

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

Fire This Time!

WET'SUWET'EN STRUGGLE FOR INDIGENOUS RIGHTS



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**CUBA:
UNITED WE HAVE
WON! UNITED WE
WILL WIN!**

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Wet'suwet'en, Indigenous Rights & the Struggle Against the Coastal GasLink Pipeline

In defense of Mother Earth

By Alison Bodine

"The Coastal GasLink project has never received consent though our hereditary governance system, our Bahlats, to proceed. The company's pre-construction activities have resulted in multiple violations of their existing provincial permits, and provincial negotiations have also proven ineffective to protect the health of our land and people. As a result, we have no faith in the provincial processes, or existing archaeological or environmental permits to protect our territories and cultural heritage. We must re-assert our jurisdiction over these lands, our right to determine access and prevent trespass under Wet'suwet'en law, and the right to Free Prior and Informed Consent as guaranteed by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." – Excerpt from the eviction notice sent to the CEO of Coastal GasLink from the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary chiefs. January 4, 2020.

This eviction notice demanding that all Canada Gaslink (CGL) contractors and staff leave Wet'suwet'en traditional territory was issued days after the British Columbia Supreme Court issued a new injunction. The injunction, which makes a temporary injunction issued in December 2018 permanent, bans Wet'suwet'en people and anyone who opposes the LNG pipeline construction from blocking access to their territories by CGL.

The decision of the B.C. Supreme Court, subsequent actions of the RCMP to attempt to enforce the injunction, and statements by BC Premier John Horgan have made it clear that the Provincial and Federal governments are taking sides with Canada GasLink.



This is regardless of the violations of Indigenous rights and sovereignty, or the devastating environmental impact that construction of the CGL pipeline will bring.

Natural Gas is Anything but Natural

The Canada GasLink pipeline is a natural gas pipeline that is planned to bring fracked gas 670km from near Dawson Creek, BC to a new liquified natural gas export facility on the BC coast in Kitimat. Despite the name, "natural" gas, and the way that it is extracted from the earth, is anything but "natural."

At a high-level, hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, involves pumping massive amounts of water, sand and chemicals at high-pressure into the earth to release pent-up gases that can then be extracted and put into pipelines. This process itself releases methane gas into the atmosphere, threatens the clean water sources in the area and can even bring seismic activity. The CBC reported on this direct link in November 2019, stating "Scientists are delving four kilometres beneath the earth's surface to find out why hydraulic fracturing triggered a 4.5 magnitude earthquake in northeastern B.C in 2018."

Fracking is also devastating to human health. In 2018, Margaret McGregor, MD, CCFP, MHSc, a member of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) wrote an

opinion piece in the National Observer describing the horrifying effects, "Fracking also releases pollutants and carcinogenic chemicals into the atmosphere. Studies demonstrate an increase in asthma and other respiratory diseases in people who live close to fracking operations, with higher rates of hospital admissions for heart, cancer, skin, nerve and bladder disease found nearby. More babies born with congenital heart defects and higher rates of pre-term births have also been observed among those who live close to fracking sites."

LNG Canada "Carbon Bomb"

After the natural gas has been fracked out of the ground, CGL pipeline is planned to deliver it to LNG Canada - a gigantic new \$40 billion liquefied natural gas export facility in Kitimat, BC. When fully operational, this facility will have the ability to produce 28 million tonnes of natural gas a year - natural gas that will burn and release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

As Warren Bell explains in the National Observer, "LNG Canada is a 'carbon bomb' that will take up around a quarter of B.C.'s entire greenhouse-gas budget for 2030, and two-thirds of B.C.'s 2050 target. It would mean B.C. would have to dramatically decarbonize everywhere else.

And in order to make the claim that



Sign depicting the hereditary chiefs of Wet'suwet'en Nation leading the opposition to Coastal GasLink pipeline

LNG Canada can be built without undermining our goals, the government has had to employ a widely accepted but utterly perverse convention.

This convention says that GHGs generated by the burning of fossil fuels outside the borders of a particular political entity – like the province of B.C. – do not count towards that entity's GHG production.

It's absurd to think that the government isn't aware that what burns in Asia effects the atmosphere over Canada — and climate change everywhere. But politically, it looks much better to say that British Columbia's GHG output is much less by excluding all GHGs generated offshore. And so that's what B.C.'s politicians say, because it makes them seem to be acting on climate change, when they're not."

The True Face of Premier John Horgan

If BC NDP Premier John Horgan's claim that LNG development is an environmentally friendly project isn't two-faced enough – he has also taken a strong stance against the rights of the Wet'suwet'en people to their traditional territories, while at the same time promoting BC as "Canada's first province to put the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into law."

On November 28, 2019, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples became law in British Columbia. The government of the province proudly announced, "The

new law will recognize and protect the rights of Indigenous peoples. It will create a clear process to make sure Indigenous peoples are a part of the decisions that affect them, their communities, and their territories – and it provides a path forward for everyone."

So, what then happened to the part of

the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) that calls for calls for "free, prior and informed consent" of Indigenous peoples for projects on their territories? As described in a Press Release sent out by the Wet'suwet'en defenders:

"At a time when the Province of British Columbia is celebrated for adopting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the Wet'suwet'en people are actively denied the protections of UNDRIP on our own lands," the hereditary chiefs said. "When we enforced our own laws and required that industry seek Free, Prior, and Informed Consent for development on our lands, we faced a brutal display of militaristic police violence and an ongoing police occupation of our territories."

To this, Premier Horgan replies, "All the permits are in place for this project to proceed. This project is proceeding, and the rule of law needs to prevail in B.C."

The question is, just whose laws is he referring to?

Doesn't Coastal GasLink have the approvals that it needs?

In BC, 95% of the land has never been ceded by Indigenous people. This means that for majority of BC, no treaties were ever signed that gave the government of Canada Rights and Title over the land. Despite this, in the eyes of the Crown, the question of what law (government of Canada or Indigenous) has jurisdiction over a territory is often left up to a court to decide.

Although you wouldn't know it by reading most major media coverage of the Wet'suwet'en struggle against CGL, in the case of the Wet'suwet'en territory, there is a legal precedent recognizing the Rights and Title of the hereditary chiefs.

