferrie's comment about MAWO. As an anti-war coalition, MAWO opposes imperialist war and occupation on principle, but on the principle of the defence of humanity and the defence of the right of a sovereign people to self-determination. Calling for the continuation of the occupation, for any reason, is calling for the suppression of Afghans' (an oppressed nation) right to self-determination. Nonetheless, I'm wondering how Mr. Ferrie reads all those statistics and negative reports by the UN, FAO, UNICEF, Amnesty International, Human Rights, etc.? Principles aside, don't the facts speak for themselves?

**Afghanistan for Afghans**

The country of Afghanistan has a long history. Indeed, Kabul and

for liberation fight against the imperialist soldiers, they must also struggle against the distortions and problems created in Afghanistan by the current and past occupations.

The increasing intensity of NATO's war drive in Afghanistan is a clear manifestation of Canada and NATO's criminal intention to completely deny Afghan self-determination in an attempt to stave off the effects of their economic crisis. The increasing resistance to the occupation within Afghanistan is a clear manifestation of the awareness of Afghan people of their history and their desire to defend their land and self-determination at all costs. The rising opposition within Canada to the Canadian government's war drive in Afghanistan is a clear manifestation that the people of Canada are waking up to the fact that the government of Canada has no intentions, or ability, to improve the lives of Afghans.

As people in Canada suffer increasing cuts to healthcare, education, social programs, women's services, higher unemployment and poverty, as well as the continuing occupation and suppression of Indigenous people in Canada, they are beginning to understand that the government that is responsible for the denial and suppression of people's rights in Canada is the same government that is responsible for the denial and suppression of people's rights in Afghanistan.

**Canadian Troops Out of Afghanistan Now!**

**NATO Out of Afghanistan Now!**

**Hands Off Afghanistan!**

# STATE TERRORISM



## and the Hopes of Justice and Peace in El Salvador



### Repression and Human Sense: the Recent Protests in El Salvador

By José Angel\*

Translated by Ernesto Nañez

In the early hours of Monday the 2nd, July 2007 in the historic city of Suchitoto ( Flower-Bird in the nahuatl language ), the current corrupt government of El Salvador exposes their neoliberal policy to the world that can only be carried out through state terrorism.

This act of repression by the state forces are directed against

population, it must be democratic and in that sense it must be constructed in consultation and dialog with the social forces and institutions, like the Municipality Governments” (which still do not know the contents of decentralization text President Antonio Saca is proposing)

The social organizations in fact have organized themselves since

10:00 am, to this the military chief replied with a threat, giving them 5 minutes to clear out; they started launching tear gas and began firing rubber bullets. The helicopters were shooting trying to surround them and then started to try to capture the majority of the protesters who were mainly women.

#### Human Rights Under Attack

As the results of these acts they were more than 80 people injured and beaten and more than 30 were arrested and subject to physical and psychological abuse during detention and transportation to the headquarters. Of these, 13 remain in jail, 6 women and 7 men, to whom they want to apply a special law against “terrorist acts”, by trying to criminalize

bodies to which they have an obligation to”

In attention to all this Amnesty International considers that the government should nullify all

through apply through special anti-terrorist acts and laws against organized crime. These laws make it possible to have legal ground to act against the



hundreds of farmers and members of different social organizations that were expressing themselves in defense of water services and against the privatization policies. In response the army and the police mobilized vehicles with machine gun emplacement, 30 helicopters of different types and special units trained to repress the heroic social movement.

These acts are a complete violation of the freedom of speech and signify a huge setback for the construction of peace and democracy in El Salvador.

#### The Event

Days before July 2nd different local organizations, women organizations, water defense committees and rural community organizations had agreed to express their position on the neoliberal initiative of privatizing the water service, an initiative which is disguised as a decentralization policy and which the government refuses to make public to this community (In Suchitoto there are 19 water systems including EMASA, the joint venture company that provides the service in the urban area). The water defense committees expressed their concern about decentralization without resources, and without giving any stake or participation in decision making would only worsen the already terrible conditions. The women organization of that city explains: “For the water decentralization to have positive effects in the

long ago to promote on their own rural projects for drinking water, and they are the only ones who can defend their rights, for this reason they went out and protested that day the president traveled to the city.

At 7:00am arrived the first squad of repressive forces to where the protesters were located, their leaders requested that the military chief be there only until

these actions and these people in an unjustified way, they are attacking fundamental rights. Amnesty International makes notice that in situations in which the fight against terrorism is invoked, the Inter-American Human Rights Commission has noted to member states to “Take into account the pertinent commitments in virtue of all the international human rights

charges that imply suppression of legitimate fundamental rights and setting the persecuted persons under these charges free.

On other accounts it is alarming that these types of actions are taken against the population that went out to pronounce itself in legitimate exercise of its’ rights, the government is using the same repression mechanisms that it used in past times. This violation to freedom of speech also disregards the spirit of the peace treaties, and also leaves no room for doubt about the current regime’s strategy, which seeks to destabilize, block or destroy the social movement, an attack on the right to organize— a very unpleasant memory of the terrible violations that occurred during the last civil war.

The husband of one of the detainees assures that the void of a missing mother in his household is worse everyday.

“My sons already ask more frequently where their mom is, they still do not understand what happened, and why their mother doesn’t comes back home at nights”

With a broken voice he continues “That really breaks my hearth, because it’s very sad to see how my sons suffer because of their mother’s absence”

#### Oppose El Salvador Government Repression

The government has implemented an authoritarian and repressive policy with which they intend

representatives of organized social movements.

As a consequence of this repressive policy the government makes use of the army to attack the population, creates non-independent tribunals and accuses the social movements that protest against their neoliberal policies of terrorism, with maximum penalties of over 15 years of prison, a law which came into effect in October 2006.

But the people are not going to be intimidated and new mobilizations are appearing in the west of the country against the pollution that will be created by the eventual installation of 2 thermo electrical plants. A project controlled by the North American company AES which controls the power stations in the country and intends to install a carbon plant and a natural gas plant. These same projects have already been rejected by the population in Honduras, when the social organizations of that country stopped the installation of a carbon plant in 2001, because of the elevated pollution levels that carbon produces.

The heroic social movement grows, the struggle continues.

Unity, Struggle, Solidarity

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# Terrorismo de Estado y las Esperanzas de Justicia y Paz en El Salvador



## Represión y Sentido Humano las Recientes Protestas en El Salvador

Por José Angel\*

En horas de la mañana de el día Lunes 2 de Julio de 2007 en la histórica ciudad de Suchitoto (Pájaro-flor en idioma nahuatl) el actual gobierno corrupto de El Salvador deja al descubierto ante el mundo entero su política neoliberal que solamente puede defender con un terrorismo de estado.

Estos echos de represión por parte de los cuerpos represivos se dan en contra de cientos de campesinos y miembros de diferentes organizaciones sociales que se expresaban en defensa del agua y en contra de las políticas de privatización, en estos actos el ejercito y la policía desplazaron vehículos

y en tal sentido planteada en consulta y dialogo con los actores sociales e institucionales como son los Gobiernos Municipales” (quienes aun no conocen el texto de descentralización que el Presidente Antonio Saca propone).

Las organizaciones sociales de echo se an organizado hace mucho tiempo para de esa forma impulsar ellos mismos proyectos rurales de agua potable y son ellos los únicos que pueden defender sus derechos por lo cual salieron a protestar ese día que el presidente viajaba a la ciudad.

A las siete de la mañana llego el primer pelotón de los cuerpos represivos donde estaban los

### Los Derechos Humanos Bajo Ataque

Como resultado de estos echos mas de 80 personas fueron heridas y golpeadas más de treinta fueron detenidos los cuales fueron objeto de maltrato físico y psicológico durante la detención y su traslado a los cuarteles, de estos detenidos 13 permanecen en la cárcel, 6 mujeres y 7 hombres y a quienes quieren aplicar una ley especial contra actos de terrorismo sin embargo al pretender criminalizar estos echos y a estas personas de modo injustificado, se atacan los derechos fundamentales. Amnistía Internacional hace notar que frente a situaciones

menoscabo al ejercicio legitimo de derechos fundamentales y disponer la libertad de los imputados con dichos cargos.

Por otra parte es alarmante que se tome este tipo de acciones contra la población que sale a pronunciarse con todo su derecho, el gobierno esta utilizando los mismos mecanismos de represión utilizados en tiempos pasados, esta violación al derecho de expresión también viola el espíritu de los acuerdos de paz; además dejan clara la posición del actual régimen que pretende desestabilizar, bloquear o destruir el movimiento social violando el derecho a la organización, un recuerdo nada

el comenta: “Eso a mi me quebranta el corazón, pues es triste ver como mis hijos sufren la ausencia de su madre”.

### Ha Oponer la Represión del Gobierno Salvadoreño

El gobierno ha implementado una política autoritaria y represiva con la cual pretende aplicar la ley especial contra actos de terrorismo y ley contra el crimen organizado, los cuales posibilitan la impunidad jurídica para actuar en contra de los representantes de los movimientos sociales organizados.

Como consecuencia de esta política represiva el gobierno hace uso del ejercito para reprimir a la población, crea tribunales

artillados con emplazamiento de ametralladoras, 30 helicópteros de diverso tipo y unidades especiales entrenadas para reprimir al heroico movimiento social.

Estos echos son violatorios de la libertad de expresión y significa un retroceso para la construcción de la paz y la democracia en El Salvador.

### Los Acontecimientos

Días antes del 2 de Julio diversas organizaciones locales, de mujeres, comités de agua y organizaciones de comunidades rurales habían acordado expresar sus posiciones frente a la iniciativa neoliberal de privatizar el agua, la cual es encubierta con la política de descentralización y la cual el gobierno se niega hacer publica a esa comunidad. (En Suchitoto existen 19 sistemas de agua incluida EMASA la empresa mixta que provee servicio en el área urbana.) Los comités de agua manifestaron su preocupación acerca de que una descentralización sin recursos, sin patrimonio y sin acceso a la toma de decisiones, solo profundizaría las condiciones miserables existentes. La organización de mujeres en esa ciudad plantea: “para que la descentralización tenga efectos positivos en la población, debe ser necesariamente democrática,

manifestantes, sus dirigentes pidieron al jefe militar estar en ese lugar hasta las diez de la mañana a lo cual el jefe militar respondió que les daba cinco minutos para desalojar el lugar, comenzaron a lanzar gases lacrimógenos así como también comenzaron a disparar balas de goma. Los helicópteros disparaban ráfagas con el objetivo de rodearlos y así poder capturar a la mayoría que protestaba, siendo ellas más mujeres que hombres.

en que se invoca la lucha contra el terrorismo la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, ha instado a los Estados miembros a “tener en cuenta los compromisos pertinentes en virtud de todos los instrumentos internacionales de derechos humanos a los que están obligados”.

En atención a todo ello Amnistía Internacional considera que corresponde dejar sin efecto todos los cargos que impliquen

grato de las graves violaciones durante la pasada guerra civil.

El esposo de una de las compañeras detenidas asegura que el vacío de una madre en su casa cada día es más grande.

“Mis hijos ya preguntan con mayor frecuencia en donde esta su mama, ellos aun no entienden que es lo que ha pasado y por que su madre no llega a la casa por las noches”.

Con un nudo en la garganta

no independientes, y acusa de terroristas al movimiento social que protesta contra las políticas neoliberales hasta con penas máximas de más de 15 años, cuya ley entro en efecto en Octubre de 2006.

Pero el pueblo no se deja intimidar y nuevas protestas están surgiendo al oriente de el país en contra de la contaminación ambiental por la eventual instalación de dos plantas termoelectricas cuyo proyecto esta siendo controlado por la empresa estadounidense AES que controla las distribuidoras eléctricas de el país y que pretenden instalar una planta de carbón y una planta con gas natural estos mismos proyectos ya han sido rechazados por la población en Honduras cuando las organizaciones sociales de ese país lograron evitar la instalación de la planta de carbón en 2001 por los elevados niveles de contaminación que produce el carbón.

El movimiento social heroico crece, la lucha continua.

**Unidad, Lucha, Solidaridad**

*\*José Angel es un miembro fundador del grupo musical Cutumay Camones de El Salvador y miembro organizador de la Coalición de Solidaridad por LatinoAmerica Unida en Vancouver, BC.*



# SICKO:

## Michael Moore's SICKO Exposes Inhuman U.S. Healthcare System

By Thomas Davies

For anyone who wasn't worried about the growing privatization of the Canadian medical system, Michael Moore's new film, "SICKO" can hopefully serve as a much-needed eye-opener. The new documentary examines the American private health care system –its massive human and financial costs– and its failure to thrive in anything beyond creating huge profits for big businesses. The film raises important questions about the reasons why, despite all the obvious negativities, a for-profit medical system exists in the United States. We in Canada must also ask why the government of Canada is currently on the slippery slope of imitation and what the alternatives are.

### Disturbing and Widespread

There are many unsettling individual horror stories in SICKO of those forced to live under the US health care system, where there is no guarantee of care unless you can pay. It's worth remembering that these are not isolated incidents, but widespread symptoms of a system where the most recent data from the US Census Bureau indicate that 46.6 million people live completely without health insurance (a rise of about 1.3 million from the previous

year). Most of these people are workers who aren't covered by their employer or the government, and cannot afford private coverage. All of them are just a car crash away from financial and medical ruin.

Even when covered by some form of medical insurance, the profit-driven priorities of the providers still make receiving adequate care extremely difficult. Debt due to medical bills is the largest single cause of personal bankruptcies in the US, and according to a Harvard medical study, 76% of those who filed for bankruptcy were actually covered under some sort of health insurance. A woman in "Sicko" was stuck with the ambulance bill after a car accident because she didn't clear the charge with her insurer before receiving the ambulance. She had been unconscious at the time.

There is an always-growing list of studies outlining the deficiencies in the quality of private care, but a good example is a major analysis of all the studies comparing mortality rates between not-for-profit and private for-profit hospitals in the US published in the May 2002 edition of the Canadian Medical Association Journal. The massive study found that because of profit-maximizing corner cutting, death rates in for-profit hospitals were significantly higher than in not-for-profit hospitals, despite the extra money paid by hospital users.

### Inefficient Too

So if it's more expensive for patients, hard to access, and there are no guarantees of better care, what are the benefits of private medicine? Is it the efficiency and streamlined nature of the system? Sorry, no. The US spends more of its GDP on healthcare than any other developed nation, and yet according to a recent World Health Organization report cited by Moore, is ranked 37th in healthcare.

Where does all the money go? A study in the International Journal of Health Services found that in 2003, administration costs in the US health care system ate up about \$400Billion, or about 25% of total health care spending.

The rest? Check out the profits of the major healthcare companies. In 2005, Johnson and Johnson earned profits of \$10Billion, and in 2007 Wall Street predicts their global profits at \$15.13Billion. The pharmaceutical industry alone is more than twice as profitable as auto, computer, and telecommunications industries.

### The Bottom Line

The bottom line is not very complex. In a system where profits are the priority, and where those with the most money make the most decisions, the majority of people are left out. This is especially alarming when what we are being "left out" of is access to adequate healthcare a matter, literally, of

life and death.

In Canada, businesses have the same priorities as the US. They have been working very hard to turn back the clock on public healthcare gains people in Canada had to fight extremely hard to get. In June 2005, they were able to secure a major victory

when a Supreme Court ruling struck down a Quebec law that prohibited private health insurance to cover procedures already offered by the public system. This opened the doors wide open to the possibilities of increased privatization.

In the province of BC there are now 70 private surgical clinics, including 23 providing outpatient general surgeries on a for-profit basis. An estimated 50,000 patients obtained surgery at for-profit clinics in 2005, according to the Vancouver Sun, paying between \$700 and \$17,000 each in facility fees.

A huge Trojan Horse for private



Hospital workers protest cuts to U.S. healthcare. Trenton NJ, June 7, 2007

healthcare is the "public-private partnerships", or P3s. These are deals where the government pays a for-profit company to provide formerly public services, with contracts lasting decades and profits guaranteed in writing. With all this underhanded privatization, there is a lot more of it than most of us thought. In 2005, the government spent \$98.8Billion on public health care. About \$43.2Billion was then spent on private!

They Won't Stop Here

Does anybody really think that these

healthcare corporations are going to stop at where they are, when they know that the further Canada slips towards the US model the huger their profits get. Anyone who says private healthcare in Canada is really just an issue of a few people paying a bit more and shortening the wait lists for the rest of us is either naïve or on some



Moore marches in rally called by California Nurses Association. Sacramento, CA, June 12, 2007.

company's payroll. To those who say it is an issue of democracy and freedom of choice: what kind of choices do those 46 million people in the US without health insurance have?

### Cuba's Way: A Better Way

"The life of a single human being is worth a million times more than all the property of the richest man on earth... Far more important than a good remuneration is the pride of serving one's neighbour. Much more definitive and much more lasting than all the gold that one can accumulate is the gratitude of a people." - Che Guevara, 1960, "On Revolutionary Medicine"

## Is Canada Heading in the Same Direction?

The most interesting aspect of SICKO is Moore's visit to Cuba. He doesn't deny the challenges the country faces, but is right in enthusiastically pointing out that Cuba spends only \$251 per capita for all of its inhabitants to receive free, universal healthcare. Compare that to \$5,700 per capita in the US, which guarantees nothing.

Despite a cruel and far-reaching US blockade, Cuba has the highest life expectancy in Latin American, the lowest infant mortality rate (at 6.22, lower than

the US), and has 5.9 doctors for every 1000 people, compared with 5.5 in the U.S., 1.7 in the U.K, and 2 in Canada. Medicines are also incredibly cheap. A September 11th rescue worker who traveled with Moore to Cuba bought a refill for her asthma inhaler for 5 cents. It would have cost \$120 in the U.S.

Cuba also absolutely excels in its ability to help those in other countries. As of March 2006 there were 25,000 Cuban health professionals working for free in 68 nations, and 27,000 young people from around the world are currently studying medicine free of charge at the Latin American School of Medicine in Cuba!

How does Cuba accomplish this? By following the words of Che, and treating the provision of healthcare as a sacred human right, not as something to be bought and sold. When a government is not continually making space for corporations to create more profits, the possibilities of free, universal healthcare, create incredible possibilities for humanity.

### Which Way Forward?

Imagine if the US allocated even only the \$400Billion a year it spends on administrative costs for healthcare, to health programs following the Cuban model. Consider what it would be like if the Canadian government was more concerned with making space for patient beds instead of corporate contracts. SICKO should serve as an important reminder of the two directions that healthcare in Canada can go. Towards the US model, or towards the Cuban. The stakes are high, because it's our lives that are at stake. People across Canada must continue to demand a complete end to the privatization of healthcare, and for free, universal, and accessible healthcare for all.

La Dirección Nacional de la UJC acordó informar la siguiente medida cuando concluía su aplicación: “El pasado sábado 7 de julio, el Buró Nacional de la Juventud Comunista decidió ajustar el plan de fuerzas a movilizar por las Brigadas Estudiantiles de Trabajo, bajo el principio de emplear a los estudiantes en tareas de orden social y recreativo, en número ajustado al mínimo necesario y en sus municipios de residencia, para evitar la transportación.

“Tal decisión fue discutida el propio día con el Estado Mayor Nacional de las BET, conformado por las organizaciones estudiantiles y los organismos de la Administración Central del Estado, y también con las direcciones de la Juventud Comunista en todas las provincias.

“Se hizo énfasis en la idea de un uso más racional de la fuerza a movilizar, el ahorro de recursos materiales, fundamentalmente combustible, y el propósito de que los estudiantes utilicen el tiempo en afianzar conocimientos, incorporar hábitos de lectura y debatir sobre



*Reflexiones del Presidente Fidel Castro*

# Autocrítica de Cuba

temas de suma importancia.

“Como resultado de las decisiones adoptadas, se moverán solo 200 000 estudiantes en julio y agosto, de los 600 000 planificados inicialmente. No se efectuarán movilizaciones hacia campamentos agrícolas o escuelas en el campo cuya ubicación implica el uso de transporte y otros aseguramientos logísticos.

“La convocatoria se hará este año por solo 7 días en labores relacionadas con tareas de la Revolución Energética, junto a los trabajadores sociales, tales como capacitación de la comunidad para una mejor cultura del ahorro, entrega de equipos electrodomésticos pendientes de distribuir y visitas a un número de núcleos familiares que, habiéndolos recibido y

asumido las obligaciones pertinentes, no han cumplimentado el pago.

“También estarán presentes en la lucha antivectorial, a fin de que no se introduzca de nuevo el dengue, y en la atención primaria y secundaria de salud, apoyando a policlínicos y hospitales.

“La promoción de actividades culturales, recreativas y deportivas en las comunidades será otra de las tareas que acometerán los participantes en las Brigadas Estudiantiles de Trabajo.

“La UJC promoverá entre los movilizados y el resto de los jóvenes el estudio y el debate.”

No puedo menos que felicitar a la Dirección Nacional de la Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas, y también a los responsables de los departamentos de Organización e Ideológico del Partido que fueron consultados por la misma y apoyaron sin vacilar esta medida.

El trabajo físico no genera por sí mismo una conciencia. Cada trabajador es diferente. Su temperamento, su organismo, sus nervios, el tipo de trabajo que realiza, el rigor de este, las condiciones en que invierte su fuerza —bajo el sol ardiente o en área climatizada—, si es a destajo o remunerado por un sueldo, si tiene hábitos de disciplina o no, si dispone de todas sus facultades mentales o padece de alguna discapacidad, escuelas en que estudió, maestros que tuvo, si es profesional o no la actividad a realizar, si el trabajador es de origen campesino o urbano. Algo muy importante: si maneja o distribuye bienes o servicios de cualquier tipo, quiénes son sus jefes, qué imagen proyectan, cómo hablan, cómo miran. Podría llenar páginas hablando de las diferencias individuales de cada trabajador. Por ello, lo que más requiere el ciudadano de nuestro país son los conocimientos, si se desea crear una conciencia.

El precepto martiano sobre la importancia de vincular el estudio y el trabajo en la formación del hombre, nos llevó en el pasado a promover la participación de los estudiantes universitarios e incluso alumnos de nivel medio superior en el trabajo físico. Ello fue, en primer lugar,

una necesidad insoslayable. Había que sustituir el vacío que dejaban entonces los que masivamente abandonaban el campo de caña tan pronto aparecían otras oportunidades de empleo. El nivel promedio de conocimientos era muy bajo, aun después de la alfabetización, del auge masivo de la enseñanza primaria y más tarde de la secundaria básica. Nuestros jóvenes lo comprendieron y aportaron su esfuerzo con disciplina y entusiasmo.

Hoy se ha masificado la educación superior, que comenzó con los médicos y educadores, continuó con los trabajadores sociales, los de las ciencias informáticas, los instructores de arte, la universalización de los estudios universitarios para gran número de carreras. Hay que hacer trabajar las células del cerebro si se desea formar conciencia, tan necesaria en la

complejidad del mundo actual.

El propósito de estudiar una o dos semanas, que este año será solo 7 días, con materiales adecuados que se les suministren, generará la satisfacción del tiempo bien empleado y la conciencia que con urgencia necesita nuestra sociedad.

Durante todo el año debemos mantenernos informados sobre las cuestiones esenciales y los detalles de lo que ocurre en Cuba y en el mundo.

En materia económica concreta, pienso que en cada país casi todos los ciudadanos ignoramos todo. Es ineludible conocer por qué sube el precio del petróleo, que el pasado lunes alcanzó cotizaciones de 77 dólares por barril; por qué suben los precios de los alimentos, como el trigo y otros, que por cuestiones de clima deben ser importados; si la causa de su elevación es permanente o coyuntural.

No todos los trabajadores tienen estímulos en pesos convertibles, una práctica que se generalizó en gran número de empresas durante el periodo especial, sin cumplir en no pocas ocasiones los requisitos mínimos comprometidos. No todos los ciudadanos reciben del exterior divisas convertibles, algo que no es ilegal, pero que a veces crea desigualdades y privilegios irritantes en un país que se esmera por los servicios vitales y gratuitos que ofrece a toda su población. No menciono las jugosas ganancias que hacían los que las transportaban clandestinamente, ni la forma en que nos tomaban el pelo transfiriendo los billetes norteamericanos a otras monedas para evitar las medidas de respuesta contra el dólar.

La falta real y visible de igualdad y la carencia de información pertinente da lugar a opiniones críticas, sobre todo en los sectores más necesitados.

Es indudable que en Cuba, los que de una u otra forma reciben pesos convertibles —aunque en estos casos son limitadas las sumas— o los ciudadanos que reciben divisas del exterior, adquieren a la vez servicios sociales esenciales gratuitos, alimentos, medicinas y otros bienes a precios ínfimos y subsidiados. Estamos sin

embargo cumpliendo estrictamente nuestras obligaciones financieras precisamente porque no somos una sociedad de consumo. Se necesitan administradores serios, valientes y conscientes.

Los que gastan gasolina a diestra y siniestra con nuestro actual parque de vehículos de todo tipo; los que olvidan que los precios de los alimentos suben sostenidamente y que las materias primas para la agricultura y la industria, muchas de cuyas producciones se distribuyen a todos con precios subsidiados, deben adquirirse a precios de mercado; los que olvidan que el país tiene el deber sagrado de luchar hasta la última gota de sangre y debe gastar en materias primas y medios defensivos frente a un enemigo que monta guardia permanente, pueden comprometer la independencia y la

vida de Cuba. ¡Con eso no se juega!

Los pelos se me pusieron de punta cuando hace pocos días un distinguido burócrata exclamó por televisión que ahora que el periodo especial se acabó enviaremos cada año más y más delegaciones para tal y más cual actividad.

¿De dónde habrá salido ese bárbaro?, me dije. Tal vez sea una donación que nos envía Sancho Panza desde su ínsula de Barataria.

En Cuba se alivió el periodo especial; pero el mundo ha caído en periodo muy especial, que está por ver cómo sale de él. Despilfarramos miles de millones de dólares en combustible. No solo como gastadores de oficio, que es una tendencia natural, sino también por la necesidad de cambiar decenas de miles de antiguos motores soviéticos, de una época en que les sobra la gasolina, por motores chinos muy ahorrrativos con razonables facilidades de pago. Este programa se ha retrasado.

En la economía mundial los metales, igual que el petróleo, suben por encima de sus parámetros históricos, pero tienen caídas bruscas.

Nada puede sin embargo remediar en breve tiempo la necesidad de combustible para el transporte personal y público y los equipos agrícolas o de construcción. Todo está mecanizado en los países desarrollados. Cuentan los viajeros que ven levantarse una tras otra edificaciones de todo tipo, que no se detienen de día o de noche. Las ciudades se agigantan. Cada vez son más los millones de personas que necesi-

tan agua potable, vegetales, frutas y alimentos proteicos, que otros deben producir y suministrar después de recorrer a veces grandes distancias. Necesitan además carreteras de tres o cuatro vías en cada dirección, puentes, obras ingenieras costosas. El menor incidente, el simple contacto lateral entre dos vehículos, lo paraliza todo. Cada día es mayor el gasto público y menor la ayuda al desarrollo.

Lo peor es que por cada mil personas hay más de 500 automóviles individuales. En Estados Unidos casi mil. Viven o trabajan en lugares distantes. Cada uno con su garaje. Cada centro de trabajo con su parqueo. No alcanzan las refinerías. Muchas necesitan ampliarse y además deben construirse nuevas plantas. La materia prima de la refinería es el petróleo; mientras más pesado más se requiere y hace rato no aparecen grandes yacimientos del ligero. Una huelga en Nigeria, la guerra de Iraq, las amenazas a Irán, los viejos conflictos

políticos en Europa, un maremoto, un ciclón, disparan los precios. Los viejos y nuevos grandes consumidores demandan cada vez más millones de barriles diarios. Crecen por supuesto simultáneamente los planes de construir nuevas plantas nucleares. No discuto ahora los efectos o peligros ambientales o climáticos, sino las incertidumbres que desatan en la economía real.

Después de gastar una montaña de oro destruyendo a Vietnam, Nixon sustituyó el oro por billetes de papel, sin que apenas alguien se percatara de las consecuencias. Era tal el desarrollo tecnológico de Estados Unidos, su capacidad de producir mercancías industriales y agrícolas, y en especial su enorme poderío militar, que la sustitución del oro por billetes

de papel no constituyó una tragedia. Se produjo una inflación de más del 10 por ciento, que fue controlada. Vino después el rearme de Estados Unidos sufragado con papeles, al final de la guerra fría, y la victoria de la sociedad consumista, que deslumbraba a las naciones con su orgía de bienestar aparente. Con papeles el imperio adquirió gran parte de las riquezas del mundo, donde impone sus leyes, menospreciando la soberanía de las naciones.

El dólar fue perdiendo progresivamente su valor hasta llegar a menos del 6 por ciento en la década del 70. Los expertos están desconcertados respecto a los fenómenos nuevos. Ninguno está seguro de lo que va a ocurrir.

¿Existen o no razones para profundizar en estos temas?

**Fidel Castro Ruz**  
10 de julio del 2007  
6:10 p.m.





## Reflections of President Fidel Castro

# Cuba's Self-Criticism

The National Directorate of the UJC (Communist Youth League) agreed to communicate the following measure as it was concluding its strategy: "Last Saturday, July 7, the National Bureau of the Communist Youth decided to tighten up the plan for the mobilization of forces of the Student Work Brigades (BET), guided by the principle of using students for tasks of a social and recreational nature, in numbers adjusted to a necessary minimum and within municipalities where they reside, in order to avoid relying on transportation.

"That decision was discussed on the same day with the National General Staff of the BET, made up of student organizations and bodies belonging to the Central State Administration, and also with the directorates of the Communist Youth in all the provinces.

"The idea of making a more rational use of the mobilized forces was emphasized; also, saving material resources, especially fuel, and the fact that the students should be using their time consolidating their knowledge, incorporating reading habits and discussing subjects of great importance.

"As a result of the decisions adopted, only 200,000 of the originally planned 600,000 students will be mobilized in July and August. Mobilizations to the agricultural fields or schools in the countryside will not take place, since their locations imply the use of transportation and other logistical services.

"This year the call will be made for only 7 days of work related to the tasks included in the Energy Revolution, together with the social workers, such as training the community to improve their energy saving habits, delivering the domestic appliances that have not been

work, the conditions under which they labor – under a scorching sun or in an air-conditioned room-, whether it is piecework or is salaried, whether the worker is disciplined or not, whether they have command of all their mental capacities or suffer from some disability, the schools they attended, teachers they had, whether the activity is a professional one or not, whether the worker is from the country or from the city. Something else very important: whether the worker handles or distributes goods or services of some kind, who the bosses are, what image they project, how they speak, the way they look at things. I could fill pages talking about the individual differences of every worker. Therefore, what the people in our country need most is knowledge, if what we want to do is create conscience.

Martí's precept about the importance of linking education and work in the formation of man, led us in the past to promote the participation of university students and even students from the middle level education in physical labor. At first, this was an inescapable necessity. We had to fill the vacuum left by those who abandoned the sugar cane fields en masse as soon as other work opportunities appeared. The average level of knowledge was very low, even after the literacy campaign, the massive surge in primary education and later at the junior high school level. Our youth understood this and contributed their efforts with discipline and enthusiasm.

Nowadays we have taken higher education to the masses, beginning with the physicians and educators and continuing with the social workers, those in the field of computer science, the art instructors, in the universalization of university courses for a wide variety of degree courses. We have to make the brain cells work if we want to build consciences, so necessary



Fidel speaks at a rally outside the U.S. Interests Section. Havana, 2001.

which is not illegal but which at times creates irritating inequalities and privileges in a country that does its utmost to supply vital services free of charge to the entire population. I do not mention the juicy profits being made by those who transport people clandestinely, nor the way they would fool us by changing the US bills into other currencies in order to avoid our response measures against the dollar.

The real and visible lack of equality and the lack of pertinent information gives way to critical opinions, especially in the neediest sectors.

In Cuba, without a doubt, those who some way or another receive convertible pesos –even though in these cases the sums are limited –or those receiving currency from abroad, also acquire free essential social services, food,

countries everything is mechanized. Travelers describe how they see building after building, of all kinds, rising up, and that the pace does not stop, day or night. Cities are becoming gigantic. There are constantly more millions of people who need drinking water, vegetables, fruits and protein foods that have had to be produced and supplied by others often after traversing great distances. Furthermore, they need highways with three or four lanes in both directions, bridges, expensive works of engineering. The least of accidents, a simple sideways brush between two vehicles, will paralyze everything. Public expenditures are greater every day and development assistance has decreased.

Worst of all, for every thousand people there are more than 500 private automobiles. In the United States that number reaches almost



Youth participate in Havana's Mayday rally. Havana, May 1, 2007

distributed, and visiting a number of families who, having received and taken on the pertinent obligations, have yet to complete their payments.

"They will also be participating in the Anti-Mosquito Campaign in order to prevent a return of dengue fever, and in primary and secondary health care, supporting polyclinics and hospitals.

"Promoting cultural, recreational and sports activities in the communities will be another of the tasks occupying the members of the Student Work Brigades.

"The UJC will promote study and discussion among the mobilized young people and among the rest of the youth."

I can certainly congratulate the National Directorate of the Communist Youth League, and also the people in charge of the Organization and Ideology Departments of the Party who were consulted about this and who wholeheartedly supported this measure.

Physical labor on its own does not generate conscience. Every worker is different. Their temperament, their physique, their spirit, the kind of work they do, the toughness of their

in today's complex world.

The purpose of studying for one or two weeks, and this year it will only be for 7 days, with proper materials that will be supplied, will generate a feeling of satisfaction in time well spent and the conscience that our society urgently needs.

Throughout the entire year we must keep ourselves informed about essential matters and about the details of what is happening in Cuba and in the rest of the world.

On specific economic matters, I think that in every country, most people are unaware of everything. It is inescapable to know why the cost of oil is climbing; last Monday the price reached 77 dollars a barrel. Why the prices of foods are increasing, such as wheat and others which must be imported because of climate related problems; if the cause of their increase is permanent or short-lived.

Not all workers receive the incentive of convertible pesos, a practice that became generalized in a large number of companies during the Special Period, without always fulfilling the minimum committed requirements. Not everybody receives convertible currency from abroad, something

medicines and other goods at extremely low subsidized prices. However we are strictly fulfilling our financial obligations precisely because we are not a consumer society. We need serious, brave and conscientious managers.

Those using up gasoline all over the place with our current fleet of vehicles of all kinds; those who forget that the prices of food increase sharply and that raw materials for agriculture and industry, many of whose products are distributed to all at subsidized prices, must be acquired at market prices; those that forget that the country has the sacred duty to struggle until our last drop of blood and must spend money for raw materials and defensive measures faced with an enemy who is permanently on guard, they can compromise the independence and life of Cuba. We cannot fool around with that!

I was horrified when a few days ago I heard a distinguished bureaucrat exclaim on TV that now that the Special Period was over, we would be sending more and more delegations each year to such and such activities.

Where did this genius come from? I wondered. Perhaps it is a donation sent us by Sancho Panza from his Isle of Barataria.

In Cuba, the Special Period has abated; but the world has fallen prey to a very special period, and we must wait to see how it will come out in the end. Billions of dollars are wasted in fuel. Not just as professional wastrels, that's a natural tendency, but also out of necessity to exchange thousands of ancient Soviet motors, from a time when there was gasoline aplenty, for Chinese motors that are very thrifty and have reasonable credit facilities. This program has fallen behind.

In the world economy, metals, just like oil, rise above their historical parameters, but they also plummet abruptly.

Of course, no one can remedy, in a short time, the need for oil in personal and public transportation and for agricultural or construction equipment. In developed

a thousand. People live or work at great distances. Everybody has their own garage. Every workplace has its own parking lot. There are not enough oil refineries. Many of them need to be expanded and also new plants must be constructed. The raw material for a refinery is oil; the heavier it is the more we need and for a long time now there have been no great oilfields of light oil coming to light. A strike in Nigeria, the war in Iraq, the threats to Iran, the old political conflicts in Europe, a tidal wave, a hurricane, all of these send prices sky high. The old and the new big consumers are always demanding more millions of barrels per day. Of course, new nuclear plants are growing at the same time. I am not discussing now the environmental or climate effects or dangers, but the uncertainties that they unleash upon the real economy.

After spending a mountain of gold to destroy Vietnam, Nixon replaced gold with paper bills, with hardly anyone noticing the consequences. The United States' technological development was such, as was its capacity to produce industrial and agricultural merchandise, especially its enormous military powerhouse, that the replacement of gold by paper did not constitute a tragedy. Inflation of more than 10 % was produced, and it was controlled. This was followed by the United States military build-up voted in with papers, at the end of the Cold War, and the victory of the consumer society which dazzles nations with its orgy of apparent wellbeing. The empire acquired a large part of the world's wealth with paper, imposing their United States laws there, scorning the sovereignty of nations.

The dollar went along progressively losing its value until it reached less than 6 percent of what its value had been in the 70's. Experts are puzzled about the new phenomena. Nobody is sure about what is going to happen.

Do we have reasons to delve more deeply into these subjects, or not?

**Fidel Castro Ruz**

**July 10, 2007, 6:10 p.m.**

# SOMALIA 6 MONTHS AFTER OCCUPATION: A BALANCE SHEET OF AN IMPERIALIST PLOT

By Thomas Davies

On December 28<sup>th</sup> of 2006 the earth shook in Mogadishu. US backed Ethiopian troops took control of the Somali capital, and were soon followed by US planes firing on civilians across the country. Their promise was an old one – to rid the country of a newly forming “radical Islamic” government (the Union of Islamic Courts), and bring law, order, peace, love and justice for all. The troops were greeted by the protests of thousands of Somalis both in and outside the country, and the past six months have proved what Somalis have been saying all along. Since the occupation began six months ago, the conditions in Somalia have dramatically worsened in every measurable way. The mission is a complete failure, and even its own creators are beginning to publicly doubt it.