As Shiri Pasternak, a professor of criminology at Ryerson University and the research director of the Yellowhead Institute wrote in the Globe and Mail newspaper, "The most important case on Aboriginal title in Canada was fought in 1997 and won by the Wet'suwet'en (and Gitksan) in the Delgamuukw decision. The court recognized that underlying title continues to rest with the Indigenous nation where treaties have not been signed. This interest in the land was found to be collective, unique and proprietary in nature. Note that it was the hereditary chiefs who brought the case to the Supreme Court and the hereditary chiefs whose authority to govern was recognized in the decision."

Coastal GasLink does not have the approval of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs. What they do have is 20 benefit agreements with Indigenous Nations along the pipeline route. These



Heavily armed police violently force their way amid protesters at the Gidimt'en checkpoint

agreements are made between the elected band councils of the Nations, which are a product of the government of Canada's Indian Act that was imposed on Indigenous people as part of colonization.

The way that the government of Canada and oil and gas corporations have designed their approvals and "consultation" processes to work to divide Indigenous people – putting the "elected" leaders of a governance system they imposed on Indigenous nations against the traditional leadership it attempts to minimize.

Stand in Solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en

Under the capitalist system, resource extraction projects always bring a cycle of a boom and a bust – and it is working, poor, oppressed and Indigenous people that get the bust. CGL and LNG Canada are no different. Hundreds of millions of dollars of tax-payer dollars are given away in government subsidies. Money that could instead be spent on improving education and healthcare in BC.

Is the loss of our environment and the trampling of Indigenous rights worth this cost?

For the past year, since the RCMP violently arrested 14 people at the Gidimt'en checkpoint for defending their territory, the Wet'suwet'en people and their supporters have continued to oppose CGL. This struggle is at a critical point once again, and it is crucial that poor, working and oppressed



Rally in support of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and against the Costal Gaslink pipeline in Smithers B.C.



Rally in support of the Wet'suwet'en fight against the Costal Gaslink pipeline in Vancouver

people in British Columbia and Canada who believe that climate catastrophe is not an inevitability support their struggle. For updates on how to support the Wet'suwet'en struggle against CGL visit www.unistoten.camp

CGL, TMX and Site C – Same Struggle, Same Fight!

In December 2019 the United Nations

committee on the elimination of racial discrimination called for a suspension of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, Site-C Dam and Coastal GasLink pipeline. The growing climate justice movement in Vancouver, BC and Canada must also make these same connections.

The electricity that is to be generated from Site-C is expected to fuel the LNG industry. The massive Teck Frontier tar-sands mine in Alberta is planned to fill half of the capacity of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. Whether they have declared a "climate emergency" or not, the Prime Minister Trudeau and the government of Canada are pouring tax-payer dollars into resource extraction projects that are stealing the future of generations to come.

Poor, working and oppressed people in Canada must fight in a unite front in the streets to demand sovereignty and self-determination for Indigenous nations in Canada, as well as an end to the heavily subsidized climate destroying projects that threaten the existence of humanity in Canada and beyond.

Follow Alison on Twitter: @Alisoncolette

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By Thomas Davies

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BUILD OUR FUTURE, NOT A PIPELINE!

*In defense of
Mother Earth*

By Alison Bodine

On December 16, the United Nations (UN) Framework Convention on Climate Change, known as COP25 concluded in Madrid, Spain. As described by António Guterres, Secretary General of the UN, “the international community lost an important opportunity to show increased ambition on mitigation, adaptation & finance to tackle the climate crisis.”

However, this angering conclusion was to be expected. Multiple news and scientific reports have reported widely on how the world's richest countries, including Canada, are far from reaching the 2015 UN Paris Agreement climate targets. These countries have the greatest resources to fight climate change at their disposal yet they are even further away from reaching what is required in order to keep the planet from warming above 1.5 degrees Celsius – what scientists around the world have agreed is a critical point in avoiding devastating and irreversible impacts on humanity from climate catastrophe (IPCC Report, 2018).

In contrast, the streets outside of COP25 were filled with 500,000 people marching for the climate solutions that humanity so urgently needs and Indigenous youth from Canada occupied the Canadian Embassy against the government of Canada's approval of massive resource extraction projects. Actions protesting the empty words of COP25 were part of the growing international climate justice movement, first inspired by the struggle of young climate activist Greta Thunberg, that continues to bring millions of people out into the streets around the world.

From Vancouver, Canada, mobilizations



Climate Convergence community gathering & potluck and “No TMX Pipeline” protest, December 18, 2019

in defense of mother earth continue to unite people from all different walks of life in the streets. Actions in December were especially focused on the critical demands to end the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion, the Coastal GasLink LNG pipeline, the Teck Mine in the Alberta Tar Sands and the construction of the Site-C Dam, as well as continued support for the important court cases of Indigenous nations defending their sovereignty and rights.

Climate Convergence – Metro Vancouver's grassroots climate coalition continued to organize, co-organize and support these important demonstrations of resistance to the government of Canada and their policies that continue to put the interests of profit above those of people and the planet.

On November 30, local hip-hop community organizer Estea Elements organized the second edition of the “Music for Our Mother” fundraising

series. The proceeds from this event, which featured a fantastic lineup of artists dedicating their talent and time, including Ndidi Cascade, Reuport Common, Obcdn Optimo & Mannemewho (CCT), Million Elements and Trevor Mills, went to support the ongoing organizing of Climate Convergence.

With the expected government of Canada announcement about the approval of the massive Teck Frontier tar-sands mine looming, Climate Convergence and 350-Vancouver came together to organize a lively demonstration in downtown Vancouver. On December 6, activists denounced Teck, which paints itself as a “green” and “responsible” corporation – while at the same time trying to build a 292 square kilometre mine (that's twice the size of Vancouver) that projected to operate for the next 40 years.

It is no surprise that the government



Music For Our Mother fundraiser organized by Estea Elements

of Canada is expected to give the project the green light despite the clear environmental devastation and trampling of Indigenous rights that this project imposes. By producing 260,000 barrels of bitumen a day, Teck Frontier will fill the capacity of TMX. The government of Canada spent \$4.5 billion tax-payer dollars on the existing Trans Mountain pipeline and expansion project – so they have no choice but to approve the mine that they need to fill the pipeline.

That is one of the reasons why continued consistent and clear opposition to TMX is critical to stopping tar sands expansion. Therefore, when the CEO of Trans Mountain announced that pipe for the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion (TMX) project will be in the ground before Christmas day, Climate Convergence was quick to announce a street action demanding “No TMX Pipeline & Tar Sands Expansion!”