## Grave Failure

Currently there are more than 4,000 Ethiopian troops in Somalia,

Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, the chairman of the UIC, made the situation blatantly clear “For any genuine Somali dialogue to take place inside the country there has to be immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Ethiopian troops from Somalia.”

Ahmed Diriye, a member of the elders council of the largest clan in Somalia, the Hawiye, was also clear that, “Mogadishu is a war zone and occupied by a foreign force; it is neither neutral nor secure.”

## No Food, No Peace, No End in Sight

The largest open-air market in Somalia, Bakara, in the capital Mogadishu, could also close due to insecurity and continued restrictions on the movement of people by government security forces. Prices in the market had already increased the prices of basic necessities from between 50 and 100 percent, necessities

eyes on us, they shoot us.”

Meanwhile, the UN warned that nearly one million Somalis are facing a major food crisis. 71% of Somalis are now undernourished, and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has said it will be short of 8,500 tons of food by October. WFP Executive Director Josette Sheeran stated that, “Close to 80 per cent of WFP’s assistance to Somalia is shipped by sea but, because of piracy, we have seen the availability of ships willing to carry food to the country cut by half.” Under the UIC leadership, Somalia had almost eliminated pirates from its water.

## Occupied Democracy is the Democracy Occupied

Getting reliable information from Somalia has also been curbed by consistent government attacks on media. In four separate raids, troops searched the offices of Radio Shabelle, a leading

as well as 1,600 Ugandan troops which are the African Union (AU) “peacekeeping mission”. This is far less than the 8,000 promised by the AU earlier this year that are supposed to come from Nigeria, Burundi, Malawi and Ghana. The United Nations (UN) was also supposed to have taken over the peacekeeping mission upon the expiry of the AU’s mandate this month, but according to Assane Ba, an AU spokesman, “For the moment the UN is not ready, [so] we have decided to stay on.”

How many countries would want to commit troops to Somalia? Although the Western media refuses to cover the situation, there are daily attacks on the occupying forces.

A supposed Somalia “reconciliation conference” being pushed by the US and the newly imposed interim parliament was again postponed. It has already been postponed twice due to lack of security, and attempts to open it this month were unsuccessful. Five mortar shells landed near the meeting place, killing 3 people and injuring 12 others.

Somalia’s civil society organizations have also protested the conference, which excludes them and the broadly supported Union of Islamic Courts (UIC).

such as transport, water, food and non-food items. The warehouses in the open-air market have not been opened for 11 days as of July 17<sup>th</sup> because of the violence or security forces who blame the shopkeepers for hiding resistance fighters. According to Abdulahi Hussein Haasn, the spokesman of Bakara business committee, “Whenever the troops set their

independent station. According to the station’s press release, “Troops searched for weapons, threatened staff at gunpoint, and disrupted live broadcasts.” The station had aired recent interviews in which merchants and local residents alleged abuses by joint Somali-Ethiopian military forces in and around the Bakara market. It was the fourth



Somali youth throw stones at Ethiopian forces, January 2007.



Somalis protest at the Social Forum against the invasion of Somalia. Nairobi, Kenya, January 22 2007.

Protest against the Transitional Federal Government and Ethiopian forces. Mogadishu, February 2007.



time this year Radio Shabelle had been harassed.

What doesn’t the government want us to hear? That thousands have already been killed since the occupation began, with battles in Mogadishu between March 12 and April 26 alone killing at least 1,670 people, according to The Associated Press.

## Displaced

According to the Red Cross, approximately half a million Somalis have been displaced, causing a dozen unrecorded deaths every week. Somalia, with a population of under 11 million, now has the fifth highest number of refugees in the world, according to the UN. This in a year where the total number of displaced people has risen 14 per cent.

This grotesque situation is being pushed primarily by the onslaught of wars and occupations waged by imperialist countries, with the top three countries being Afghanistan, Palestine, and Iraq. Somalia follows closely behind only Sudan, and the recent huge increase in refugees is being called, “The Iraq Effect”

## The Lies Will Stop

On July 8<sup>th</sup> the speaker of Somalia’s interim parliament backed by occupation forces, Aden Madobe, announced Sunday that a three-month martial law imposed six months earlier was over.

Although not speaking on a huge aircraft carrier, it wasn’t all that far from George W. Bush’s announcement of the end of “major combat” in Iraq on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2003. Four years and over 700,000 Iraqi lives later, the Iraqi people have definitely not stopped fighting against a definitely ongoing and brutal occupation of their country. You could still hear the gunfire in Mogadishu as Madobe gave his speech. This month also saw the announcement of a major conference in Eritrea in September, with the purpose of forming a coalition to end Ethiopia’s occupation of Somalia.

So, despite everything, people in Somalia continue to organize and to fight much like their brothers and sisters from the Middle East and beyond. By any means necessary, with the unity of their aspirations to end the suffering of foreign occupation. The responsibility of all peace and justice loving people around the world is to recognize both their right and capacity to rule their own country free of foreign domination, and demand an immediate end to the occupation of Somalia.

ALL FOREIGN TROOPS OUT OF SOMALIA NOW!

SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ALL OF AFRICA!

US HANDS OFF SOMALIA!

# THE WAR OVER WATER



By Manuel Yepe\*

Since ancient times access to water has been a source of power and conflict.

In the same place where US occupation forces fight a ruthless and unequal war against Iraq, some 4,500 years ago there was a bloody battle between two cities for the use of the water of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. History records it as the oldest war over water.

Obviously, the wars will no longer be between city-states. In today's lopsided world that has accentuated the contradictions between the opulent North and the needy South, more than clashes between great powers, one can expect battles between

the rich and poor nations.

The neoliberal economic order imposed on the world keeps national governments from creating conditions to face the dangers on the horizon from the growing lack of water.

The difficulties faced because of a lack of water -desertification, less food production, an increase in infectious diseases, epidemics and a loss of ecosystems- brings on political and social tensions that are already having bloody internal consequences in Latin America and Africa.

There is also a growing tendency that the internal problems created over access to water become international conflicts as possession of water resources determines the viability of societies.

With the value of water rising all the time, as a deficit resource on a worldwide scale, the issue becomes part of the global strategy of the great capitalist powers that impose their most common neoliberal formulas: privatization

and militarization.

The major transnational corporations have fixed their sights on controlling the most promising water resources of the countries in the so-called "developing world."

The World Bank, as a guardian of the economic interests of the United States and the great transnational companies, "recommends" that developing countries privatize their water reserves through concessions to foreign corporations, which in turn will make them as valuable as oil.

The poor do not have the money to fund the operating costs of the water companies that offer water as one more product; while governments, under the neoliberal scheme, lack the means to help the firms and much less their "customers."

In some parts of the world, an unusual interest is taking place on behalf of the US and other powers to provide "military protection" to guard the largest water sources. The medium and long-range objectives are ever more open and the accelerated militarization of the areas where great water reserves are located is underway.

With the extending of market ruled economies in Latin America, especially via free trade treaties or their variants, the poor and indebted countries see themselves obliged, as the only way out of crisis, to open themselves up to foreign exploitation of their natural resources, often located on ancestral lands of the

indigenous populations.

Governments and large multinational consortiums have grown accustomed to signing accords without respect for the rights of those native peoples, who over thousands of years have had the wisdom to care for "Mother Earth" and the water that sustains life, and who are showing their ability and will to struggle for those

An era is boding where tensions and wars will take place over potable water. This can only be avoided or reduced by way of a system of relations that impedes an ecocide, which excludes using water as a resource open for marketing and, much less, converted into a bounty for powerful plunderers.



Waiting for water, Iraq.

rights. They also have the support of social movements around the globe.

Latin America, with the greatest potable water reserves in the world, is being intensively ransacked. Soon its remaining forests will be converted into deserts.

And the water not consumed by foreign plunderers in their extensive plantations, is often contaminated by chemical products they use for their crops and the residues of extract industries like open shaft mining.

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# LA GUERRA POR EL AGUA

Por Manuel Yepe\*

El acceso al agua ha sido, desde la más remota antigüedad, fuente de poder y de conflicto.

Allí, donde hoy fuerzas de ocupación lideradas por Estados Unidos practican una despiadada guerra desigual contra la nación iraquí, hace 4 500 años, tuvo lugar un cruento enfrentamiento entre dos ciudades por el uso de las aguas de los ríos Tigris y Éufrates que la historia registra como la más antigua guerra por el agua.

Obviamente, ya las guerras no serán entre ciudades-estados. En las actuales condiciones de un mundo unipolar que ha acentuado la contradicción entre el Norte opulento y el Sur menesteroso, más que los enfrentamientos entre grandes potencias, es de suponer que será la oposición entre naciones ricas y pobres el escenario probable de las batallas.

Pero el orden neoliberal impuesto al mundo impide que los gobiernos nacionales estén en condiciones de enfrentar como es debido los peligros que se avecinan para sus pueblos por la creciente escasez de agua.

Las penurias que provocan la escasez de agua (desertificación, menos producción de alimentos, incremento de las enfermedades infecciosas, epidemias y pérdida de los ecosistemas) inducen tensiones políticas y sociales que ya han tenido cruentas eclosiones internas

en América Latina y África.

Los problemas internos que genera la disponibilidad de agua tienden a transformarse en conflictos internacionales con mayor frecuencia, en la medida en que se evidencia que la tenencia de recursos acuíferos determina la viabilidad o no de las sociedades.

Al ser el agua valorada, cada vez más,



Afganistán, devastado por la guerra, sufre de extrema escasez de agua, Afganistán, 2007.

como un recurso deficitario a escala mundial, se inserta en la estrategia global de las grandes potencias capitalistas, que le aplican sus más comunes recetas neoliberales: la privatización y la militarización.

Las grandes transnacionales han fijado entre sus objetivos esenciales

el control sobre los prometedores recursos acuáticos de los países "en vías de desarrollo".

El Banco Mundial, como guardián que es de los intereses económicos de Estados Unidos y las grandes compañías transnacionales, "recomienda" a los países en desarrollo la privatización de las reservas de agua existentes a través de concesiones a empresas

extranjeras que se adueñan así de este recurso que, en poco tiempo, será tan valioso como el oro o el petróleo.

Los pobres no tienen dinero para sufragar los costos funcionales de empresas operadoras de acueductos que ofertan el líquido como una

mercancía más, y los gobiernos, en el esquema globalizador neoliberal, carecen de hacienda para apoyar a esas empresas y mucho menos a sus "clientes".

En algunas partes del mundo, se aprecia un inusitado interés por los gobiernos de Estados Unidos y otras grandes potencias en brindar "protección militar" a las vías acuáticas importantes. Se hace cada vez menos disimulada y más acelerada la militarización de las grandes fuentes de agua, cuyo objetivo a largo o mediano plazo es evidente.

Con la extensión de la globalización neoliberal en América Latina, especialmente por medio de tratados de libre comercio o variantes con el mismo fin, los países pobres y endeudados se ven obligados — como única salida a sus crisis— a abrirse a la explotación ajena de sus recursos naturales, frecuentemente ubicados en terrenos ancestrales de los pueblos indígenas.

Se ha hecho hábito que los gobiernos y los grandes consorcios transnacionales entren en tales acuerdos sin respetar los derechos de esos pueblos originarios, que a lo largo de milenios han tenido la sabiduría necesaria para cuidar a la "Madre Tierra y al agua que sostiene la vida", y que ya han dado muestras de su capacidad y voluntad de luchar por sus derechos y triunfar. Ellos cuentan con la solidaridad de los movimientos sociales del continente y del mundo.

Latinoamérica, con las reservas de agua potable más grandes que quedan en el mundo, está siendo saqueada tan intensamente que pronto sus grandes bosques naturales, descomunemente deforestados, cederán su lugar a la extensión de sus regiones desérticas.

Y el agua que no consumen los saqueadores extranjeros en sus plantaciones extensivas, la contaminan los productos químicos que usan para los cultivos y los residuos de las industrias extractivas, como la minería a cielo abierto.

Se pronostica una era de tensión y de guerras en torno al acceso al agua potable, que solo podría evitarse o atenuarse por medio de un sistema de relaciones que impida el ecicidio, que excluya la consideración del agua como un recurso escaso susceptible de ser mercantilizado y, mucho menos, convertido en botín de poderosos saqueadores.

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# 26TH OF JULY MOVEMENT & DYNAMISM OF CUBAN REVOLUTION

By Tamara Hansen

In the early morning hours of July 26th 1953, the darkness of night was just lifting on the town of Santiago de Cuba. Around 150 young rebels drove in a suspicious row of cars through part of town, however they went unnoticed because no one was yet awake.

They were driving with determination in their hearts and minds. Their goal? The Moncada army garrison. Their dream? To overtake the garrison and its cache of weapons and tools of repression used by the US-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista, and put that arsenal in the hands of the people to begin an uprising for their liberation.

This morning was the beginning of the end for US control and hegemony in Cuba, the beginning of the end of the reign of terror they puppeteered with their marionette Batista.

The attack was well planned, but a few unexpected incidents alerted the army of

throughout the year was closer to 30%.

How could a country be changed from a situation of repression, poverty and ignorance to today when, Cuba has the most doctors per capita of any country in the world, with, according to the CIA World Factbook, a literacy rate of 99.8% and an unemployment rate of only 1.9%?

## Formation of the 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement

After their retreat, many of the revolutionaries were captured. Using torture, intimidation, duress and other inhumane tactics Batista's army hunted and rounded up most of the young rebels. Fidel Castro, a young lawyer in training at the time, was also soon captured.

Fidel was lucky to make it to his trial date. Many of his fellow combatants were tortured to death in Batista's prisons. At his trial, Fidel represented himself. His trial was marked by a poignant speech where he condemned his guards, the judge and all others working for the court for their involvement in the brutal and corrupt government.

their invasion too quickly. After loosing some fighters and the onslaught of government soldiers, the rebels retreated. This initial attack failed, but we call it the beginning of the end because the vision shown by the rebels under the leadership of a young revolutionary named Fidel Castro (only 26 at the time) opened Cuba's path towards revolution. Only six years after that fateful morning, this revolution and its ideas triumphed over the brutal dictatorship of Batista.

## Cuba under Batista's control

The need for the change represented by the July 26<sup>th</sup> attack was quite evident by the misery and poverty that plagued Cuba prior to the Cuban Revolution.

According to the CBC website, "He [Batista] opened the doors to large-scale gambling in Havana, to the point where the capital became known as the Latin Las Vegas. Cuba became a playground for the rich, most of whom were American. There was little tolerance for opposition to the government."

The Yahoo! Education Encyclopedia continues, "In 1952 he [Batista] seized power through a coup. His second term as president was marked by brutal repression, which led to several uprisings, notably that of Fidel Castro. Pressed by the rebels and after a mock election (1958) had failed to calm the populace, Batista fled Cuba."

In 1953, 90% of people in Cuba were illiterate or semi-literate, without even a 6th grade education level. One third of all homes in Cuba were classified as huts, while only 56% of homes had electricity. A 1953 employment census noted that 8.4% of the work force was unemployed. This rate does not even give the full picture of the poverty facing Cubans as the census was taken during the height of the sugar harvest when unemployment was at its lowest. It is estimated that real unemployment

"Sentence me. It doesn't matter." He said with conviction, "History will absolve me."

Fidel Castro was shortly thereafter found "Guilty" and sentenced to 15 years in jail.

This would not last long; as members of the urban underground quickly began distributing clandestine copies of Fidel's speech. This talk shook the disgruntled and oppressed people of Cuba. Popular pressure grew across the country demanding the release of all political prisoners, including Fidel Castro. Batista was required to release the heroic rebels after only two years.

Many of the committed rebels fled quickly to Mexico where they created 'the 26th of July Movement' and planned a new attack against the Batista regime. In 1956, Fidel and other leaders of the 26th of July Movement returned to Cuba from Mexico and began a campaign to defeat the government of Batista. Two years later, in December 1958, Ernesto Ché Guevara, a leader along with Fidel in the 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement, led an attack in Santa Clara against an armoured train Batista planned to send across the country to reinforce his lowering troop morale and crippled army. However, their convoy was interrupted when Ché and his fellow revolutionaries derailed the train and triumphantly persuaded the troops and their leader to surrender. Batista fled Cuba shortly thereafter.

## Where has the 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement taken Cuba?

And here we are today, 54

years after the initial attack on July 26<sup>th</sup> 1953! What does Cuba have to show for it?

**Health:** In 1959, life expectancy in Cuba was 45 years. Today, according to the CIA World Factbook, life expectancy in Cuba is 77 years. Cuba's infant mortality rate is also the lowest in Latin America at 6.04%. Cuba has the most doctors per capita of any country in the world.

**Education:** In 2006 Cuba marked 45 years of free education. Cuban news agency Prensa Latina reported last year, "On June 6, 1961, the revolutionary government decreed the Teaching Nationalization Law. Two months after defeating the US invasion of Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs), the country ended the education system that served a privileged minority and brought real democracy to teaching." Illiteracy was wiped out just two years after the revolution began, and today the



literacy rate sits at 99.8%, which according to the United Nations is full literacy.

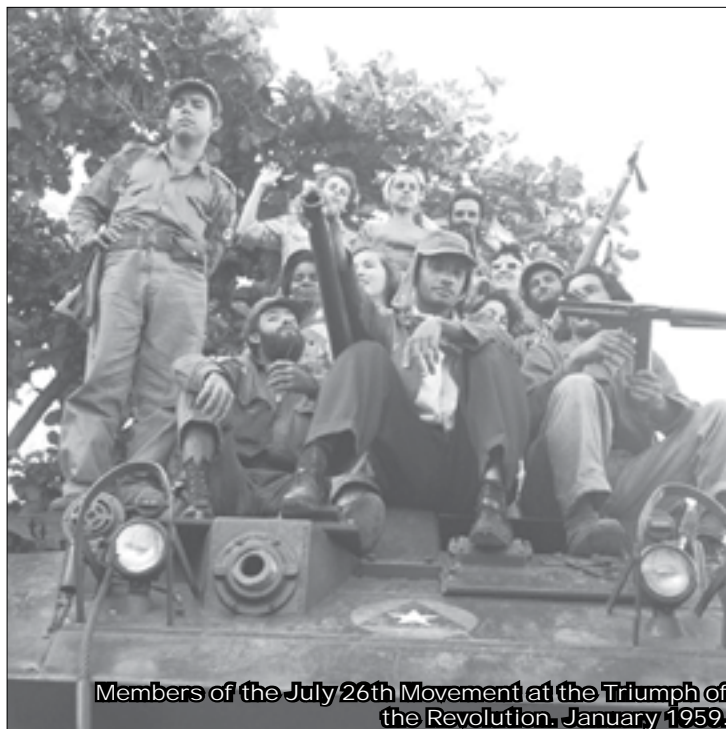
**Jobs:** In May 2005 the minimum wage in Cuba went up from 100 to 225 pesos benefiting over 1.6 million workers, which accounts for 54% of state employees. In July 2005 wages rose in the healthcare and education sectors, which benefited over 850,000 workers. These actions, as well as raises in social assistance and social security benefited 4.4 million people, which accounted for 30.9% of the population.

**Internationalism:** Cuba, since triumph of revolution in 1959, has constantly championed a revolutionary internationalist program in its foreign policy. Cuba has helped dozens of countries in this planet through material, health, education,

technology, and even military assistance. Thousands of Cuban doctors, nurses, technicians, and educators are serving to improve lives of millions of people. Cuban military assistance in Africa helped many African countries in their struggle for self-determination. With the help of the Cuban revolutionary armed forces, the Angolan army defeated for good the South African army, which not only gained complete sovereignty for Angola but caused the collapse of Apartheid in South Africa and brought the freedom of Nelson Mandela. All of these achievements happened while revolutionary Cuba has been for more than 45 years under severe US blockade and constant US and other imperialist attacks and sabotage. Because of these important gains made by the revolution for students, workers, women, people of colour and other oppressed groups, July 26th continues to be a day of great celebration and renewal of hope for gains to be made in the near and far futures.

## The Battle of Ideas: a better world is possible!

Since the triumph of the revolution Cuba has been under pressure from the Government of the United States, because of lost stakes and profit when Cuba nationalized its industries and kicked many US companies out of Cuba. The US government has been seeking ways to defeat the Cuban revolution and return it to the hands of profit-makers and private companies. They have done this through the immoral and illegal blockade imposed on Cuba, the attempted Bay of Pigs invasion, and the more recent creation of the 'Commission for the Assistance to a Free Cuba,' a commission under the US Department of State.



Continued on Page 14

# FREE THE CUBAN 5

Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero,  
Ramón Labañino, Fernando González,  
and René González



[www.vancubasolidarity.com/freethefivevan.html](http://www.vancubasolidarity.com/freethefivevan.html)

# Love is Not Imprisoned\*

By Liset García

Translation by Cindy O'Hara

**-The news talks about how the regimen of the prison where you are imprisoned is particularly rigorous. How is the life of Ramón behind the barbed wire?**

-U.S.P Beaumont is a maximum security prison, and like all its kind in the United States it houses the most violent, most dangerous, most aggressive prisoners, and so the system of imprisonment is severely strict, restrictive and intimidating.

"The cells measure approximately five by seven feet, a very small space, where they enclose us from 10:00 at night until 5:45 in the morning. On the weekends and holidays it is until 6:45. Every unit is made up of two floors of 32 cells each, in other words 64 total, for a maximum of 128 'tenants' per unit.

"On every floor there is a steel door that only the guard can open with keys. Behind this door there is a metal detector, after that another door that's opened by a central remote control from one of the five outside towers. Only then can you go out into the central yard, made up of two little baseball fields, which is all surrounded by tall cells enclosed by huge barbed wire, super-sharp razors that looks like that which you've seen in the prison at Guantanamo. "To access any area: the dining room, the church, the commissary and others, you have to go through other doors with keys, metal detec-

tors and innumerable guards that are checking you every second. All of this is tied together with a huge army of video cameras, located in every imaginable corner, that take note of every activity, every fight, every glance.

"Another security measure are the infamous shakedowns, that consist of the guards checking every cell and throwing out anything they want to. Also, every so often there are urine and breath tests to detect drugs and alcohol.

"As is known, in this prison there are some very dangerous prisoners. Life here is surrounded by anxiety and uncertainty, which causes acts of violence that occur every day. Because of this, there are very frequent times when the prisoners are shut in their cells, for 24 hours or longer periods of time, during which you are not permitted to bathe, or make phone calls, or receive family visits, or legal visits or consular visits. For a large part of last year we were in this regime of *lock down*, as they call these times when we are locked in.

"Moreover, I am subject to a program of check-in every two hours. In other word, between eight in the morning and eight at night I have to leave what I am doing and present myself to the nearest guard.

"In the midst of all this I always try to surround myself with healthy, peaceful, educational activities and avoid conflicts. For me, it's simply Beaumont, where I have learned to live, to test myself, and also grow, the same as my four brothers do where they are.

"Our struggle for peace, for a better world is not just a philosophy of life but also a form of living it. I want to leave here as a better human being, and nobody can block that. This is

one of the challenges and commitments of the Five."

**-How do you channel your energy as a man of action, a friend of practicing sports and also being an intelligent professional?**

-My days here are spent struggling in a constant fight against monotony, so I frequently vary my activities and schedule.

"In the morning, after my personal cleanup, I clean and organize my cell and then go to the laundry room, Monday through Friday, to do my work as an orderly, which consists of cleaning off the washing machines and cleaning the room. The rest of the time I occupy with doing something that will make me forget the solitude and isolation.

"I do exercises, I run and also practice some yoga (just in my cell) for strength, flexibility, etc. I have to confess to you that for me physical exercise is essential, to sweat, to relax, to relieve daily stress. Since I was little I've always strongly practiced sports; it's a necessity for me.

"I also look to satisfy my intellectual restlessness. I dedicate a large part of my time to reading and answering letters which, with all love and affection I send to all the brothers and sisters in the world who write to us, although there's never enough to respond to everyone as we would like to. I'll take advantage of this opportunity to express gratitude in the name of the Five for all the letters we have received.

"The important thing is to try to maintain a balance between physical and intellectual activity. Both are essential for us and that's what we try to do.

"Also I play chess, another sport which fascinates me and I need to play daily. At eight thirty at night they call us all inside the units until ten, the hour that they lock us in the cells until the following day. At this time I read the correspondence I've received that day, and then I listen to the news until I fall asleep; I go to bed with Cuba, and with her I always get up."

**-What are the people like with whom you share space in the prison? What have you learned since you've been a prisoner?**



Ramón and his wife Elizabeth.

- I have learned that here you relate to the human being, and not with the crime that he has committed, although for me there are unpardonable crimes, such as rapes, child abuse, murders. Aside from that I have gotten to know sensitive human beings, including honest ones, and with some of them I have shared and learned sports and other skills.

"I want to emphasize that the inmates and the personnel of the prison have treated me with respect; they know I am Cuban."

**-Do the prison authorities know about the decisions in the legal process? How do they react to that??**

-I believe they know about the decisions that have been made in our case, especially the reversal of the trial verdict by the three judges in Atlanta. Then they asked me when I would go free, and why I was still in prison. Later, how was the case going, and why the delays. I tell them about the maneuvers of the Government, the appeals . . .

**-In these years of imprisonment you have been able to see your wife Elizabeth and your daughters Ailí, Laura y Lizbeth in a few visits to the prisons. In the few photographs of these reunions permitted by the prison regime you can't see what's going on in Ramón's mind when he embraces them for the photos, the only time that he's permitted to touch them. How do these visits go? And at the time to say goodbye, knowing that when you will see them again is an uncertain mystery subject to the prison regime and the delayed visas?**

-The visits of Eli and my three little ones are the happiest moments I have in all this time of imprisonment. When I am with them nothing exists, nothing matters, just love, tenderness, the happiness of having them. I forget the place where I am and it's like I'm at home or in a park with them, in Cuba. I surrender to all the passion of being a husband and father. The only thought in my mind is to stretch out every second and hold onto it. It's a magic moment; I bare my soul to the four of them and involve myself in every little bit of their lives, of their achievements, of their dreams. I advise them, teach them, encourage them, take care of them, I show them all that I can in this place. And they do the same with me.



Elizabeth with daughters Lizbeth and Laura.

"Between Eli and I we create the family framework that we so much miss living every day. We laugh, we sing, we argue, we criticize, we inspire, we analyze goals and dreams, and also we cry. And there have been scoldings too; that's part of my duty as a parent, although afterwards I fill them with praise and encouragement.



"The time for the photos is very special. Then we can walk together and embrace the four of us, just like a dream come true after I return.

"The partings are the worst, terrible. That last day, that last minute is heartbreaking for all of us. I always save my best smile for that day. I try to distance myself from all that sadness, to move through that difficult passage without pain or tears. So I say to them that it's not the end of a magical visit, but rather the beginning of another period of hopes.

"The pain of not knowing when we will see each other again is offset by the certainty that our love is invincible. I dream every day with this love that unites us; this keeps me and my spirits alive. One day we will recover the tenderness and affection that is denied us today."

**-Your daughters are growing up and becoming women without**

**their father close by. What do you hope for them? How do you want them to see you?**

-I hope that my daughters can be everything that they can be. I want them to always study a lot, that they graduate from the university in the specialty that they prefer. That they fulfill themselves in every sense, as human beings, as women. They live in a

my duties as a human being and as a revolutionary. I want them to always know how much I love them."

**-I have spoken many hours with Elizabeth and I've seen how her face lights up when she speaks about you. How do you manage to continue nourishing the love that unites you? How do you resolve the challenge that this separation imposes on you? In your opinion, how is she assuming, in the name of both of you, the tasks of teacher and guide for the lives of Laura and Lizbeth?**

-Love has many aspects. It's not just nourished by physical presence, by sex; although both are very important, they are not indispensable. The spiritual aspect, the intimate one, the sweetest, the profoundest, these usually can't be destroyed.

"The big advantage that Eli and I have is that we have lived and in-

tensely enjoyed ourselves as lovers, as faithful friends, as eternal compañeros every second that we have shared together. In the present circumstances, we utilize all resources, from letters, phone calls and visits, to poetry, painting and the communication between our spirits.

"With this strength that the conviction of love gives us, I know that I will return to her arms to continue being that which we have always been: as one.

"Elizabeth is a special woman and an extraordinary human being. She has overcome all the trials. In addition to being a faithful and loving wife, she has been a compañera of battle in this cause that we defend. Her role as father and mother of our daughters has filled her with impeccable virtue.

"I always knew that it would be difficult to find a partner who could endure the ups and downs of my missions, of my life. But when I got to know Eli, my doubts were resolved and I understood that I had found that person. Facts have proved that true. I have for her only love, eternal gratitude and infinite tenderness."

**-It's known that you couldn't even tell your mother about the work you were doing outside of Cuba. How difficult was it to keep quiet, especially when you knew that you would not see her again?**

-Look, my beloved mother Nereida always dreamed that I would be a military man or a doctor. She would have been enchanted if I had chosen one of these two careers.

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# July 26

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In order to combat these dark forces from interrupting the immense gains Cuba has made for poor and working people Cuba has created a campaign called, "The Battle of Ideas". This began when Elian González was kidnapped by his mother from his father in order to take him with her to the United States. When Elián's mother died on a raft between Cuba and Miami he was taken in by family members living in the US. Elián's father and the Cuban government fought a long and difficult battle to get Elián back. Using education, organization and mass mobilizations Cuba pressured the Government of the United States to do what was just, both legally and morally, which was to return Elián to his father.

This was a major victory for Cuba against the United States, a country that is constantly slandering Cuba and making false accusations towards Cuba as a pretext to uphold its internationally exposed and condemned blockade against the island.

Some of the projects initiated by the Battle of Ideas were recently outlined in an article by the The Cox Newspapers Washington Bureau. They explained a presentation given

by Otto Rivero, a member of the Cuban Council of Ministers who is coordinating the campaign, "Success in the Battle of Ideas, the reporters were told, can be tallied by thousands of projects that have been accomplished in institutions across Cuban society. Among these are the restoration of 84 hospitals, the expansion of 498 small medical clinics and the installation of 155 high-tech medical machines. Dozens of run-down schools have been rebuilt, while 34,877 new social workers have been trained to aid the population. All levels of education have been reorganized with a focus on information technology, and university classrooms have been moved into Havana's suburbs and cities around the island. Every child now gets computer instruction from the age of 6, along with English language classes beginning in the third grade. The Battle of Ideas even extends to the effort to train the next generation of Cuban Olympic champions, along with the opening of youth video clubs, in which more than 20,000 young people have created short movies and video presentations."

This project encompasses a huge variety of projects to advance and polarize Cuba and the world. It is deepening the differences between where the interests of the US government lie, which is in re-privatizing Cuba and widening the divide between rich and poor, and the Cuban people's



Fidel speaks following the triumph of the Revolution, 1959.

interests, which is having access to health, housing, jobs and education. In short, it is a battle between the ideas of Capitalism vs. Socialism.

### Fidel: Revolutionary Leadership Example!

More importantly than all of the statistics is that the path of the revolutionaries of July 26th 1953, the path of hope, social justice and prosperity for all poor and oppressed people in Cuba, has not been abandoned-nor will it ever be.

On July 31<sup>st</sup> 2006, Fidel Castro announced that he was going for surgery and would be stepping down temporarily from his posts as President of the Council of State and President of the Council of Ministers. Since that time he has not made any public appearances, however he has begun publishing, "Reflections by the Commander-in-Chief," articles with his perspective on what is happening in Cuba and around the world.

With titles such as, "NOBODY WANTS TO TAKE THE BULL BY THE HORNS",

"THE TRAGEDY THREATENING OUR SPECIES", "BUSH EXPECTS EVERYTHING TO BE SOLVED WITH A BANG", "NEEDING AFFECTION", "CUBA'S SELF-CRITICISM", and "THE BRAIN DRAIN" we can see that 54 years after leading the attack on the Moncada army garrison, and one year after going in for serious surgery, Fidel is still ready to fight.

Fifty-four years ago it was time for the Cuban revolutionaries to show their fellow Cubans and Latin Americans an alternative to repressive US-style imperialism. Today, that alternative has been realised and surpassed in Cuba. Today more than ever, the gains of the Cuban revolution are being felt around Latin America. With the revolutionary leadership in Venezuela, and progressive governments being elected in many different Latin American countries, they are joining Cuba towards a better future. There are many battles that still need to be fought, but it is clear that Latin Americans are marching forward to a better future!

Viva Fidel! Viva Cuba!



July 26, 1959. Revolution Square, Havana Cuba.

## Ramón

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I once thought when I completed 12th grade that I should ask to go into medicine to please her. Nevertheless, from a very young age I honored her dream, even though I could never tell her.

"In 1998 during an urgent trip to Cuba due to the delicate state of her health, I was intending to tell her the truth, that I wasn't in Europe nor head of a corporation, as everyone thought. But I never did it, to avoid putting at risk the important tasks I was carrying out. That's why I wrote, dedicated to her, the poems *Deuda* (Debt) and *Carta para una madre ausente* (Letter to an absent mother)."

**-The Five usually and often speak in the name of all of you. How do you agree? Do you communicate with each other?**

-Do you believe in extra sensory perception? Well something like that happens with the Five. We don't need to speak, to communicate with each other, to know what each one of us is thinking. I believe this is because we were all educated with the same ideals, the same reasoning, the same dreams. I am sure any worthy Cuban would do the same. We are the fruits of a people, of a generation that doesn't give in or abandon independence, national sovereignty, socialism.

**-What virtue do you most admire in each of your four compaZeros in the struggle? What are the keys elements in which you five have put your hopes of achieving your return?**

-My brothers have many virtues that I admire. In particular I stress for Ge-

rardo his eternal humor; in Tony, his sensitivity and nobility; in René, his exquisite culture, and in our Fernando, his virility and determination.

"We defend a totally just and noble cause; we haven't just used our intelligence. We haven't ever injured anyone or anything, on the contrary we have tried to save the lives of innocent human beings, fighting against terrorism and preventing wars.

"We count on the support of our people and many brothers and sisters in the world, which is essential in this battle. If we obtained two important victories (the overturning of the trial by the three judges in Atlanta, and the declaration of the United Nations Group on Arbitrary Detentions that our arrests are illegal and arbitrary), true justice could come at any time. This is the essence of our optimism and our conviction that final victory and the beautiful return to our country and liberty will come."

**-How do you feel about Cuba? In what do you have the most confidence, and what worries you the most? Do you see any threats to the Cuban Revolution?**

-I feel Cuba in my soul, in my skin, in every moment. Without her we would not exist. I have confidence in our people, in the Revolution, in our humane socialism, which we should take care of carefully against real threats and the ambition of the empire. This is why we should be prepared and ready for any contingency. Also we have to maximize our vigilance within the country so that weak minds, lovers of the second rate and treason, don't prevail.

"Fidel lives and will always live because he lives in the people, in their ideas and their way of making the Revolution. But it won't be maintained by spontaneous generation,

but by fighting for it and caring for it. We will make in Cuba a society that is each day better, more advanced, just and humane, with the efforts of everyone.

"Cuba represents the dream of many people in the world. We cannot commit the grave error of failing humanity."

**-What figures or personalities inspire you to resist day after day?**

-The history of our country is our inspiration. But since you ask me to single someone out - it's very difficult to do, I would have to say many



names -, I tell you that I think of Marti, of Maceo, of Mariana, of Che, of Celia, of Fidel . . ."

**-Have you had any weak moments or moments of doubt? If you have, how did you overcome them? If not, why not?**

-When one defends a just cause like the right to life of a people, of humanity, there is no space for weakness or doubt. You know that this is the way forward and how to act, what to do in every moment and in the face of every trial. You are accompanied by truth and love of life.

**-What do you think of the people of the United States? In particular, I'd like to know your evaluation of the work of the people in solidarity with the case, with whom you maintain ties through letters from the prison.**

-The people of the United States are very hard workers, warm, friendly and happy. I have excellent memories of these people, of the people and their lives. The affection that I receive from some of them I will keep with me always. Very special is the solidarity of all the compañeras and compañeros who facing all the adversities of these times, support us with bravery, determination, in the defense of Cuba and our liberty. They represent the best, the most pure of the North American people.

"Solidarity is so important that I think that the solution to our case will have to rest with it, and the national and international pressure that will obligate that justice be well applied, the laws and the Constitution of this country. We obtained two victories in 2005, a year that set decisive standards. For this reason, I see the return to our land nearer every day. The light goes forward."

**-What do you think of your attorney, how has the relationship between you been, in spite of all the violations there have been in the process?**

-When the trial started, the prosecution limited the contacts between my attorney, William Norris and me, so the process was difficult. Now we are very far apart, he's in Miami and I'm in Texas; communication is difficult. Basically it's been through letters, official documents, at the end of the year, etc.

"In spite of the obstacles, the relations between us are good, cordial, respectful, and warm. We have succeeded in his understanding well the essence of the case, and I can tell you that he sees me as a patriot who defends his country, just as he would."

**-If you could go into a time machine and go back in your life, what things would you do exactly the same, and which ones differently?**

-I would do everything exactly the same.

**-Have you imagined your return to Cuba? What would you want to do as soon as you got back?**

-I have imagined, dreamed, analyzed, painted the return to Cuba, the Five have even made jokes about it among ourselves. But nothing will be as extraordinary as living it. I only know that it will be spectacular, the most beautiful and happiest day of our lives. We have thousands of plans. I would like to be able to embrace every Cuban and then go to the place where my mother rests to take flowers and put these words in her eternal rest: Mother, I fulfilled your dream. I love you eternally, your Ramoncito.