On December 18 activists joined at the busy intersection of Cambie Street and Broadway to denounce this hasty declaration with powerful chanting, information tabling, and bright lights signs demanding “No TMX Pipeline.” Despite four ongoing court challenges from Indigenous nations in the Federal Court of Appeal, 1200 outstanding permit applications in BC, the Federal government continues to push ahead with the TMX pipeline expansion - regardless of the devastating environmental impact and the massive waste of at least \$20 billion tax-payer dollars. In fact, this action took place on the same day that organizations in BC, including the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) launched a new petition

demanding that the government of Canada reveal the real costs of the TMX project. As stated by Chief Kukpi7 Judy Wilson, Secretary treasurer of UBCIC during the press conference announcing the petition,

the government of Canada has the obligation to reveal the costs of TMX, “so we can have a full discussion around the billions of public dollars spent on oil infrastructure during a time when Indigenous communities lack safe drinking water and critical work on reduction of carbon emissions is needed for a climate safe future.”

Following the successful intersection action, there was a community potluck organized by Climate Convergence to give activists the opportunity to reflect on the victories and challenges of climate justice organizing in Vancouver. A diverse group organizations and individuals joined in, and the night was full of warm and encouraging exchanges looking forward into continued climate justice organizing in the new year.

Without continued organizing in opposition of projects such as TMX and the Teck Frontier tar-sands mine, these devastating projects would have already been built – and only continued united action in the streets, schools, and workplaces can stop them from being built once and for all. Whatever promises are made – whether by Prime Minister Trudeau in Ottawa, or by the world's wealthiest countries at meetings of the United Nations, it is people organizing in the streets against the climate crisis that will win a future for humanity and a healthy planet to live on. To join Climate Convergence come to the next organizing meeting or event by checking www.climateconvergence.ca.

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MOTHER OF ALL STRUGGLES!

Indigenous struggle against colonialism



Evo Morales
1959 -

Revolutionary Bolivian indigenous leader. He was Bolivia's first indigenous president until being pushed out by a coup in 2019 orchestrated by the United States and their right wing puppets in Bolivia.

The way of living in harmony with the Earth is one, without neoliberalism (...) we must not allow students to be stolen from us by the school of the Americas. If it is not with neoliberalism, it is with militarism to impose its plundering model ... outside Bolivia, they prepare for divide us and submit to steal our natural resources. We must strengthen the communal movement. Our government program is based on strengthening the economy and nationalization of our resources. Capitalism does not forgive that social movements can demonstrate that without the participation of external agents, we can free ourselves. We have shown that without capitalism and without the IMF [International Monetary Fund]. We can have a prosperous Bolivia. never giving up before the enemy, capitalism is humanity's worst enemy (...) a thing is private property and another the excessive accumulation of resources. The way of living in harmony with the Earth is one, without neoliberalism. If it is not with neoliberalism, it is with militarism to impose its plundering model ... outside Bolivia they prepare for diviners and submit to steal our natural resources.

The United States drone assassination of Iranian general Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi commander Abd Mahdi al-Muhandis, along with eight others, was a war crime by any definition, violating both Iraqi sovereignty and international law. This criminal act carelessly risked sparking a wider, catastrophic war that would involve many nations and put millions of lives at risk.

President Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo followed their aggression with a series of lies, which were repeated by much of the media and many politicians, claiming that General Soleimani was responsible for the deaths of over 600 U.S. soldiers in Iraq. But it is Iran who has been the victim of U.S. aggression ever since 1953, when the democratically-elected president Mohammed Mossadegh was overthrown in a joint British/U.S. coup, followed by the imposition of the Shah. From 1980-1988, the U.S. fueled the Iran/Iraq war, which killed more than one million people. In 1988, the U.S. shot down an Iranian civilian passenger plane, killing more than 290 Iranian civilians. Since 1984, the U.S. has imposed crippling sanctions that have devastated Iran's economy and the lives of its citizens.

Iraq also has been devastated by U.S. sanctions imposed by the Clinton administration, which killed 500,000 children, and by the U.S. invasion and occupation which followed in 2003, resulting in the deaths of over one million Iraqis.

Donald Trump's order to assassinate General Soleimani was the culmination of his campaign of "maximum pressure" against the Islamic Republic of Iran. The bipartisan attack began when Democrats joined with Republicans to resume sanctions in 2017, giving Trump leverage to withdraw from the Iran nuclear agreement (JCPOA). The Iranian people continue to suffer tremendously from U.S. sanctions, which prevent Iran from accessing world financial markets, depriving them of life-saving medications and the ability to maintain the nation's infrastructure.

The Anti-War Movement Responds

But the U.S. people are not fooled by their government's aggression. The anti-war movement quickly and decisively organized mass actions in 80 different cities in 38 states. Tens of thousands of people rallied across the country to demand No War on Iran and U.S. Out of Iraq!

Most importantly, the people of Iran and Iraq have spoken loudly. Millions have

NO U.S. WAR ON IRAN U.S. OUT OF IRAQ!

Millions attending Soleimani's funeral in Tehran, Iran



taken to the streets to mourn their martyrs and both governments spoke quickly. The Iraqi parliament passed legislation demanding that the U.S. close its embassy and remove all military personnel. They also ended all security agreements and now deny the U.S. the right to use Iraqi airspace. Iran announced that the JCPOA is officially dead, that they will resume enriching uranium, and that they will take their case to the United Nations.

Donald Trump is just the latest U.S. president to lay waste to the nations of the Middle East, a region whose problems can all be laid at Washington's door. Democrats in Congress have made a great show of their impeachment but not before giving Trump everything he wanted. They agreed to remove language from the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that would have required him to seek congressional approval before taking action against Iran. They gave him more than \$700 billion in defense spending – more than ever before – and refused to

end the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) which is the pretext for continued occupations in the region.

Trump's provocations did not end with the assassinations. He publicly stated that the U.S. would target 52 sites in Iran, including those of cultural significance – another war crime. He then threatened Iraq with extreme sanctions after its parliament and Prime Minister requested that all foreign troops, including U.S. troops, be removed from their country. Trump also said he would force Iraq to pay for the bases built to support the US occupation. This is a gross violation of Iraqi sovereignty and a slap in the face of the Iraqi people.