\* From the Cuban magazine *Bohemia*, March 2007



# EL AMOR NO ESTÁ PRESO\*

de metales y un sinnúmero de guardias que te chequean a cada segundo. Todo eso unido a un ejército enorme de cámaras de video ubicadas en cada rincón inimaginable que registra cada actividad, cada pelea, cada mirada.

“Otra medida de seguridad son los infames *shakedowns*, (registro) que consisten en chequear la celda y botar lo que se les antoje. Además cada cierto tiempo hacen pruebas de orina y de aliento para detectar drogas y alcohol.

“Como es conocido, en esta cárcel hay presos muy peligrosos. La vida aquí está rodeada de la zozobra que provocan los hechos de violencia que ocurren a diario. Por eso son muy frecuentes los encierros en las celdas, por 24 horas o por períodos largos de tiempo, en los que no se permite ni bañarnos, ni hacer llamadas telefónicas, ni recibir visitas familiares, legales, ni consulares. Gran parte del pasado año estuvimos en régimen de *lock down*, como se le llama aquí a esos encierros.

“Además estoy sometido a un programa de chequeo cada dos horas. O sea, entre las ocho de la mañana y las ocho de la noche debo dejar lo que está haciendo y presentarme ante el guardia más cercano.

“En medio de todo esto trato siempre de rodearme de actividades sanas, pacíficas, educativas y evito conflictos. Para mí, es simplemente Beaumont, donde he aprendido a vivir, a probarme, incluso a crecer, igual que hacen mis cuatro hermanos donde están.

“Nuestra lucha por la paz, por un mundo mejor no es solo una filosofía de vida sino la forma de vivirla. Quiero salir de aquí como un ser humano mejor y eso nadie podrá impedirlo. Es uno de los retos y compromisos de los Cinco.”

**-¿Cómo encauzas tus energías de hombre de acción, amigo de practicar deportes y que eres además un inteligente profesional?**

-Mis días aquí se debaten en una pelea constante contra la monotonía, por lo que varío con frecuencia mis actividades y horarios.

“En la mañana, después del aseo personal, limpio, organizo mi celda y voy al *laundry-room* (cuarto de lavandería de mi unidad) para realizar mi trabajo de lunes a viernes, como *orderly*, que consiste en sacudir las máquinas de lavar y limpiar ese cuarto. El resto del tiempo lo ocupo haciendo algo que me haga olvidar la soledad y el aislamiento.

“Hago ejercicios, corro y también practico (a solas en mi celda) algo de yoga, de fuerza, elasticidad, etcétera. Debo confesarte que para mí es imprescindible el ejercicio físico, sudar, relajarme, para liberar el estrés diario. Desde pequeño he practicado deportes fuertes; son una necesidad para mí.

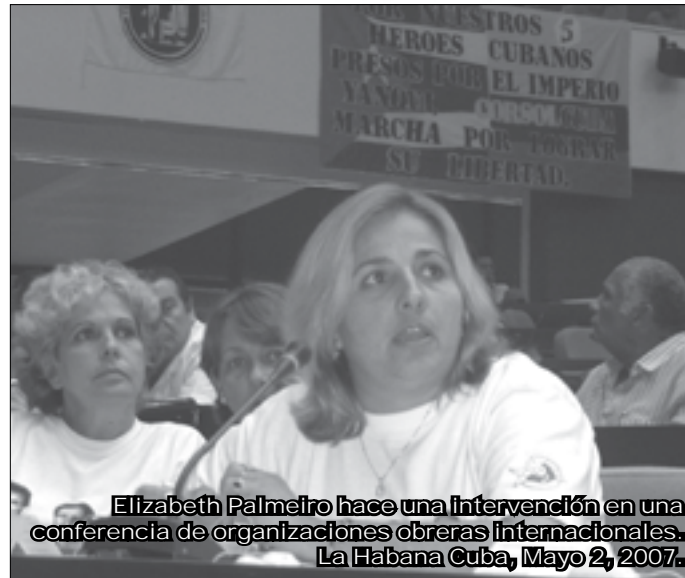
“También busco satisfacer mis inquietudes intelectuales. Gran parte del tiempo lo dedico a leer y responder cartas que con todo amor y cariño les envío a todos los hermanos del mundo que nos escriben, aunque nunca damos abasto para poder llegar a todos como quisiéramos. Aprovecho esta oportunidad para agradecer en nombre de los Cinco todas las misivas que recibimos.

“Lo importante es tratar de mantener un balance entre la actividad física y la intelectual. Es que ambas son esenciales para nosotros y eso intentamos hacer.

“También juego ajedrez, otro deporte que me fascina y necesito jugar diariamente. A las ocho y 30 de la noche nos llaman a todos para dentro de las unidades hasta las diez, hora en que nos encierran en las celdas hasta el siguiente día. En ese horario leo la correspondencia recibida en el día, y luego oigo noticias hasta que consigo el sueño; me acuesto con Cuba y con ella me levanto siempre.”

**-¿Cómo son las personas con quienes compartes espacio en la cárcel? ¿Qué has aprendido después de que estás preso?**

- He aprendido que aquí uno



Elizabeth Palmeiro hace una intervención en una conferencia de organizaciones obreras internacionales, La Habana Cuba, Mayo 2, 2007.

se relaciona con el ser humano, no con el delito que cometió, aunque hay delitos que para mí son imperdonables, como las violaciones, los maltratos a menores, los asesinatos. Fuera de eso he conocido seres realmente sensibles, incluso honestos, con algunos de ellos he compartido y aprendido deportes, habilidades.

“Quiero subrayar que los reclusos y el personal de la cárcel me han tratado con respeto; saben que soy cubano.”

**-¿Las autoridades del penal conocen las decisiones sobre el proceso? ¿Cómo reaccionan frente a eso?**

-Creo que ellos saben de las decisiones que ha habido en nuestro caso, en especial la anulación del proceso realizada por los tres jueces de Atlanta. Entonces, me preguntaban cuándo me iría libre, y por qué estaba aún en la cárcel. Luego, cómo andaba el caso, por qué las demoras. Les cuento de las maniobras del Gobierno, las apelaciones.

**-En estos años de encierro has podido ver a tu esposa Elizabeth y a tus hijas Ailí, Laura y Lizbeth en unas pocas visitas a la cárcel. En las escasas fotos de esos encuentros permitidas por el reglamento carcelario no se ve qué pasa por la mente de Ramón cuando las abraza, único momento, el de la foto, en que les está permitido tocarse. ¿Cómo transcurren las visitas? ¿Y la hora de despedirse, sabiendo que volver a verlas es una desconcertante incógnita por el régimen de la cárcel y las demoradas visas?**

-Las visitas de mi Eli y mis tres pequeñas son los momentos más felices que tengo en todo este tiempo de encierro. Cuando estoy con ellas nada existe, nada importa, solo el amor, la ternura, la felicidad de tenerlas. Me olvido del lugar donde estoy y es como si estuviera en casa o un parque con ellas, en Cuba. Me entrego con toda la pasión de esposo y padre. Por mi mente solo pasa extender cada segundo y conservarlo. Es un momento mágico; desnudo el alma de las cuatro y me meto en cada pedacito de sus vidas, de sus realizaciones, de sus sueños. Las aconsejo, las educo, las inspiro, las cuido, les enseño todo lo que se puede en ese espacio. Ellas hacen igual conmigo.

“Entre Eli y yo creamos ese marco familiar que tanto añoramos vivir cotidianamente. Reímos, cantamos, discutimos, criticamos, estimulamos, analizamos metas y sueños, incluso lloramos. No han faltado los regalos; es también ese mi deber como padre, aunque después las llene de halagos y estímulos.

“El momento de las fotos es muy especial. Entonces podemos caminar juntos y abrazarnos los cuatro, tal como sueño hacer luego del regreso.



Prisioneros políticos en Estados Unidos

“Las despedidas son lo más difícil, terrible. Ese último día, ese último minuto es desgarrador para todos. Siempre guardo mi mejor sonrisa para ese día. Trato de alejar toda la tristeza para pasar ese trance sin dolor ni lágrimas. Por eso les digo que ese no es el final de una visita mágica sino el principio de otra jornada de pasiones.

“El dolor de no saber cuándo nos volveremos a ver se compensa con el convencimiento de que nuestro amor es invencible. Sueño todos los días con ese

amor que nos une; eso me mantiene vivo y animado. Algún día recuperaremos la ternura y los afectos que hoy nos prohíben.”

**-Tus hijas crecen y se están haciendo mujeres sin la cercanía de su padre. ¿Qué esperas de ellas? ¿Cómo quieres que te vean?**

-Espero que mis hijas sean lo máximo. Quiero que estudien mucho y siempre, que se gradúen en la universidad en la especialidad que prefieran. Que se realicen en todo sentido, como seres humanos, como mujeres. Viven en un país en donde no hay límites para los sueños, y sé que ellas lograrán el suyo. Quiero que sean eternamente cubanas y revolucionarias.

“Quisiera que me vean como al padre que, aunque se alejé de ellas, no las abandoné. Todo lo hizo por amor, por salvar los sueños y la seguridad de los cubanos, por tratar de ser consecuente con mis deberes de ser humano y de revolucionario. Quisiera que tuvieran siem-

pre presente cuánto las amo.”

**-He conversado largas horas con Elizabeth y he visto cómo se le ilumina el rostro cuando habla de ti. ¿Cómo te las arreglas para seguir alimentando aquel amor que los unió? ¿Cómo resuelves el desafío que supone esta separación entre ustedes? En tu opinión, cómo ella asume, a nombre de los dos, la tarea de educar y conducir las vidas de Laura y Lizbeth?**

-El amor tiene muchas existencias. No solo se alimenta de la presencia física, del sexo; aunque ambas son muy importantes, no son imprescindibles. La existencia espiritual, íntima, dulcísima y profunda suele ser indestructible.

“La gran ventaja que tenemos Eli y yo es que hemos vivido y disfrutado intensamente como amantes, como fieles amigos, como eternos compañeros cada segundo que compartimos juntos. En las actuales circunstancias, utilizamos todos los recursos, desde las cartas, las llamadas y las visitas, hasta la poesía, la pintura y la comunicación de nuestros espíritus.

“Con esa fuerza que nos da el convencimiento del amor, sé que volveré a sus brazos para seguir siendo lo que hemos sido siempre: uno solo.

“Elizabeth es una mujer especial y un ser humano extraordinario. Ha superado todas las pruebas. Además de fiel y amorosa esposa, ha sido compañera de batalla en esta causa que defendemos. Su papel como padre y madre de nuestras hijas lo ha cumplido con virtud impecable.

“Siempre supe que sería difícil encontrar una pareja que soportara los avatares de mis misiones, de mi vida. Pero cuando conocí a Eli, salí de dudas y comprendí que ya había hallado a esa persona. Los hechos lo han demostrado. Tengo para ella solo amor, gratitud eterna y ternura infinita.”

Continuado en la página 16

Por Liset García

En el mínimo espacio de una celda no cabe un hombre como Ramón Labañino Salazar o cualquiera de sus cuatro hermanos. El espíritu, las ideas, su historia individual abarcan una dimensión imposible de aprehender, y sobre todo de encarcelar. Lo peor para quienes decidieron confinar a estos héroes el 12 de septiembre de 1998, es que tampoco han conseguido arrestar la verdad.

Aquel día, Ramón Labañino Salazar tenía cumplidos una parte de sus sueños y los primeros 35 años de su existencia. Luego de casi una década de castigo y avatares legales, este hombre conserva intactos los deseos de vivir y seguir luchando.

A ese convencimiento se llega luego de leer estas líneas enviadas a BOHEMIA, repasar su correspondencia, conversar con su esposa

Elizabeth Palmeiro Casado, conocer a sus hijas e indagar cómo es ese joven que culminó estudios de Economía en la Universidad de La Habana con Diploma de Oro y ha ejecutado diversas misiones a partir de entonces.

Las respuestas recibidas demuestran que cualquier espacio suele resultar ideal para una entrevista. Es preciso solo que entrevistado y periodista estén de acuerdo en contar lo que debe ser contado. Por eso, la única condición que puso Ramón cuando accedió a dialogar con los lectores de esta revista fue dejar aplazada una segunda parte para cuando esté entre nosotros. “Será en Cuba y pronto”, escribió. Y así se hará.

**-Las informaciones hablan de que el régimen carcelario de la prisión donde te encuentras es especialmente riguroso. ¿Cómo es la vida de Ramón tras esas alambradas?**

-U. S. P Beaumont es una cárcel de máxima seguridad y como todas las de su tipo en Estados Unidos alberga a los más violentos, peligrosos y agresivos prisioneros, por lo que el sistema carcelario es estrictamente severo, restrictivo e intimidante incluso.

“Las celdas miden siete por cinco pies aproximadamente, un espacio bastante reducido, donde nos encierran desde las diez de la noche hasta las cinco y 45 de la mañana. Los fines de semana y días feriados son hasta las seis y 45. Cada unidad está formada por dos pisos de 32 celdas cada uno, o sea, 64 en total, para un máximo de 128 inquilinos por unidad.

“En cada piso hay una puerta de acero que solo el guardia puede abrir con llaves. Detrás de esa puerta hay un detector de metales, después otra puerta que se abre por control remoto central desde una de las cinco torres exteriores. Solo entonces sales al campo central formado por dos pequeños terrenos de juegos de pelota, donde está todo cuadrículado por altas celdas cerradas por gigantescas alambradas de púas, cuchillas superafiladas parecidas a las que se han visto en la cárcel de Guantánamo.

“Para acceder a cada área: el comedor, la iglesia, la comisaría y otras, hay que pasar a través de otras puertas con llaves, detectores



# Entrevista con Ramon

Continuado de la página 15

-Es conocido que ni a tu mamá pudiste contarle la labor que estabas haciendo fuera de Cuba. ¿Qué tan difícil fue callarte incluso cuando sabías que no la volverías a ver?

-Mira, mi adorada madre Ne-reida tenía el sueño de que yo fuera militar o doctor. Le hubiera encantado que escogiera una de esas dos carreras. Pensé alguna vez al concluir el 12 grado pedir Medicina para complacerla. Sin em-

utilizado nuestra inteligencia. Nunca le hemos hecho daño a nadie ni a nada, al contrario, hemos intentado salvar la vida de seres humanos inocentes, luchando contra el terrorismo y evitando las guerras.

“Contamos con el apoyo de nuestro pueblo y con muchos hermanos del mundo, lo que es esencial en esta batalla. Si obtuvimos dos importantes victorias (la anulación del juicio por los tres jueces de Atlanta, y la declaración del Grupo de Detenciones Arbitrarias de la ONU de que nuestro arresto es ilegal y arbitrario), la justicia real puede llegar en cualquier momento.

podemos cometer el grave error de fallarle a la humanidad.”

-¿En qué figuras o personalidades te inspiras para resistir día a día?

-La historia de nuestra Patria es nuestra inspiración. Pero como me pides que singularice es muy difícil hacerlo, tendría que decir muchos nombres, te diría que pienso en Martí, en Maceo, en Mariana, en Che, en Celia, en Fidel.

-¿Has tenido algún momento de flaqueza o de duda? Si la has tenido, cómo la has vencido? Si no, por qué?

-Cuando se defiende una causa justa como el derecho a la vida de un pueblo, de la humanidad, no existe espacio para la flaqueza y la duda.



bargo desde muy joven ya yo honraba su sueño, aunque no pude decírselo nunca.

“En 1998 durante mi viaje urgente a Cuba por su delicado estado de salud estuve tentado de revelar la verdad, que no estaba en Europa ni presidía una corporación, como todos suponían. Pero nunca lo hice pues ponía en riesgo las importantes tareas que des-

Esta es la esencia de nuestro optimismo y nuestra convicción de que la victoria final y el retorno hermoso a la Patria y a la libertad llegarán.”

-¿Cómo sientes a Cuba? ¿En qué confías más, y qué es lo que más te preocupa de tu país? ¿Ves alguna amenaza para la Revolución Cubana?

Sabes que este es el camino y cómo actuar, qué hacer en cada momento y ante cada prueba. Te acompañan la verdad y el amor a la vida.

-¿Qué piensas del pueblo de Estados Unidos? En especial, quisiera tu valoración de la labor que hacen las personas solidarias con el caso, con quienes mantienes vínculos epistolares desde la

empeñaba. Por eso le escribí aquellos versos *Deuda y Carta a una madre ausente.*”

-Los Cinco suelen hablar a menudo en nombre de todos. ¿Cómo se ponen de acuerdo? ¿Se comunican?

-¿Crees en la comunicación extrasensorial? Pues algo así nos ocurre a los Cinco. No necesitamos hablar, comunicarnos, para saber lo que piensa cada uno. Creo que se debe a que todos fuimos educados en los mismos ideales, razonamientos, sueños. Estoy seguro de que cualquier cubano digno haría igual. Somos fruto de un pueblo, de una generación que se niega a claudicar, a abandonar la independencia, la soberanía nacional, el socialismo.

-¿Qué virtud admiras más de cada uno de tus cuatro compañeros de lucha? ¿Cuáles son las claves en que ustedes cinco han depositado sus esperanzas para lograr el regreso?

-Muchas virtudes tienen mis hermanos, que admiro. En particular destaco en Gerardo su humor eterno; en Tony, su sensibilidad y nobleza; en René, su exquisita cultura, y en nuestro Fernando, su virilidad y determinación.

“Nosotros defendemos una causa totalmente justa y noble; solo hemos

-A Cuba la siento en el alma, en la piel, en todo momento. Sin ella no existimos. Confío en nuestro pueblo, en la Revolución, en nuestro socialismo humano, que debemos cuidar bien de amenazas reales y de la ambición del imperio. Por eso debemos estar preparados y listos para cualquier contingencia. También hay que extremar la vigilancia desde adentro para que mentes débiles, amantes de la pacotilla y la traición, no imperen.

“Fidel existe y existirá siempre porque vive en el pueblo, en sus ideas, en su modo de hacer la Revolución. Pero no es por generación espontánea que se mantendrá, sino batallando y cuidándola. Haremos en Cuba una sociedad cada vez mejor, más avanzada, justa y humana, con el esfuerzo de todos.

“Cuba representa el sueño de muchos en el mundo. No

carcel.

-El pueblo de Estados Unidos es muy trabajador, cariñoso, amistoso y alegre. Guardo excelentes recuerdos de este pueblo, de su gente y su vida. El afecto que recibí de algunos de ellos los conservaré siempre. Muy especial es la solidaridad de todas las compañeras y compañeros que enfrentados a todas las adversidades de estos tiempos nos apoyan con valor, determinación, en la defensa de Cuba y de nuestra libertad. Ellos representan lo mejor, lo más puro del pueblo norteamericano.

“Tan importante es la solidaridad que pienso que la solución de nuestro caso tendrá seguramente que ver con ella y la presión nacional e internacional que obligue a aplicar bien la justicia, las leyes y la Constitución de este país. Ya hemos obtenido dos victorias en 2005, año que marcó pautas decisivas. Por eso veo el retorno a nuestra tierra cada vez más cercano. Por ahí anda la luz.”