When Congress returns on January 7 they must be met with demands for action. Their impeachment makes no mention of the international crimes in which they are complicit. They must add war crimes – surely a high crime and misdemeanor – to their articles of impeachment. Congress must clearly state that they oppose war on Iran, whether Trump seeks approval from them or not.

The people's demands are clear. We are absolutely opposed to a war with Iran – which could have devastating consequences for the entire planet. The U.S. must withdraw its military from Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen and all of the Middle East. The January 4 anti-war protests are just the beginning. We will continue to mobilize mass actions and to voice our demands for an end to invasion, occupation, and war. We stand in solidarity with the people of Iran and Iraq, who want the U.S./NATO axis to leave their region and end their deadly interference and interventions.

**NO WAR ON IRAN
U.S. OUT OF IRAQ!
U.S./NATO Out of the Middle East!
End the Sanctions!**

Statement by the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC)

www.unacpeace.org

By Janine Solanki

December 17, 2014 marked a historic day, when former U.S. President Barack Obama and former Cuban President Raul Castro announced the beginning of normalizing relations between the two countries. With this announcement also came the release of the remaining three of the Cuban 5 heroes from U.S. jails, who returned to Cuba to the immense joy of their families, the Cuban people and supporters and activists around the world.

On that day, the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver celebrated this news with a victory action at the U.S. consulate for their 109th monthly action, after all those previous actions demanding freedom for the Cuban 5. These 5 Cuban heroes spent up to 16 years in prison, unjustly jailed in the U.S. after investigating anti-Cuba terrorist groups in order to protect the Cuban people. With the Cuban 5 freed and important steps towards normalizing relations, it was clear that public pressure to demand an end to the U.S. blockade was more critical than ever. The Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver soon reformed as Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade – Vancouver (FCAB) and continued with monthly protests at the U.S. consulate, now voicing demands for an end to the U.S. blockade.

Fast forward 5 years to December 17, 2019 – U.S. President Trump has rolled back many of the important steps to normalize relations and break down the blockade, and is instead tightening their criminal blockade on the Cuban people even further. In Vancouver, Friends of Cuba Against the U.S. Blockade marked this 5 year milestone with their monthly protest

action, proclaiming through picketing and chanting that Cuba supporters and activists will continue demanding “Trump – end the blockade on Cuba now!” In between rounds of picketing, protesters heard from local speakers, as well as a phone message from members of Ottawa Cuba Connections who were also holding their monthly protest in front of the U.S. Embassy that day. For this day events were held not only in Vancouver but also Montréal, Toronto, Ottawa and

Halifax,
Canada and
Kiev, Ukraine

Following the action protesting

5 years of freedom of Cuban 5, 5 years of actions against U.S. blockade on Cuba



Committee, and Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver

Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, recounted the moment when

they received news that the Cuban 5 heroes were freed and were able to spread this incredible news to other organizers and supporters of the Cuban 5. They shared photos that went through the 9 years of the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver’s organizing, through picket actions, vigils, cultural events, international conferences, and even bike rides to free the Cuban 5, and then meeting with the Cuban 5 after their freedom!

The final highlight of the program was the music of Maju Maju – a South African born singer and a performer, now living in Vancouver, who is a former member of the two times Grammy Award winners Soweto Gospel Choir from South Africa. Maju Maju along with Andrew Beddos on the keyboard and other musicians joining in produced beautiful and powerful music which got everyone up on their feet and dancing! The evening wrapped up on this uplifting note, and with a group photo in front of a free the Cuban 5 banner which had been modified to say “FREED” back on December 17, 2014.

To find out about the next Friend of Cuban Against the U.S. Blockade event, visit www.vancubavblockade.org, and follow on Facebook and on Twitter @NoBloqueoVan

Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki



the U.S. blockade of Cuba, FCAB also celebrated this day when the 5 Cuban heroes were freed. To mark this historic victory, a cultural night was held at Vancouver’s Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House. The event started with video footage recounting the release of the Cuban 5 and the preceding years of campaigning for their freedom. The program continued with FCAB organizer Max Tennent who shared a poem reflecting on Cuba’s struggle against U.S. imperialism. Then Azza Rojbi, coordinator of FCAB and previously of the Free the Cuban 5



Celebrate 61 Years of the Cuban Revolution



By Janine Solanki

At 2 am on January 1st, 1959, U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista and his associates hurried onto a small plane and fled Cuba once and for all. They had realized their defeat by the revolutionary Rebel Army led by Fidel Castro was inevitable, and this became the first New Years Eve where the masses of Cuban people were able to celebrate the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. 60 years later, Cubans alongside people around the world celebrate the date and the incredible achievements of the Cuban Revolution that has inspired millions of people around the world to struggle for a better world, as well as looking forward to another year of great effort for peace, equality and social justice.

Since 2005, Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) has organized an annual Cuban New Year

Eve celebration bringing together hundreds of people to celebrate the new year and the Cuban Revolution.

This year's party marked 61 years of the Cuban Revolution! The doors of the Heritage Banquet Hall in New Westminster opened to Cuban revolutionary banners

adorning the walls along with party lights and festive decorations; tables with information on Cuba and social justice causes; delicious Cuban food and drinks being served at the bar; a photo booth with props and a Cuban background where party goers could get a polaroid taken; and of course the enticing dance floor! The party started with Tamara Hansen, the coordinator of VCSC recounting the historic victory of the Cuban Revolution that this party was celebrating. Then Coast Salish Indigenous Elder, activist and organizer Kelly White got everyone up on their feet to participate in acknowledging the unceded Central Coast Salish territories that the event was taking place on, and to join in a round dance to the sound of her drumming and singing.

The event then continued with live music – first with a beautiful song sung by the young activist Nadia Binetti. The crowd then warmed up with the Ranchera singing of MX Katracho, whose music from the soul of 'Nuestro America' brought people up to their feet for some spontaneous dancing! Before the evening's salsa lesson,

Janine Solanki, national coordinator of the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade to Cuba, spoke to invite people to join the brigade and be part of this unique travel experience in Cuba! The program of the Che Brigade features salsa lessons, so to give a taste of that experience Janine got everyone up on their feet to warm up the dance floor with a salsa lesson! This set the stage for DJ Zaza and Nadro to take over get the dance party rolling! They also handed over the DJ booth to DJ Carlitos Tunes from El Salvador, who spun his Latin fusion of hits that kept the dance floor shaking all night long!

The dance floor was packed as the clock counted down to midnight, and 2020 was brought in with the balloon drop cascading from the ceiling, the sound of cheers and noisemakers, and celebratory hugs all around. The festivities continued and near the end of the night Tamara Hansen took a pause to announce the winners of the raffle prizes, with books,



Cuban mementos, t-shirts and the prized Havana Club rum!

This one-of-a-kind party enjoyed by over 120 people can best be described as a party in Cuba – an inclusive event where the whole family from kids to grandparents and everyone in between can enjoy dancing, eating, drinking and celebrating together! What better way to welcome in 2020, and to celebrate 60 years of the Cuban Revolution!

Check out upcoming Cuba solidarity events at www.vancubasolidarity.com, or follow on Facebook, and Instagram and Twitter @VanCuba_VCSC

Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki



Speech by Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, President of the Republic of Cuba, closing the National Assembly of People's Power Ninth Legislature's Fourth Period of Ordinary Session, at Havana's Convention Center, December 21, 2019, Year 61 of the Revolution.

Dear compañero Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, first secretary of our Party's Central Committee;

Compañero Esteban Lazo, President of the National Assembly and the Council of State;

Compañeros of the Historical Generation who are with us;

Deputies;

People of Cuba:

On the eve of another anniversary of the undefeated and victorious Revolution, first of all I want to exclaim: Congratulations!

We have navigated a year full of challenges, tension and aggression. We faced these united, and united we are winning.

The 61st year of the Revolution has indeed been difficult and challenging, although never as hard as those that followed the January triumph when the harassment was accompanied by vicious attacks, including: an invasion, sabotage, arson, banditry and the isolation of Cuba throughout the hemisphere.

The challenges were defeated, overcome one by one, leaving us, the protagonists, with a history that makes us deeply proud and a very formidable revolutionary lesson: by the people, with the people and for the people: anything is possible!

Steeled by all those years of resistance, and supported by the strength of the human work erected against all odds over six decades, we have been able to navigate through 2019 overcoming obstacles that appeared insurmountable, and today can rightly celebrate, without complacency and conscious that every goal met is a new starting point.

Speaking of obstacles, let us begin with the worse and most pervasive of all: the United States economic, commercial and financial blockade.

When the history of these days is written, we will need to reserve a chapter for the year 2019 because of the brutal, one could say demented way in which aggression against Cuba was escalated this year, practically, at the rate of more than a sanction per week; that is, a "turn of the screw" every seven days to asphyxiate our economy.

Cruises, flights, remittances, medical services, financing, fuel transportation and insurance were cancelled, restricted or prohibited. There

MIGUEL DÍAZ-CANEL, PRESIDENT OF CUBA: UNITED WE HAVE WON! UNITED WE WILL WIN!



was no area exempt from witch-hunting, sieges, and persecution. Nor is there any revolutionary project or action exempt from defamation.

To justify its actions, Washington has once again resorted to blatant lies, and to the crude accusation that we are promoting instability and are a threat to the region, which we have vigorously denied.

Measures adopted are aimed at sabotaging Cuba's foreign trade and hindering financial transactions with third countries, including payments, collections and credit options. They seek to deny supplies to national industry, limit access to technology and sources of capital, and cut our economic income, with specific actions against fuel shipping, tourism and international health services.

To this end, the United States has launched an intense slander campaign against the medical collaboration that Cuba provides. It is immoral

and unacceptable to question the dignity, professionalism and altruism of the more than 400,000 health collaborators who, over 56 years, have participated in missions in 164 nations.

As the people know, behaving in an unprecedented manner, the United States government today boasts of having threatened, persecuted and taken illegal action against more than ten companies and dozens of vessels from third countries that transport oil to Cuba. This aggression will go down in history as cowardly piracy.

The openly stated goal is to deprive a country of 11 million people of its fuel supply. The impact was not worse thanks to the unity, conscious response and solidarity of the people; the strength of the socialist socio-economic system; and our 60 years of experience confronting imperialist aggression.

But there, in our economic results, is the impact this aggression caused. Virtually every sector was obliged to face interruptions or delays in production. We were able to prevent inconvenient power outages and endure the restrictions by taking measures tailored to particular situations, by territory and by agency. The entire country tightened its belt again, but no austerity measures were implemented that would unload the cost of the criminal blockade onto the people. We are a territory free of neoliberalism!

According to our enemies, and those who amplify their messages on whatever communication platform, the blockade is meant to harm the government. A lie! The blockade affects the entire people because it affects all economic sectors and

actors.

The additional restrictions on the availability of fuel, which began in April, significantly affected public transportation, forcing a temporary halt or slowing down of some investment projects, damaging agriculture, food production and distribution, and other areas of significant economic and social impact.

The suspension of cruise ship arrivals and flights to the provinces, cuts in remittances, the closure of consular offices and limitations on travel licenses, among others, hit the non-state sector of the economy particularly hard.

The people know this because they are suffering from it; but they have also faced the situation with greater wisdom and foresight, with that inexhaustible source of energy that exists in every Cuban: creativity and the unsurpassable capacity to find a solution to every problem. This is our history, which teaches us that unity,

resistance, struggle and emancipation are key to our victories.

In the first place, thanks to this and also to the cooperation of sovereign governments and courageous business people, willing to challenge U.S. hegemony to trade with Cuba, we have faced and resisted the economic war.

And, here we are! On our feet, dignified and firm. Calm, but alert. Aware that those who go this far in their malevolence have no scruples in resorting to even more perverse plans, if they might contribute to erasing from the map this example of audacity and resistance that irritates them so much, and which they have not been able to defeat in 61 years, with neither coercion or seduction.

Exactly two years ago, at the closing of the National Assembly, Army General Raúl Castro recalled, "The Cuban Revolution has resisted the attacks of eleven United States administrations of different parties and here we are, and here we will be, free, sovereign and independent".

With the greatest pride, the present generations of leaders, of the people and, particularly, Cuban youth, present today in the Revolution, we say: Of Fidel, of Raúl and of all their comrades in struggle, we are continuity!

I know that this statement alone infuriates our adversaries, because it is the confirmation that none of their plans have worked. They have hit us hard and are hitting us. The blockade delays progress and reduces the effectiveness of our efforts. It hurts us, bothers us and irritates us, just as abuse, arrogance and wickedness

hurt, bother and irritate; but it is important for them to know that we will not surrender!