-¿Qué opinión tienes de tu abogado, cómo han transcurrido las relaciones entre ustedes, pese a las violaciones que ha habido en ese particular?

-Cuando empezó el juicio la Fiscalía limitó los contactos entre mi abogado William Norris y yo, lo que hizo difícil el proceso. Ahora estamos muy



# RCMP



# PEPPER SPRAY

# NATIVE

# CHILDREN



Child victims of police pepper spraying, Sechelt, BC, June 30 2007.



By Aaron Mercredi

It was supposed to be a celebration for two victorious sports teams returning from a tournament in Vancouver. But, the grand entrance of the Sechelt's First Nations soccer teams on to their reservation on the Sunshine Coast, which has become a community tradition, was interrupted by RCMP violence and pepper spray.

Fourteen people were hospitalized after police unloaded cans of pepper spray on the procession of 20 vehicles that were involved in the celebration. The coach, the players and the families were all targeted in this attack, but most disturbing was the fact that many of those sprayed were children, including a 6-month-old baby who suffered burns to his face and scalp.

Footage of the attack made it on to news channels across Canada. Immediately after this incident took place, the RCMP issued

The day was a strong show of support and solidarity for the people in Sechelt, letting them know that they were not alone and that people will mobilize when a community is under attack.

The situation grows...

Within the week, the Sechelt community was once again responding to the moves by the RCMP. About 50 band members barricaded the band offices in an attempt to force the resignation of their Chief after he accepted an apology from the Sechelt RCMP for the pepper-spraying incident and also accepted an internal investigation in to the matter. The frustration and anger felt by members of the community has brought them not to accept these small token gestures by the RCMP and its weak attempts to save face. You don't have to look to far to see that this apology doesn't count for anything, and that an internal investigation is just the police investigating themselves, which leads to nothing. Do Canada's police forces have a history of being accountable for their misconduct, abuse, and even murder

statements saying they were only trying to stop a pick-up truck that was honking its horn and carrying young people around and that the pepper spray was used when the driver resisted arrest. Interesting that this then led to a full-on-slaught of pepper spray against a whole crowd of people.

Native People Respond

Within days of the brutal attack, posters started appearing on telephone poles around Vancouver announcing a rally against RCMP brutality. Organized by the Indigenous Action Movement, this emergency gathering brought out over 100 people to Canada Place in Downtown Vancouver to protest the abuse inflicted on the Sechelt community members by the RCMP. After opening the rally with songs and a prayer, speakers from the Indigenous community in Vancouver sent words of support to the Sechelt community and related this recent attack to the other cases of systemic abuse against Native people by Canada's enforcement agents.

When members of the Sechelt community found out about the rally, they made their way over to Vancouver to take part in it. Family members spoke about their experience and the anger that is rising in their community, especially because their young children were targeted with the pepper spray.

of Indigenous people? From Dudley George, an unarmed Indigenous activist who died from a gunshot wound from an Ontario Police Officer's semi-automatic rifle, to Neil Stonechild, who froze to death on a cold winter night on the outskirts of Saskatoon after being beaten, stripped of his warm clothes and left out in the cold, the abuse at the hands of Canada's enforcement agents has not just shown out of the blue. It is systemic and well established in this country. These are only two other examples of the countless cases of police misconduct against Native people. There are also cases where the police have investigated themselves, either found nothing wrong or held some minor disciplinary action and then moved on, case closed.

The fundamental problem is that government of Canada and the RCMP are trying to maintain their control over Native communities in the same way they did back in the day when there was the pass system and Native peoples' movements were restricted by white Indian agents. Yes, time has passed and gains have been won, but the incident in Sechelt shows the extremes that the RCMP will still go to in order to assert their arbitrary power over Native people. This needs to be reversed and the police must be held fully responsible for their heartless attack against a peaceful Native celebration.

distantes, el en Miami y yo en Texas; la comunicación se dificulta. Básicamente ha sido a través de cartas y documentos oficiales, por fin de año, etcétera.

“A pesar de los obstáculos, las relaciones entre nosotros son buenas, cordiales, de respeto, incluso de cariño. Hemos logrado que entienda bien la esencia del caso, y pudiera decirte que el me ve como un patriota que defiende su patria como el mismo lo haría.”

-¿Si te permitieran montarte en una máquina del tiempo y volver tu vida hacia atrás, qué cosas harías exactamente igual y qué diferente?

-Lo haría todo exactamente igual.

-¿Te has imaginado el regreso a Cuba? ¿Qué quisieras hacer tan pronto llegues?

-He imaginado, soñado, analizado, pintado el regreso a Cuba, hasta bromas hemos

hecho entre los Cinco. Pero nada será tan extraordinario como vivirlo. Solo sé que será grandioso, el día más hermoso y feliz de nuestras vidas. Tenemos miles de planes. Quisiera poder abrazar a cada cubano y después ir al lugar donde descansa mi madre para llevarle flores y poner estas palabras en su descanso eterno: Madre, yo cumplí tu sueño. Te ama eternamente, tu Ramoncito.



# Elections Called in Cuba

## THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRACY LOOKS LIKE!

By Tamara Hansen

*"But in the 2 years since that revolution swept Fidel Castro into power, those promises have all been broken. There have been no free elections - and there will be none as long as Castro rules. All political parties - with the exception of the Communist Party - have been destroyed... But Castro is not just another Latin American dictator - a petty tyrant bent merely on personal power and gain. His ambitions extend far beyond his own shores. He has transformed the island of Cuba into a hostile and militant Communist satellite - a base from which to carry Communist infiltration and subversion throughout the Americas."*

-US Senator John F. Kennedy Jr. (Democrat), October 6<sup>th</sup> 1960, one year before being elected US president

*"It's in our interests that Cuba become free, and it's in the interest of the Cuban people that they don't have to live under an antiquated*

our lives."

### What are elections like in Cuba?

The Cuban government has three main elected levels: municipal, provincial and national. Elections begin at the municipal level, with residents in each constituency (a smaller area within a municipality) nominating between 2 and 8 candidates at public meetings held several weeks before the municipal election. Out of these candidates the constituency elects one delegate to their municipal assembly. Once the municipal representatives have been elected they receive suggestions from nomination commissions for who should be elected to the provincial assembly and as the deputy to the national assembly. The municipal councils then vote on this grouping of suggested representatives. This grouping is then sent to the population for ratification.

Who participates in the constituency elections? Article 132 of the Cuban Constitution ratified in 1992 states, "All Cubans over 16 years of



*form of government that has just been repressive... Some will say all that matters is stability -- which in my judgment will just simply reinforce the followers of the current regime. I think we ought to be pressing hard for democracy."*

-US President George W. Bush (Republican), June 28<sup>th</sup> 2007, at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island

### Cuba sets an example

For many years the government of the United States, whether it is the democrats or republicans in power, has been labeling Cuba as a country without free elections and with a dictatorship. They complain that there is no freedom of speech, a single party political system and that Fidel is a tyrant who imprisons all of his opponents.

But sitting in a country where, according to their own Federal Election Commission, voter turn out has sat between 49-55% in the last 3 elections, and where approval ratings for the President, George W. Bush, currently stand at 27% according to a Gallup/USA Today poll, we must ask: Who is the United States to judge and evaluate electoral system and democracy?

While the United Nations International Covenants on Human Rights state, "all peoples have the right of self-determination, including the right to determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development," the US refuses to acknowledge Cuba's right to decide on its own system of elections and democracy.

On April 16<sup>th</sup> 1961, Cuba's Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro declared the socialist character of their revolution and made clear why the US was so intent on invading Cuba. "Because the imperialists do not forgive us for being here... That's what they will not forgive—that we are here, under their very nose, and that we have built a socialist Revolution under the very nose of the United States!... Workers and peasants, this is a socialist and democratic Revolution of the poor, by the poor and for the poor. And for this Revolution of the poor, by the poor and for the poor we are ready to give

age, men and women alike, have the right to vote except those who: a) are mentally disabled and have been declared so by court; b) have committed a crime and because of this have lost the right to vote." Who can be nominated as a candidate? Article 133 of the Cuban constitution states, "All Cuban citizens, men and women alike, who have full political rights can be elected. If the election is for deputies to the National Assembly of People's Power they must be more than 18 years old." Who is in these 'nomination commissions'? In accordance with Cuba's Electoral Law, it is the municipal, provincial or national, executives of the Central Cuban Workers' Organisation (CTC), the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR), the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP), the University Students' Federation (FEU) and the Intermediate Level Students Federation (FEEM) who give the suggested nominations to the elected municipal representatives.

Elections are truly a community affair. The ballot boxes are guarded by young children who are members of the pioneers (similar to Girl Guides and Boy Scouts in Canada). The votes are counted publicly, anyone interested in watching the vote count is free to do so, including national and foreign media, diplomats, tourists, etc. The reason for having civil society groups create a nomination commission is to make sure that groups who were traditionally excluded from elections: workers, women, Afro-Cubans and young people all have organizations representing their interests involved in the elections process.

### Should the US really be talking about democracy?

The US government tries to confuse people who hear that there is only one political party in Cuba. In an article from Agence France-Presse (AFP) entitled, "US pokes fun at Castro and calls elections sham" from July 10<sup>th</sup> 2007, US State Department spokesman Tom Casey said, "If Castro-lite, meaning Raul Castro, wants to hold elections-lite, meaning the kind that they have held in the past -- single party

elections that don't allow the people to have a choice and only allow them to ratify the rule of the current dictatorship -- whether its Fidel Castro's name that is on top of the ballot or Raul Castro's doesn't really matter much."

But the question is, do you have to be a member of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) to run or be nominated for elections in Cuba? The answer is no. The Associated Press explained after the April 2005 elections in Cuba, "Under Cuba's one-party system, municipal, provincial and national representatives are elected by citizens on a local level. Anyone can be nominated to these posts, including people who aren't members of the island's ruling communist party - the only one recognized in Cuba's constitution."

Secondly, it is interesting to point out from an article on Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX) website, "The Cuban people are perfectly familiar with the characteristics and "bounties" of the multiparty system that the United States praises so much; it lived with it for more than half a century. What is paradoxical is that the superpower wishes to impose on others what it has not been able to achieve itself. In the United States, a one party system is, in fact, in place, the party of capital and the transnationals, which from time to time changes its costume and has managed to stay in power for more than 200 years."

### What about the dissidents in Cuba?

According to the BBC in the 2003 elections, "Dissidents had called on voters to

hand in blank ballots, dismissing the election as a "parody" of democracy." However, only 0.86% of the votes for the 2003 provincial elections came in blank. Basically these 'dissidents', which the US, British, and other bourgeois media pay so much attention too, are a minority in Cuba. One cannot make the argument either that the vote was invalid because of low voter turn out, because while the United States voter turn out is hovering around 50% , over 97% of voters turned out for the last municipal and provincial elections in Cuba. The vast majority of Cubans do indeed want to see improvements and changes in their country, BUT they want to see these changes happen under revolutionary leadership, without US interference or Iraq-style 'liberation'.

### How do nominees campaign in Cuba, don't you need a lot of money?

The only campaigning allowed in Cuba is the publication of each candidate's official biography.

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Comic drawn by internationally acclaimed Cuban cartoonist, Arístides Esteban Hernández Guerrero, or "Ares".



# A LYRICAL AND POLITICAL FIGHTER

## INTERVIEW WITH SPIN HIP HOP ARTIST



SPIN

By Noah Fine  
& Shakeel Lochan

Hip Hop culture and all its components was born in an environment of racism, gentrification, suppression and violence within the eastern US. It tore through the veil of ethnic equality, and exploded in the five boroughs of New York, in the poorest ghettos. It fused elements of Jazz, Blues, Reggae, Dub and Spoken Word and created itself upon a history of black and Latino struggle!

We live in a growing era of war occupation. An era that sees imperialist countries such as the US, UK, and Canada waging war in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. Since Hip Hop has

spread out internationally, and many young people around the world are using it as a way of expression against daily brutality and misery under capitalism, in actual sense it has become a tool for resistance and opposition in contrast to what is mostly known in mainstream life as a tool for making money for big business!

Spin is an established base of political or rather conscious hip hop/spoken word art in Canada coming out of Toronto as a refugee from Guatemala. A community activist a leader within youth organizing, and participant in piles of progressive grass roots and labour organizing, a true spiritual and dynamic cat.

Spin works to bring hip hop and revolutionary activism together as two inseparable elements of oppressed people's fight back against imperialism. Spin rhymed in front of thousands of young Venezuelan's from the barrios of Caracas in 2005 and was the only poet to spit spoken word at the Havana International Hip Hop Festival in Cuba in 2004. His relationship to oppressed people and their struggle is life-long and will continue onward until a better world is created. Spin is a dreamer. A follower of Che, Brother Malcolm X, and in their spirit knows a better world is possible and he will be a

part of making it. Spin is a member of CUPE local 1281 and the Recording Secretary for CUPE Toronto District Council.

Fire This Time met to interview Spin while in Vancouver performing for Vancouver's Hip Hop Festival Against War & Occupation 3. You can check him out in all elements of the festival from giving a workshop on "Hip Hop Internationalism" to spitting conscious lyrics on the stage from 11:30pm Saturday July 21 at Sunrise Pavilion in Surrey (10341-135 Street) and Sunday July 22 at Strathcona Park (Venables at Malkin Ave.) from 12-8pm.

**Fire This Time (FTT): What brought you to Hip Hop?**

**Spin:** Coming into Canada as an immigrant, having to leave my country as a refugee, having my father sell out my mother and having her raise me by her own. I saw a music video by Naughty by Nature, a hip hop group, an amazing hip hop group, and they have this song called Ghetto Blaster and he speaks about growing up without a father. He also speaks about growing up angry. This video, really impacted me because it spoke to the pain I was feeling and

Palestine, what hurts me now is that there is kind of divide and conquer the Palestinian militant groups have turned on each other which is exactly what the oppressor wants, divide and conquer. United we stand and divided we fall. In reality it works out to the brutality that the state of Israel has Palestinian people under, and the lies that you see in the media which never, ever tell the accurate truth. You actually have to go and dig in make an effort and research for yourself what's actually happening. And then of course you have Iraq, which is a complete disaster and we shouldn't be there. We're in Afghanistan because of a pipeline that's running through Afghanistan and to benefit the U.S. oil interests, U.S. foreign policy. We're in Iraq out of geopolitical positioning, or whatever. And I mean, Israel's been abusing Palestine for decades. It's just really angering to me that this is happening and so many people are fooled by the lies that they see in mainstream media.

**FTT:** What about hip hop you think lends itself to the fight for a better world?

**Spin:** Hip Hop started in political roots. Like Immortal Technique said 'I remember the time when hip hop

## Elections in Cuba

Continued from Page 17

This outlines the history and character of each candidate and is put up around the neighbourhood.

In an article written by journalist Teresita Jorge, for AIN, a Cuban news agency, she states, "The ethical standards that are part of the Cuban electoral process today explicitly prohibit political campaigns to convince voters choose a specific candidate or to attack the prestige of an opponent. The delegates, who form part of the municipal People's Power Assemblies, have to provide voters with a yearly report of their activities and receive absolutely no payment for their work as council persons." This is in stark contrast to Canada or the United States.

The Center for Responsive Politics projected last October, before the November 2006 mid-term elections in the US, that the wealth spent by candidates would total out to approximately \$2.6Billion! According to Granma International, Sheila Krumholz the Center's executive director explained how, "candidates running for the House of Representatives have spent \$760,000 USD

on average." On the other hand and not too surprisingly, according to the Washington Post Second Quarter 2007 Summary the 2008 presidential candidates have spent so far:

Hilary Rodham Clinton (D) \$12,769,306

Barack Obama (D) \$16,042,388

John McCain (R) \$13,071,657

Rudy Giuliani (R) \$11,222,806

This is millions of dollars, way more than any average American would have in their bank account, much less have to spend on trying to win an election. Think about it, this is just what they have raised and spent for their campaign, the personal wealth of all the other major candidates is much higher!

### New elections this Fall in Cuba

From the role of civil society, to the constituency elections, to the pioneers guarding the ballot boxes - Cuba's elections are truly grassroots and participatory. And while voter turn out in the US has been suspended around 50% since the 1972 election, in Cuba voter turn out stands strong.

Last week a new round of elections was called in Cuba. On July 9<sup>th</sup> Prensa Latina news



Cubans voting



agency reported, "Cuba's Council of State has called general elections to choose delegates to assemblies in municipalities and provinces, as well as deputies to the national Parliament... The first round of the elections will be held in October 21<sup>st</sup> this year. In places where candidates fail to get over 50 percent of votes, there will be a second round on October 28<sup>th</sup>. According to the text, the date for the election of provincial delegates and deputies to the National Assembly will be set at the proper time."

It will be exciting to see more of Cuba's democracy in action!

the anger and rage that I carried inside. So I guess I came into hip hop through anger and rage and I spoke to the injustices that were happening to me, which made me relate to the reality of black youth in the ghettos of the United States. So that's what came to me as a fan, as a lover of the music, and later on when I started performing my poetry, and it being very much associated with hip hop or rap, it getting me into hip hop spaces and build a connection with hip hop artists, to where I am today man, just like KRS One said "I am Hip Hop".

**FTT:** What do you think of the era of wars and occupations plaguing Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and all occupied lands?

**Spin:** It's disgusting man, I mean, you also got Puerto Rico being occupied, Haiti being occupied. The case of Afghanistan particularly hurts me man because I was just reading about the sister Malalai Joya in Afghanistan who, according to the reasoning of the Canadian government of why we are there, about bringing liberation to women and promoting women's rights, this woman Malalai Joya who's a 28 year old parliamentarian, democratically elected, should be the president of that country as a very outspoken critic and in reality she was just expelled for 3 years for condemning the fact that their war lords that according to her own words, 70% of the Afghan parliament consists of war lords, drug lords and criminals. It really angers me that people are so stupid, that they don't realize that we are doing nothing anywhere close to bringing democracy and that we're actually as Canadian troops that are over there, we're basically enforcing former war lords that are responsible for the sad state of affairs that Afghanistan is in. With

was not economically viable," but people really did it out of love and out of a need for expression. They would go bomb a train, and by that I mean graffiti, tag up a train. I don't want to wind up with "Security Certificates." It was about a message. And if you travel throughout the world in spite of the corporatization, that has taken place with hip hop and how it has become a commodity. The hip hop and the third world, or what I call the recovering nations, is political man. They go to Colombia and hip hop's denouncing military abuses. You go to Palestine, their spraying graffiti on the Apartheid Wall that the state of Israel is building. You know what I mean. You go to Argentina their talking about the economic state of decay and the abuses that the government afflicted on the people. Where ever you go, hip hop is the voice of resistance. Even within Canada, or so called Canada, really Turtle Island, you see the Indigenous hip hop artists really taking a stand through the music and reclaiming their culture. It's really meant to be a weapon for the poor and a voice for the voiceless.