The blockade is a policy so discredited, so immoral and so contrary to all rights, that its defenders go beyond all legal and human limits to maintain it, forgetting a Spanish proverb, older than Don Quixote: "The pitcher goes to the well so often that, in the end, it breaks." Proverbs, by the way, express the wisdom born from the people's experience, including their struggles.

Who knows if one day a proverb might emerge, in all languages, from the people's legendary struggle against this monster, as a universal monument to our resistance! I could imagine this proverb: "An empire that isolates ends up isolated." (Applause)

Dysfunctional and eaten up by internal corruption, the United States government has stepped up its aggressive, unilateral conduct in almost all regions of the world, in the face of problems that are central to the future of humanity, and has exacerbated existing conflicts with total disrespect for international law and the sovereign prerogatives of many states.

In this hemisphere, the U.S. officially reaffirms the validity of the Monroe Doctrine and its actions are fully consistent with that imperialist ambition. Its political structures responsible for policy in this region seem to be dominated by elements of the Cuban-American extreme right and characters associated with the terrorist, criminal history of the United States in the region.

But not everyone is bowing down to their pressure. The United Nations General Assembly, which every year takes a position against this criminal policy, has once again condemned it in 2019, in a practically unanimous manner. In the region, only two governments distanced themselves from the world's condemnation: only Brazil voted against it, in clear submission to the empire, and Colombia abstained from voting on a resolution it has supported since 1992.

To justify this reprehensible decision, Colombian authorities resorted to unappreciative, politically motivated misrepresentation of Cuba's altruistic, devoted, discreet, unobjectionable contribution to peace in that



Sign reads "unity makes us invincible" at the workers day march in Ciego de Avila, Cuba on May 1, 2018

country, a process in which the conduct of the Cuban government is universally recognized.

The aggressiveness of imperialism is reflected in its extensive, crude program of political subversion and interference in Cuba's internal affairs, to which some \$120 million of taxpayers' money has been allocated, over the past three years.

With growing activism, as has been widely reported, the U.S. embassy in Cuba is directly involved in these actions, in blatant violation of Cuban and international Law, specifically, the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

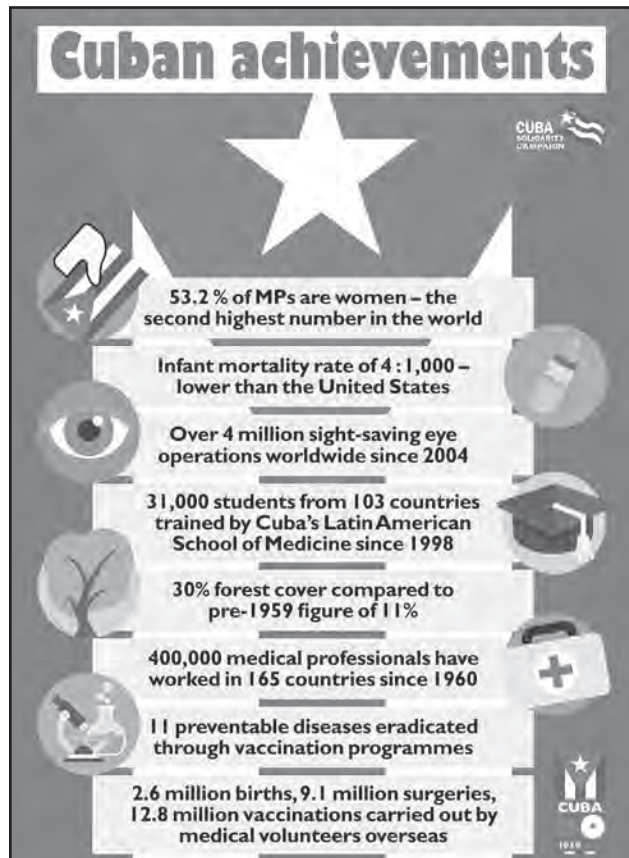
True to the historical path of the Revolution, the Cuban government has remained firm and serene in the face of this open, growing hostility.

We have refused to take the bait of provocations and remain responsibly committed to preserving formal bilateral ties and the few spaces for official cooperation that remain in place between the two countries, seeking to protect the conditions that allow for maintaining family ties of millions of citizens and communication between the two countries.

It should be emphasized, however, with absolute clarity, that Cuba will take all necessary steps to neutralize the interventionist efforts of the United States, to protect the tranquility and well-being of the population, to safeguard national unity and to defend, at whatever cost necessary, the sovereignty and independence of the country. (Applause)

We will not allow ourselves to be provoked, nor will we renounce our sacred independence. In the face of the enemy's threats, we will act as Raúl has advocated: everyone in their neighborhood, in their community, must be on battle footing and make our own that phrase we repeated when the Comandante en jefe died: I am Fidel! (Applause)

When we look abroad, all the reasons we resist



and create without wavering are confirmed. The crisis of multilateralism, so questioned at the most recent Non-Aligned Movement Summit, because of the profound imbalances it causes, and its permanent threat to peace, reveals a world where inequality is deepening and the majority is being marginalized and excluded.

Neo-liberalism, driven by the powerful media and fundamentalists of all kinds, impoverishes nations that were once prosperous. We have just seen this in Argentina, which had been saved once already from neoliberal disaster and then again became "scorched earth" in only four years of disproportionate measures, as is being documented by its intellectuals and artists, outraged by the high social debt left by the outgoing government, the great promoter of neoliberal formulas.

Under similar schemes, the Chilean model, so exalted by international financial organizations, today shows its inability to solve social problems generated by an economy designed by the Chicago Boys. Their young people, beaten and abused by the hundreds, are leading, in continuous demonstrations, an epic battle against the system that excludes them.

They demand rights that have not been seriously addressed by their government, nor do they seem to be visible to the OAS, which shows such concern for stability and democracy in Venezuela, Nicaragua and even Cuba, which has no reason to thank the "Ministry of Colonies," to which we fortunately ceased to belong, more than 50 years ago.

We reaffirm that we will maintain solidarity and cooperation with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, its legitimate government under the Presidency of Nicolás Maduro Moros, and with the Sandinista government and people, led by President Daniel Ortega.

Let this be a reminder to those who put on anti-Cuban shows with the grotesque OAS Secretary General at center stage.

Another outrageous, unacceptable episode that 2019 brought was the coup against President Evo Morales Ayma in Bolivia, carried out by the local oligarchy under Yankee guidance, with the scandalous complicity of the OAS.