**FTT:** What would be your message to the youth?

**Spin:** To the youth!

**FTT:** To the new generation.

**Spin:** To the new generation, first and foremost I would like to speak to the thugs, you know. I got love. Hip hop has love for you. I was never a thug but I was associated with people who were and still are. And I understand where this rage comes from. If you're Latino and your out their wanting to slash, cut somebody, you got all this rage to you. Understand what was done to your people.

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*We Remember*

*Compañera*



*By Tamara Hansen*

We receive with heavy hearts the news of the passing of Compañera Vilma Espín Guillois. An honored revolutionary, Vilma became active in the struggle in Cuba against the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. She first participated with Frank País in the urban underground, and after the assassination of País in 1957 she took the role of leading the movement in Oriente province. Then, in mid-1958, the clandestine movement in the cities became too dangerous for Vilma and she moved to the Sierra Maestra to join the guerrilla fighters.

The Cuban revolution triumphed soon after, and just over a year later the Cuban Women's Federation (FMC) was created. At the founding of the FMC Vilma became its

president-elect. Her presidency was re-confirmed at every FMC Assembly, from the first in 1962 to the seventh in 2000. In the first years of its foundation the FMC began to activate women in the changes being executed by the revolution, it began a new era for women in Cuba. According to Granma International, "During the first 15 months of work, the nascent organization, still embryonic, had mobilized women en masse for the construction of schools and hospitals; to collect up and take care of unsupported children wandering the streets at the triumph of the Revolution; to improve living standards in the so-called "destitute" barrios; and other social tasks."

Even the Washington Post, a publication that is quite biased against the Cuban revolution, had to admit the great work of Vilma, "She was credited with improving the status of women in a society known for its history of machismo by articulating the need for a more equal environment between the sexes. She gave prominent voice to improvements in maternal and child health-care policies as well as the need for women to educate themselves... "From the feminist perspective, she empowered women in a home to say to a husband, 'It's my national, patriotic duty to work, to volunteer in the community,' " said Heana Fuentes, executive

director of the Cuban Feminist Network, a Miami-based social-needs organization... "Whether you are for or against Castro, that's an empowering tool for women."

Vilma was well known throughout Cuba and the world as a lifelong fighter for the rights of women, this is very important because when women have rights it opens new doors for their children, their husbands, their parents, their communities and their societies. Women's rights are inextricably linked to the rights of all human beings and the need to build a better, more humane world.

On June 18<sup>th</sup> 2007, Vilma passed away. But she is not forgotten, nor

are her contributions to the gains made by the Cuban Revolution. Remembered today and forever, for her amazing and exemplary contributions to the victorious battle for the revolution and the ongoing battle for the rights of women in Cuba and worldwide, Vilma is a revolutionary we hold close to our hearts and make her revolutionary life an example for all women in struggle and all men and women fighting for revolutionary change.

As President of Cuba Fidel Castro wrote in his reflections lately on her life and legacy, "Vilma's example today is more necessary than ever."

# Vilma Espín Guillois

*(April 7th 1930 - June 18th 2007)*



Vilma cutting cane



Vilma alongside Raul Castro, 1953.

## A Reflection by Commander in Chief, Fidel Castro

### Vilma's Struggles

Vilma is dead. Even though the news was expected, it was still an impact. Out of respect for her delicate health condition, I never raised her name in my reflections.

Vilma's example today is more necessary than ever. She devoted her entire life to the struggle for women's rights when in Cuba most women were discriminated against as human beings, the same as in the rest of the world, with only the honorable revolutionary exceptions.

It was not always this way throughout the historical evolution of our species, leading her to fulfill the social role befitting her as a natural workshop where life is forged.

In our country, women came out from under one of the most horrible forms of society, that of a Yankee neo-colony under the aegis of imperialism and its system, where everything that the human being is capable of creating was turned into merchandise.

When what has been defined as the exploitation of man by man started far back in history, the mothers and children of the dispossessed bore the brunt of the burden.

Cuban women used to work as domestic servants, or in luxurious shops and bourgeois bars, selected for their good looks. Factories assigned them the simplest jobs, the ones that were the most repetitive and worst paid.

In education and healthcare --services provided on a small scale-- their indispensable cooperation was as teachers and nurses who had only been offered basic training. The country, 2,009.92 miles from end to end, only had one higher education center located in the capital and later,

several faculties in university campuses in two other provinces. As a rule, the only young women who could study there were those from the most affluent families. In many activities, the presence of a woman was not even dreamed of.

For almost half a century, I have been witness to Vilma's struggles. I cannot forget her presence at the meetings of the July 26 Movement in the Sierra Maestra. She was eventually sent by the movement's directorate to carry out an important mission on the Second Eastern Front. Vilma did not shrink from any danger.

After the triumph of the Revolution, she began her ceaseless battle for the rights of Cuban women and children, which led her to found and lead the Federation of Cuban Women. There was no national or international forum too distant for her to attend in defense of her assailed homeland and of the noble and just ideas of the Revolution.

Her gentle voice, steady and timely, was always listened to with great respect in Party, State and mass organization meetings.

Today women in Cuba make up 66 percent of the technical work force of the country, and they take part, in the main, in almost all the university degree courses. Previously, there were hardly any women involved in scientific activities, since science and scientists did not exist, but exceptionally. In this field as well, today women are in the majority.

Revolutionary duties and her immense work load never prevented Vilma from fulfilling her responsibilities as a loyal wife and mother of several children.

Vilma is dead. Long live Vilma!

*Fidel Castro Ruz, June 20, 2007*



### Las Luchas de Vilma

Vilma ha muerto. No por esperada la noticia dejó de golpearme. Por puro respeto a su delicado estado de salud nunca mencioné su nombre en mis reflexiones.

El ejemplo de Vilma es hoy más necesario que nunca. Consagró toda su vida a luchar por la mujer cuando en Cuba la mayoría de ellas era discriminada como ser humano al igual que en el resto del mundo, con honrosas excepciones revolucionarias.

No siempre fue así a lo largo de la evolución histórica de nuestra especie, que la llevó a ocupar el papel social que le correspondía como taller natural en que se forja la vida.

En nuestro país la mujer emergía de una de las más horribles formas de sociedad, la de una neocolonia yanqui bajo la égida del imperialismo y su sistema, en el que todo lo que el ser humano es capaz de crear ha sido convertido en mercancía.

Desde que surgió en la lejana historia lo que se llamó la explotación del hombre por el hombre, las madres, los niños y las niñas de los desposeídos soportaron la mayor carga.

Las mujeres cubanas trabajaban en los servicios domésticos, o en tiendas de lujo y bares burgueses, donde además eran seleccionadas por su cuerpo y su figura. Las fábricas les asignaban los trabajos más simples, repetitivos y peor remunerados.

En la educación y la salud, servicios que se prestaban en pequeña escala, su imprescindible cooperación era realizada por maestras y enfermeras a las que sólo ofrecían un nivel medio de preparación. La nación, con 1.256,2 kilómetros de extensión, contaba únicamente con un centro de educación superior ubicado en la capital, y más adelante, con algunas facultades

en centros universitarios de otras dos provincias. Como norma sólo podían estudiar en ellas jóvenes procedentes de familias con ingresos más altos. En muchas actividades ni siquiera se concebía la presencia de la mujer.

He sido testigo durante casi medio siglo de las luchas de Vilma. No la olvido en las reuniones del Movimiento 26 de Julio en la Sierra Maestra. Fue enviada finalmente por la dirección de éste para una importante misión en el Segundo Frente Oriental. Vilma no se inmutaba ante peligro alguno.

Al triunfar la Revolución, se inicia su incesante batalla por las mujeres y los niños cubanos, que la llevó a la fundación y dirección de la Federación de Mujeres Cubanas. No hubo tribuna nacional o internacional a la que dejara de asistir por distante que fuera el camino a recorrer, en defensa de su patria agredida y de las nobles y justas ideas de la Revolución.

Su voz dulce, firme y oportuna, siempre se escuchó con gran respeto en las reuniones del Partido, el Estado y las organizaciones de masas.

Hoy las mujeres en Cuba constituyen 66 por ciento de la fuerza técnica del país, y participan mayoritariamente en casi todas las carreras universitarias. Antes, la mujer apenas figuraba en las actividades científicas, pues no había ciencia ni científicos, salvo excepciones. En ese campo también son hoy mayoría.

Los deberes revolucionarios y su inmenso trabajo nunca le impidieron a Vilma cumplir sus responsabilidades como compañera leal y madre de numerosos hijos.

Ha muerto Vilma. ¡Viva Vilma!

*Fidel Castro Ruz, 20 de junio de 2007*

# "Don't Miss the Bus!"

## Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba Launches the Route from Vancouver

By Janine Solanki

Cuba supporters march to the US/Canada border, June 30, 2007.



Nancy Abby and Sophie Ziner, June 29, 2007.



Celebration at the Unitarian Church of Vancouver, June 29, 2007.



Humanitarian aid at the US/Canada Border, June 30, 2007.

On 18 trips, the Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba, has organized hundreds of people with hundreds of tons of humanitarian aid to drive on routes throughout the US and onto Cuba. People young and old, from North America and beyond, travel with something very important pulling them together - they travel on the Caravan because they are in solidarity with Cuba, and refuse to allow the cruel and immoral US blockade to stand in the way of Cuban internationalism and humanity!

This year, as they stop along their way, they will collectively visit 120 US and Canadian cities, holding forums that will leave residents discussing their new perspectives on Cuba, which the US media blacks out. Showing their solidarity and a commitment to breaking the US blockade, caravans will cross from the US into Mexico openly stating that their intention is to take the goods and themselves to Cuba and openly defy the US blockade!

As the route leaving Vancouver prepared to make their first border crossing and begin their trip, supporters and organizers gathered at the Unitarian Church on June 29<sup>th</sup> to give the caravanistas a warm and exciting send-off celebration where everyone learned more about the caravan and Cuba. The night included a warm welcome from Mary Bennet, from the Unitarian Church of Vancouver and Canadian Unitarian council, followed by the words of Jose Marti and other Latin American political poets, through the mouths of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) organizers April Desilets and Thomas Davies. After viewing the great Cuban film, "Desafio," which showed the challenges of the Special Period in Cuba, Sophie Ziner, an organizer with VCSC and the BC to Texas route coordinator for this year's Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba, took the mic to relate her experiences as a young woman traveling to Cuba. Event co-organizers: VCSC, the Social Justice Committee of the Unitarian Church of Vancouver and the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver (FC5C-Van) were then happy to invite up special guest

speaker Nancy Abby. Nancy, from the Santa Cruz Cuba Study Group and the US-Cuba Sister Cities Association, came all the way from California to share her message of solidarity with Cuba and demanded that the US lift the illegal blockade against Cuba.

Music and dancing then took the night away as Pablo Oyzaro and Beto Fuentes played their beautiful renditions of classical Latin American songs of resistance and struggle, which energized the audience in anticipation of the day ahead... As one of this years 14 routes setting off, more than 150 people from Washington state and BC rallied on July 30<sup>th</sup>, behind the 9 caravanistas from Vancouver as they crossed the White Rock/Blaine border crossing at Peace Arch Park. The rally and picnic started off with the tunes of the Raging Grannies and Solidarity Notes Choir, and continued as Randy Caravaggio, from Victoria Goods for Cuba, invited Nancy Abby to again take the stage to speak. Representatives from each of the solidarity groups, including VCSC, FC5C-Van, the Seattle Cuba Friendship Committee, and of course, Rick "the bus driver" who is a long time Cuba supporter and has been a bus driver for the Caravan for many years. After a short speech from each of the departing caravanistas and music from Art Farquharson and Anne Feeney, both long time social justice musicians, supporters held signs and banners and raised their voices with demands of "Lift the Blockade on Cuba Now!" as they walked alongside the carloads of aid towards the border. After the caravanistas and the aid successfully passed through to the US, everyone gathered on the US side of Peace Arch Park and loaded the aid from the cars on to a big yellow school bus painted with the face of Che Guevara, the Cuban 5, and scenes from Cuban life and history.

Farewells were said and the Pastors for Peace bus started the US portion of it's journey...



Solidarity Notes Choir, June 30 2007.



March to the US/Canada Border, June 30 2007.

By Sarah Alwell



Free the Cuban 5 now! Justice for the 5 now! These were the cries of over 30 people who gathered outside the U.S consulate in Downtown Vancouver, on June 26<sup>th</sup> for the monthly picket action, to demand the release of the 5 Cuban heroes. Heroes who continue to be unjustly imprisoned in US jails for exposing US government funded, right wing anti-Cuban terrorist organizations working out

of Miami, Florida.

The first speaker was Jaehun Choi, member of Imagination for International Solidarity, which is a Social Justice organization based in Seoul, Korea. Jaehun talked about his recent trip to Cuba, by which he was amazed to see how many aspects of Cuban society reflected the struggles of the Cuban 5.

Esteban Gonzalez Arteaga, organizer with Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) spoke

about his participation at the International Youth Summit in Havana, Cuba, which discussed the case of the 5. Alongside the youth delegations from 48 different nations sent to discuss and organize on the case of the Cuban 5, Esteban had the privilege of listening to various Cuban youth speak about the role of young people in organizing in defense of these 5 men.

Sophie Ziner, route coordinator and speaker with the Pastors for Peace



Free the Cuban 5 Picket Action, June 26, 2007.

Caravan to Cuba spoke about the Pastors for Peace Caravan, and how by breaking through the US blockade to bring aid to Cuba, they are also breaking the media blockade against Cuba.

The Cuban 5 were fighting to defend the remarkable gains that the people of Cuba have made since the beginning of their revolution in 1959. Gains that are constantly under attack from US sponsored terror and aggression and a cruel and inhumane blockade that remains in full force today. But the 5 were also fighting to defend working and oppressed people around the world, who suffer at the brutal hands of the US and

other imperialist powers in this new era of wars and occupations. It is for these reasons that we must now defend them. We must educate ourselves and stand in unity with the people of Cuba and people around the world to demand freedom for these 5 brave heroes!

This is what the Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver has been doing for the past three years by organizing forums and conferences, marches and rallies, as well as monthly picket actions outside the U.S consulate. With 18 successful picket actions so far, our work is far from over. We must continue to organize and mobilize until the very day these 5 heroes are free. Join us!

To find out more information on upcoming actions visit [www.vancubasolidarity/freethefive.com](http://www.vancubasolidarity/freethefive.com)

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Free the Cuban 5 Picket Action, June 26, 2007.

# Mobilization Against War + Occupation *in action*



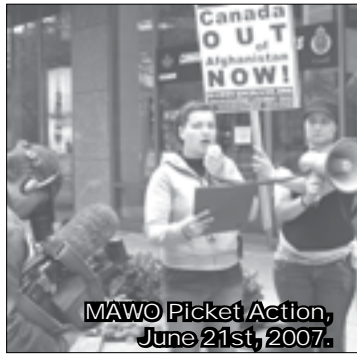
## MAWO PICKET ACTION & RALLY PROTEST CANADIAN WAR DRIVE IN AFGHANISTAN

By Kira Koshelanyk

June 2007 was a month marred by the deaths of 4 more Canadian troops in Afghanistan, as well as the deaths of hundreds of Afghan civilians by Canada/NATO occupation air strikes. The brutality of Canada's occupation of Afghanistan was protested again in Vancouver by Mobilization Against War and Occupation, with two street protests – the June 21<sup>st</sup> monthly picket action and the June 23<sup>rd</sup> monthly anti-war anti-occupation rally.

The June 21<sup>st</sup> picket action targeted the Canadian Armed Forces Recruitment Center in Vancouver with more than 25 picketers. The rallying chants were punctuated by speeches by participants including a former Canadian soldier who sent his message loud and clear to the government of Canada: “we don't want our money being wasted anymore on the production of weapons and on a war that is unjust!” The monthly (and often even more frequent) picket actions have become a regular occurrence in Vancouver as the combat and attack of the occupation becomes more and more brutal against Afghan people.

Two days later over 200 protesters took to the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery, demanding “Cana-



da/NATO Out of Afghanistan!”, “US/UK Out of Iraq!” and “Self-determination for all Oppressed Nations!” The words of the speakers from the stage and the crowds' chants attracted passersby who picked up protest signs and joined in the important action.

Opposition to the ongoing imperialist war drive comes from a wide range of people in Canada from different age groups and backgrounds and the speakers on the stage reflected this composition. Students, Indigenous activists and other solidarity activists, including Luciano Sanchez from the Hospital Employee's Union BC Global Peace & Solidarity Committee, all took to the mic to express their anger and frustration at the mounting deaths of Afghan people and the ongoing occupation forces air strikes that killed hundreds of people in June alone.

Both of these protest actions in June form an important part of the foundation of the growing movement in Canada against war and occupation. The consistent opposition in action reaches many people in Vancouver, encouraging them to turn their disillusionment and anger into action as well. As the quagmire for Canada in Afghanistan, the US/UK in Iraq, and all of the imperialists playing this devil's game of war for profit gets worse and worse, the antiwar movement must grow and help put pressure on the contradictions, hypocrisy and lies of this war drive and build the forces of grassroots opposition. Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) in Vancouver has pledged to not stop until, united with people struggling on the ground in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, across the Middle East, Latin America and Africa, finally defeat the forces of imperialist war and occupation and build a better world!

**ALL FOREIGN TROOPS OUT OF SOMALIA!  
NO TO INVASION OF SUDAN!  
US/CANADA/UN HANDS OFF AFRICA!**

**MAWO AFRICA PETITION DRIVES ATTRACT THOUSANDS!**

By Andrew Barry

On June 2<sup>nd</sup> Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO) took to the streets in Surrey with petitions, newsletters, sign-up sheets, and other anti-war information to outreach to people about the current era of war and occupation that has extended to Africa. At the Surrey Central sky train station organizers and supporters with MAWO talked to thousands of people and collected more than 400 signatures for two popular MAWO petitions.

The first petition calls for “All Foreign Troops out of Somalia!” which was created in response to the US-directed Ethiopian invasion and occupation of Somalia, which began in December 2006. The second MAWO petition demands “No to Invasion of Sudan!” to counter the escalating US/UN threats of military invasion in Sudan.

These two MAWO Africa petitions have been quite popular since they were created, as over 2,100 people have now signed on to these petitions calling for an end to the imperialist aggression and attacks in Africa. This has allowed for MAWO organizers to



talk with thousands of people in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland about the vicious imperialist attacks in Africa and throughout the world. These signatures show that more and more people in Canada are opposing the imperialist war drive around the world.

Hundreds of copies of the MAWO newsletter #14, which focuses on imperialist aggression in Africa, were also handed out to people. This newsletter has informative articles about Somalia, Sudan, and the 1994 Rwandan genocide. In addition many people wanted to find out more information about MAWO's upcoming events as dozens of people also signed up on the email list.

Going out to the streets and doing petition drives is one of MAWO's most important lines of work in getting regular working people and students involved in the anti-war movement. With the success of this petition drive and with the petitions themselves, MAWO will continue to go out on to the streets, and talk to more and more people in Canada about how everyday workers and students can unite to oppose the current war drive by the governments of Canada and the US. Please join us in this important work!