The deeply racist coup plotters repeat the formula tried in Venezuela of self-proclaimed authorities. It no longer matters that the OAS report (on the elections) was a lie, and that there were never any violations or fraud on the part of MAS. Its leaders are now refugees in other countries, persecuted by the real criminals: those who took power with the Bible in one hand and a gun in the other.

Since the very beginnings of the coup, Cuba has condemned it. We reaffirm here today our solidarity with compañero Evo Morales Ayma and the Bolivian people. (Applause)

To the foreign attempts to destabilize the Caribbean States of Dominica and Suriname, we respond that Cuba's solidarity with both governments and peoples is solid and firm.

In this bitter context, hopeful processes have emerged in Mexico and Argentina. Neither of these has set out to build socialism or nationalize the economy, and yet the war against their social policies has already begun, using the pretext of Marxist influence.

We reaffirm our affinity and solidarity with the government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico, and applaud the election of Alberto Fernández and Cristina Fernández as President and Vice-President of Argentina. (Applause) We insist on the recognition of Lula's innocence



Top: Presidente Miguel Díaz-Canel visit patients & doctors at the hospital " Docente Dr. Ernesto Guevara de la Serna" en Las Tunas province in Cuba

Bottom: Sign reads " lift the genocidal blockade" at May 1st workers day march



and the restitution of his political rights. His full freedom must therefore be demanded.

In Mexico and Argentina, during the last year, we have witnessed the resurgence of our dreams of integration and the idea of preserving CELAC, diverse and plural, which managed to establish in our country, in 2014, more than a Proclamation, the shared intention to be forever a Zone of Peace.

Our ties with Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Middle East are being consolidated. Our political relations and high-level exchanges with the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam have been strengthened.

It has been a positive year in terms of ties with the European Union and its member states in different areas, including economic trade,

investment and cooperation.

Cuba's participation in the XVIII Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, was active and productive. We reiterate the importance of the Movement playing an increasingly vigorous international role, in addressing together the great challenges imposed on countries of the South.

Compañeras and compañeros:

We have outlined the international political situation, aggravated by the aforementioned crisis of multilateralism and the high level of U.S. interference in our region.

In this context, full of dangers and threats, the modest performance of the Cuban economy is no exception. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) confirmed that the general slowdown in Latin America and the Caribbean persists, with a growth rate of 0.1% expected, and announced that it will be low in 2020, with an estimated rate of 1.3%, in an international context characterized by worsening trade tensions, among other factors. These rates are the basis for Cuba's economic performance in 2019, with its 0.5% growth, and the forecast for 2020, which is a realistic 1%.

We are no exception. What is truly exceptional is that our economy has not declined under the weight of the enormous pressures and financial persecution that has been exacerbated this year to an unprecedented degree.

What is also exceptional is that we have not resorted to easy neo-liberal formulas that are back in style, even though it is more than proven that they only serve to widen the gap between the few, very few, increasingly rich and rapidly impoverished majorities.

Let me recall that at the height of neoliberalism, in the 1990s, Fidel "went to the future and came back to tell it", as they say about his powerful foresight. In the context of an Ibero-American Summit, in 1993, our historic leader warned:

"Neoliberalism has no future and the time will come when all this will begin to be questioned, but time must pass and, in the meantime, we must be there fighting the most just causes, for the most correct ideas, raising consciousness. It is very important that the people become aware, and the people will become aware to the extent that they see that these formulas do not solve their problems."

When Fidel expressed that criticism in advance, the system's theorists were determined to convince us that capitalism was the end of history. Today we could say that we are witnessing the end of the history of capitalism. All we see is a repetition of formulas that have already proven to be ineffective and, what is worse, in spite of their high social cost.

No, thank you, we do not want that for our people. We want prosperity and we are going to fight for it with all our might; but never at the cost of leaving the majority out of any benefit.

We are not interested in a society, as we have seen so many out there, where the lights that advertise progress overshadow the stars in the sky, while hundreds of people sleep in parks and dozens of children throw themselves onto air-conditioned vehicles to clean the windows of their well-to-do passengers, men and women who think they can ease their consciences by throwing them a few coins for food.

We want decency, beauty, good taste and a culture of detail to reign in our cities and for the best productive practices to make our fields flourish. We want honest work and efficiency to win the war against illegality, bureaucracy, accommodation, inertia and apathy.

Cubans are winners of the impossible. And this is a good time to propose another year of positive exceptionality.

Looking at highlights of the year that is ending, we ourselves are surprised by the leap taken over difficulties:

To begin 2019, a devastating tornado severely damaged homes and workplaces in five municipalities of the capital. That early morning of January 28, in the darkness, amidst the rubble, few believed that it would be possible to heal the deep wounds and complete construction and beautification plans for Havana's 500th anniversary.

A real tornado of work, effort, solidarity and collective intelligence, in a few months, erased nature's blow, setting records in finishing investments projects.

This contributed to the surpassed goal that most encourages us, at the end of the approved Housing Policy's first year of implementation. With homeowners' efforts, subsidies and state funding, 43,700 dwellings were completed, 10,000 more than planned, a real inspiration for coming years, when we aspire to complete more than 60,000 annually. Only in this way, and under new concepts of functionality, quality and harmony with the environment, will we, one day, be able to solve accumulated problems in housing.

2019 was also the year we began to see results from greater investment in highway and rail transportation. Eighty new cars were put into operation in the national railroad system, which was accompanied by improved quality of these services, as well as the rehabilitation of the main railway stations.

More than 300 buses assembled in Cuba, 69 semi-buses and 125 motor-tricycles were added to public transportation, while progress was made in the repair of buses that had been out of service for some time, bringing some relief to one of the country's

most acute problems, which will continue to demand resources and efficiency.

Workers in the budgeted sector will surely remember that in 2019 their salaries were raised up to three times, which favored, among other things, the return of 12,942 teachers to classrooms, allowing for 96.9% coverage without the use of alternatives.



Sign reads "I am happy I live in Cuba" at May 1st workers day march

Tomorrow is Educator's Day. Congratulations and recognition for the contributions made by Cuban teachers on that day.

Without yet reaching the salary reform, the increase raised the real value of state sector workers' income, and to a lesser degree, social security benefits, a demand postponed for years, in the expectation of an improved economy, which is still pending.

This was the year in which telephone service and Internet access were extended and diversified, beginning as one of the world's last-placed countries in this arena, to become one of those with the most growth in internet connections.