## 'HANDS OFF IRAN!' MAWO Forum Discusses the US Assault on Iran

By Nicole Burton

On June 1<sup>st</sup>, more than 50 people attended a forum entitled, “Hands Off Iran!,” co-organized by the Iranian Committee Against War (ICAW) and Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO). As the second event co-hosted by the two Vancouver anti-war groups in two months, it came in response to the increasing imperialist threats against Iran's sovereignty. This includes the recent UN sanctions against Iran, and the massive build-up of more than 50 U.S. warships, carrying more than 17,000 US military personnel in the Persian Gulf. The focus of the forum was to discuss these urgent matters threatening Iran's right to self-determination, and how the anti-war movement can effectively respond.

Presenting at the forum were Ali Yerevani and Saffaar Saeed, both organizers with the Iranian Committee Against War. Saffaar Saeed, a journalist, writer, and long-time social justice activist in Iran and Canada, was a participant in the Iranian Revolution, which kicked US imperialism out of the country in 1979. He presented on the current US threats towards Iran, noting that the US' record of death and destruction in Iraq and Afghanistan proves that their advancing aggression against Iran today will not benefit the

Iranian people.

Ali Yerevani, also a participant in the 1979 Iranian Revolution, has been active in social justice struggles in Iran, Europe, the US, and Canada, and is currently the political editor for the Fire This Time social justice newspaper. He spoke about the importance of Iran's long history of anti-imperialist resistance in order to better understand the struggle for self-determination of Iranian people today. He also explained that the current threats against Iran are within the context of the growing era of war and occupation, which has spread from Afghanistan, to Iraq and Somalia since 2001—and now is threatening Iran.

“Whatever happens in the Middle East, the U.S. has to deal with Iran—either in terms of peaceful negotiation or all kinds of aggression, including military aggression. Iran, from the point of view of its strategic location, diversity of nationalities, and political influence, has become the mirror of the entire Middle East,” Yerevani said, concluding that, “This could be understood even better within the context of how the Iranian Revolution of 1979 relatively and increasingly changed the relationship of forces in favour of the oppressed people of the Middle East.”

The forum closed with a lively discussion and reminder to all those opposed to military aggression against Iran to answer the Iranian Committee Against War's call to mobilize in the event that the U.S. invades Iran. The Emergency Action Plan states that protesters should gather at the US Consulate (1075 W Pender @ Thurlow St) on the day of attack at 4pm, and each following day for the first week to demand: “HANDS OFF IRAN!” and “STOP ATTACK IRAN!”



Saffaar Saeed and Ali Yerevani of the Iranian Committee Against War, June 1st, 2007.



### Spin

Continued from Page 18

If you from Ecuador, Guatemala, wherever your from, understand what was done to your people, understand, what it is that brought us here. Most of us here leave human rights abuses. We have a legacy behind us man. We come from Kings and Queens. If you're Indigenous people up here, and your out their gang bangin, whatever you're doing, just understand that we have a powerful, powerful, history, herstory, and a powerful future in our hands. When we self-destruct, we're giving the power to our oppressor. What I really want to say is, know where to aim that line in a poem. There's a line in a poem that goes, “Spitting poems doesn't make me a non-violent cat. I just happen to know, where to be aiming that gat.” And dream. Know what your dreams are and live them out “By any means necessary.” Just like Malcolm X said. And the brothers, respect the women. For every single youth, that maybe reading this paper right now, we need you. And I have every bit of faith that this world can be left in your hands and you can better it. Amend the mistake that we have made. But never, ever give up on your dreams, and never try to be something that you're not. Dreams come true.

FTT: Thanks Spin.

# FORUM CELEBRATES & DISCUSSES THE POLITICAL LEGACY OF CHE GUEVARA

# FORO CELEBRA Y DEBATE EL LEGADO POLÍTICO DE CHE GUEVARA

By Esteban González Arteaga

A forum on June 15<sup>th</sup> celebrating the 79<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Latin American revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara titled "Che, Cuba & the Coming Changes in Latin America," drew over 100 people into the Chilean Co-op. The event, organized by the newly formed Solidarity Coalition for a United Latin America (SCULA), featured the Cuban documentary "Che: Love, Politics, and Rebellion."

The forum was opened by MCs Gladys Uribe and Esteban González Arteaga, both of SCULA, who introduced the night, and highlighted Che's example in all of today's struggles for social justice. Rosa Quero, coordinator of SCULA, read the coalition's *Political Platform for Political Struggle*, emphasizing the coalition's slogan "Unity, Struggle, and Solidarity." She also urged participants at the forum to become involved in solidarity organizing with Latin America.

The film that was presented followed Che, from his days as a Medical student in his native Argentina, through to his death fighting in the jungles of Bolivia. The movie had clips of interviews with Fidel Castro, describing the young man whose heart filled with anger at the sight of the injustices committed by imperialism. It also made clear how and why Che decided to fight in the Cuban revolution, and then fought in the Congo, and in Bolivia, for the liberation of people in those countries from imperialism.

The movie was followed by a panel presentation by Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and Marisol Torres of the Vancouver Internationalist Bolivarian Circle "Bob Everton." Tamara Hansen

achievements gained as a result of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, her country of birth. She explained the various ways that the people of Venezuela are following



Marisol Torres y Tamara Hansen presentan sobre el legado político del Che con José Ángel como traductor. Junio 15, 2007.

the legacy of Che Guevara and shifting political power to the poor and working-class masses in Venezuela. They are also strengthening the growing anti-imperialist bloc of countries in Latin America in order to put every oppressed person in Latin America in a stronger position to fight for progressive social change.

The floor opened for discussion, where many people discussed how Che and his ideas are important to the current struggle against the new era of war and occupation and the fight for humanity in Latin America and the rest of the world.

Por Esteban González Arteaga

Un foro llevado a cabo el 15 de Junio celebrando el 79º aniversario del nacimiento del revolucionario latinoamericano Ernesto Che Guevara con el nombre "Che, Cuba, y los Cambios que Vienen en América Latina," atrajo la participación de más de 100 personas en la Cooperativa Chilena. El evento organizado

por la recién formada Coalición de Solidaridad por América Latina Unida (CSALU), estreno el documental cubano "Che, Amor, Política, y Rebelión."

Los maestros de ceremonia Gladys Uribe y Esteban González Arteaga, los dos con CSALU, abrieron la noche y

recalaron el ejemplo del Che en todas las luchas por la justicia social hoy en día. Rosa Quero, coordinadora de CSALU, leyó la Plataforma de Lucha Política de la coalición, puso énfasis en la consigna de la coalición "Unidad, Lucha, y Solidaridad," y le pido a todos los participantes en el foro que se incorporaran al trabajo de solidaridad con América Latina.

La película que se presentó siguió la vida del Che, desde sus días como un estudiante médico en su natal Argentina, hasta su muerte en la jungla boliviana. La película incluía entrevistas con Fidel Castro, describiendo al joven cuyo corazón se llenaba de ira al ver las injusticias cometidas por el imperialismo, y se narra cómo el Che decide luchar con la revolución cubana, y después en el Congo y Bolivia por la liberación de estos pueblos del imperialismo.

La película fue seguida por las presentaciones de Tamara Hansen, coordinadora de Comunidades de Vancouver en Solidaridad con Cuba (VCSC) y Marisol

Torres del Circulo Bolivariano Internacionalista "Bob Everton." Tamara Hansen habló, traducida al español por José Ángel, organizador con la coalición, sobre la importancia del Che como "una fuente de inspiración para millones de jóvenes revolucionarios." Ella explicó el papel que jugó el Che en el gobierno cubano durante los primeros años de la revolución: "Che creía en la construcción del socialismo en Cuba, esto significa desarrollar la participación política y conciencia revolucionaria de la mayoría de Cuba - los trabajadores, campesinos, mujeres, y jóvenes." Ella concluyó con una cita del Che sobre la necesidad de que todos tomen como suya la lucha por la justicia social: "Para nosotros está clara la solución de este interrogante; podrá ser o no el momento actual el indicado para iniciar la lucha, pero no podemos hacernos ninguna ilusión... Nos empujan a esa lucha; no hay más remedio que prepararla y decidirse a emprenderla."

Marisol habló después, explicó los logros que se han dado como resultado de la Revolución Bolivariana en Venezuela, su país de nacimiento. Ella explicó las diferentes formas que el pueblo venezolano sigue al ejemplo del Che, y esta cambiando el balance del poder hacia las masas pobres y trabajadoras de Venezuela, y además fortaleciendo el creciente bloque antiimperialista en América Latina con la meta de poner a cada persona oprimida en América Latina en una mejor posición para luchar por el cambio social progresivo.

El foro se abrió para las preguntas y comentarios de la audiencia. Se habló de cómo el Che y sus ideas son importantes en la presente lucha en contra de la nueva era de guerra y ocupación y en la lucha por la humanidad en América Latina y en todo el mundo.

Al final de la discusión la audiencia gritó, "¡Viva Cuba! ¡Viva el Che!" y después de los aplausos se trajo un pastel conmemorando el cumpleaños del Che; todos los presentes participaron en soplar las velas. Fue una noche conmovedora y el legado del Che se veía reflejado en las caras de todos los participantes en este tributo a un gran revolucionario.

spoke, translated into Spanish by SCULA organizer Jose Angel, on the importance of Che as "a source of inspiration for millions of young revolutionaries." She explained his role in the Cuban government in the early days of the revolution, "Che believed in constructing socialism in Cuba, this means developing the political participation and revolutionary consciousness of the majority in Cuba - workers, peasants, women, and young people." She concluded by quoting Che's words on the need for all to take up the fight for social justice, "For us, the solution to this question is quite clear: the present moment may or may not be the proper one for starting the struggle, but we cannot harbour any illusions... They are pushing us into this struggle; there is no alternative: we must prepare for it and we must decide to undertake it."

Marisol Torres spoke next, explaining the

Wrapping up the discussion, the crowd shouted "Viva Cuba! Viva Che!" with a loud round of cheering, which was followed by a cake commemorating Che Guevara's birthday. Everyone present came to the front of the room to participate in blowing out the candles. It was a moving evening and Che's legacy could be seen reflected in the faces of all those who participated in this tribute to this very important revolutionary.



La audiencia dentro de la Cooperativa Chilena escuchó las presentaciones de los oradores. Junio 15, 2007.

Comunidades de Vancouver en Solidaridad con Cuba (VCSC por sus siglas en inglés) es una organización que trabaja para crear apoyo y solidaridad para Cuba en Vancouver, Canadá e internacionalmente. Para cumplir con esta labor nosotros organizamos frecuentes eventos educativos y culturales, conferencias, movilizaciones y acciones en defensa de la soberanía de Cuba contra los ataques imperialistas y en defensa de las victorias de la Revolución Cubana.

Además apoyamos 3 campañas de peticiones:

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- 2- Por Libertad de los Cinco Cubanos Encarcelados en los EE.UU.
- 3- Por la Extradición del Terrorista Anticubano Luis Posada Carriles

A través de las campañas de peticiones en toda la lower mainland, en eventos, festivales, secundarias, y universidades, podemos

## ¿Quiénes son VCSC?

conversar con miles de personas sobre Cuba. El objetivo de este trabajo es llevar a Cuba, un país haciendo importantes avances sociales, a jóvenes, estudiantes, mujeres, personas de América Latina, personas del tercer mundo y a otras personas trabajadoras y oprimidas en Canadá, como un ejemplo de la construcción de un mundo mejor.

Cualquier miembro nuevo es bienvenido y animamos a todos a que se involucren con VCSC para construir un movimiento de solidaridad con Cuba más fuerte y más grande en Canadá.

Para conseguir más información contacta: [cubacommunities@yahoo.ca](mailto:cubacommunities@yahoo.ca) 778-882-5223 [www.vancubasolidarity.com](http://www.vancubasolidarity.com)

## Who is VCSC?

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

We also support 3 petition campaigns:

- 1- Against the US Blockade on Cuba
- 2- To Free the Cuban 5 held in US Jails
- 3- To Extradite anti-Cuban Terrorist Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela

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

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

For more information contact:

[cubacommunities@yahoo.ca](mailto:cubacommunities@yahoo.ca)  
778-882-5223  
[vancubasolidarity.com](http://vancubasolidarity.com)



## FiveHeroes 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](http://www.freethefive.org) or [www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca](http://www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca)

# EVENTS and ACTIONS



## Vancouver

**SUNDAY JULY 22ND**

### Moncada Day Celebration

Celebrating the anniversary of the Moncada Garrison Attack—the beginning of the Cuban Revolution

2pm  
Chilean Co-op  
3390 School Ave.  
(Near Kingsway and Tyne)  
Dinner: regular - \$10  
Children under 14 - \$5  
Org'd by: Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association

**MONDAY JULY 23RD**

### Nicaragua and Latin America Today

Hear: Phil Cournoyer--  
Nicaraguan citizen, member of the FSLN, former leader of Canadian Action for Nicaragua  
7 pm  
319 W. Hastings St.  
(Spartacus Bookstore)  
Sponsor:  
Vancouver Socialist Forum  
Info: 778-554-2730

**MONDAY AUGUST 20TH**  
End the Occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan! Stop the Accelerating Destruction of Earth! No Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America!

Rally at 5:00pm  
Vancouver Art Gallery (Robson Street Side, at Hornby)  
Org'd by StopWar.ca

**SATURDAY**

**AUGUST 25TH**  
Canada/NATO Out of Afghanistan! US/UK Out of Iraq! Self-determination for All Oppressed Nations!

Monthly Antiwar Rally  
2pm  
Vancouver Art Gallery (on Robson & Howe St)  
Org'd by: Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO)  
www.mawovancouver.org  
info@mawovancouver.org  
604-322-1764

## Toronto

**SATURDAY AUGUST 11TH**  
3RD ANNUAL BBQ

Noon to 4pm at High Park, (south of main entrance – Site #4) Kids Welcome  
Tickets: \$10 - all proceeds towards efforts to Free the 5  
For tickets or for more info:  
Cris Castillo 647.292.2557,  
Brien Young 416.762.5745  
Org'd by:  
Free the Cuban 5 Cmte-Toronto

**THURSDAY, JULY 26TH**

### Celebrate the 54th Anniversary of Cuba's Revolution Day!

No to the U.S. Blockade! Free the Cuban Five! Extradite Posada Carriles to Face Justice!  
6:00pm – Food and Refreshments  
7:00pm – Program  
25 Cecil St. – Steelworkers' Hall (1 block south of College & Spadina)  
Free admission  
Sponsored by: Toronto Forum on Cuba  
Info: torontoforumoncuba@rogers.com

## Montreal

**WEDNESDAY AUGUST 1ST**  
NO SECURITY WITHOUT JUSTICE! NO PROSPERITY WITHOUT DIGNITY! STOP THE SPP!

Public Assembly  
6:30p.m.  
UQAM, room AM 050  
355 Ste-Catherine East (metro Berri-UQAM)  
Translation available for all events. Childcare available for downtown assembly.  
Org'd by:  
No One Is Illegal Montreal, The Immigrant Workers Centre, and Project Genesis  
Info: 514 691-0471 or 514 342-2111  
noii-montreal@resist.ca

**SATURDAY JULY 21**

### Anti-Capitalist Consulta

Open to all delegates of groups who are interested in actively mobilizing against Bush, Harper, Calderon and the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP)  
Noon-5pm  
Room R-M 110, UQÀM  
315 Ste-Catherine East (corner St-Denis)  
Métro Berri-UQÀM  
Org'd by: People's Global Action (PGA) Network  
info: www.psp-spp.com  
info@psp-spp.com  
514-848-7583

**AUGUST 23RD TO 26TH**  
Forum Social Québécois

Another Québec is on the March! Workshops, Conferences, and Artistic Protests.  
For more Info:  
www.forumsocialquebecois.org  
514 982-0533  
info@forumsocialquebec.org

## Montebello

**MONDAY AUGUST 20**  
Mobilize and Protest against George Bush, Stephen Harper and Felipe Calderon at the meeting of the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP)

Day of Action against the SPP  
3pm at Chateau Montebello (or as close as possible to Montebello) Org'd by: People's Global Action (PGA) Network.

## Distribute Revolutionary Change in Your Area!

For distribution of Fire This Time in your area, across BC, and internationally, please contact:

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



## Also Available from FIRE THIS TIME



For more pamphlets available from Fire This Time Contact:  
Mike Chimenti (604) 518-5009 [distro@firethistime.net](mailto:distro@firethistime.net)  
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In the United States or anywhere else in the world, go to the Pathfinder website at: [www.pathfinderpress.com](http://www.pathfinderpress.com)

## Essential Readings on the Case of the Cuban 5

Available for \$1 ea.

To Order Contact:  
Free the Cuban 5  
Committee Vancouver  
604.719.6947  
or  
[cuban5\\_van@yahoo.com](mailto:cuban5_van@yahoo.com)



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- SUCK SENSE
- MUNA
- SUNDAY SKOOL DROPOLITS
- NDIDI CASCADE + DEANNA
- BRIDGEE + KIA KADIRI
- DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION
- CHADIO
- A-SLAM PRODUCTIONS
- KYTAMI
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- SANDMAN
- GOLD
- LADY SINCERE
- RUEOPTICS
- VC
- BITTER TASTEBUD
- SPEECHES BEYOND
- LYRIC
- FLOORFILLAHZ
- STEALTH BOMBERS KREW
- RAW TALENT

# VANCOUVER HIP HOP FESTIVAL AGAINST WAR + OCCUPATION 3

**SATURDAY JULY 21ST**  
**SUNRISE PAVILION**  
 10341-135 STREET SURREY  
 NEXT TO SURREY CENTRAL SKYTRAIN  
 1PM TO 11:30PM

1pm-2:30pm - Workshop: HipHop: Roots of Resistance  
 Origins of Hip Hop | Rise + Role of Women in Hip Hop | The Indigenous Perspective  
 Hip Hop Internationalism

2:45pm-4:45pm - HipHop Academy-Class of 2007  
 MC'ing + Beatboxing Tutorial | DJ'ing Tutorial | Breakdancing Tutorial

5:30pm - 11:30pm - Evening Show-Music As the Means!  
 MC's | DJ's | Breakdancers | Graffiti Installations | VJ's | Door Prizes and more!

**SUNDAY JULY 22ND**  
**STRATHCONA PARK**  
 ON VENABLES ST AT MALKIN AVE  
 12NOON TO 8PM

Outdoor Show//Ol'Skool Block Party!  
 MC's | DJ's | Breakdance Showdown | Self Determination Tent | Skateboard  
 Demonstrations | Live Graffiti

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 604.322.1764

British Columbia Agencies for the 2007 Hip Hop Festival, Vancouver, BC, Canada, and the Pacific Region  
 Community Social Justice Centre 25 (CJ) Community Alliance Vancouver (CAV) and the Pacific Region  
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