Seven million, three hundred thousand telephone lines, 6 million of these for mobile phones and more than 3 million 3G and 4G users, speak to the great progress made in reaching our goal of greater computerization of society.

Tourism merits a separate paragraph, being the sector most affected by the tightening of the blockade - along with medical services - which managed to surpass four million visitors, open 3,855 new hotel rooms and advance in building ties with national production, foreign investment and the non-state sector, aspects which require more work, given their impact on the national economy, along with continuous improvement of quality.

In the Mariel Special Development Zone, industrial plants are already operating and manufacturing Cuban products needed for

our domestic market and with export potential.

But most important this year, for this legislature and all citizens, was the approval of our new Constitution, which strengthens Cuban society and opens new paths to the institutionalization of the country.

Six laws have emerged from its implementation in two sessions, in an unprecedented legislative exercise that today leaves us with the legal instruments needed for better functioning of the National Assembly itself, municipal assemblies and People's Councils, as well as with new figures and forms of government work, which should lead to the improvement of People's Power bodies, which cannot be postponed.

In this parliamentary session we have elected for the first time, in recent years, a Prime Minister and also the new Council of Ministers. We can assure you that compañero Manuel Marrero Cruz, deputy prime ministers and appointed ministers will give their all, providing continuity to the inspirational work of running the government with the people and for the people.

We were advancing in this dynamic of work, addressing the most pressing needs and demands of the population, when the imperial escalation deprived us of more than 50% of our fuel needs, beginning in September.

The "conjuncture" arrived, a period that required all our strength to avoid negative effects and setbacks. Jokes and memes were created on social media that will make the list of the nation's most powerful strengths: the ability to joke about even our most serious problems. Even those of us who used the word initially to mitigate fear caused by malicious rumors that the most difficult moments of the Special Period would return, relieved the anguish at crowded bus stops, during closings and long lines at gas stations, production shutdowns and all the associated problems, laughing when there was no other way out.

That was one more fight we won, but not totally. (Applause) The "conjuncture" forced us to search our experience in the worst times for saving practices that had been shelved, but as soon as the most difficult crisis moment passed, some state car drivers have gone back to rolling up their the windows and forgetting about solidarity. There are measures that cannot be circumstantial. We must enforce them until the routine becomes habitual. Like all forms of conservation and all practices of solidarity.

This is a decision. It is not a request. This is a stipulation that I am making on behalf of the government and the needs of the majority. (Applause) And we will demand compliance

Continued on page 30

A Successful Year of Resistance ★★★★★★★★

People of Venezuela Advancing Against Imperialism



By Francisco Dominguez

Massive march in Caracas, Venezuela against the Trump administration sanctions and blockade on Venezuela, on Aug 10, 2019

The failure of Juan Guaidó to be re-elected as president of the national assembly is also a failure of the US to bring about regime change through his self-proclamation as “president in charge” of Venezuela.

It is worth noting that the new leadership of the national assembly and its new president, Luis Parra, are all members of opposition parties.

The US strategy of Guaidó’s presidential self-proclamation could not be more destabilising, especially considering that it has Donald Trump’s recognition and support — and slavish endorsement of most of the EU, plus Ecuador, Chile, Colombia and, of course, the likes of Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro.

The US strategy behind Guaidó’s self-proclamation, Operación Libertad, throughout 2019 involved violent initiatives aimed at bringing about chaos and mayhem sufficiently intense to justify external (US military) intervention.

This was the case with the attempt, with the support of Colombian armed forces, police and paramilitaries, to push by violent military means US-donated “humanitarian aid” across the border with Venezuela in Cucuta, Colombia.

The paramilitaries would take over a city or big town, proclaim it “liberated territory,” fly in a “Guaidó provisional government” and call for international assistance to be positively responded by the US military — exactly the model the US sought to deploy in Cuba in April 1961. It failed then and it failed in Venezuela in February 2019.

In March 2019, a cyber-attack against Venezuela’s electricity system produced total blackout for five days.

It brought the country to a halt, interrupting or obstructing the functioning of all its services, including transport, water and healthcare (dozens, including babies, died in hospitals).

The blackout was unsuccessful in its intention to instil panic and desperation, which extreme rightwingers sought to exploit by encouraging looting so as to justify external (US military) intervention.

In April 2019, Guaidó, with well-known extreme rightwinger Leopoldo López, staged a farcical attempted coup d’état during which a few dozens soldiers blocked a Caracas thoroughfare, where they languished for hours waiting for a non-existent military uprising.

The coup ended with golpista soldiers seeking asylum in the Brazilian embassy, López in the Chilean then Spanish embassy, and, Guaidó, tail between his legs, back to his home, surrounded by embarrassment.

They waited in vain for a government knee-jerk reaction leading to a shootout with an abundance of corpses, thus justifying external (US military) intervention.

The military remained totally loyal while, wisely, the government allowed the coup to just crumble away.

Then the US activated the Lima Group (comprised of representatives of right-wing Latin American governments), led by the

golpista Organisation of American States secretary-general Luis Almagro, seeking to both isolate the Venezuelan government and create the conditions for an international (US military) intervention.

Though they — especially Colombia and Brazil’s Bolsonaro — have been vociferously in favour of such intervention, time and again they have resisted US pressure to commit troops for a military adventure against Venezuela.

In August, Trump passed a raft of extra economic and financial sanctions, including the freezing and confiscation of Venezuelan assets in the US (of about US\$30 billion), as well as the application of penalties against anyone doing business with Venezuela.

It brought Venezuelan financial transactions in the world almost to a total halt. US strategists expected panic and capitulation from Maduro but instead were met by more resilience.

Throughout the year, Guaidó called for mass mobilisation almost weekly, each time with less support. His team has been beset by accusations of corruption even from his own “ambassador” to Colombia; by irrefutable evidence of strong connections with Colombian narco-trafficking paramilitaries, and by growing fragmentation in the opposition and within his own base.

The US got the Lima Group, led by Almagro, to use the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR in its Spanish acronym) to apply sanctions against Venezuela.



Macrh in Caracas, Venezuela in support of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and against the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR), on December 3, 2019.

A US-designed military treaty, TIAR's activation has a military threatening flavour, but it left Venezuela unimpressed.

According to the Venezuelan government, Guaido's team ordered a terrorist attack against military barracks during which terrorists murdered a soldier.

They stole rifles and about 10 rocket launchers, apparently intending to shoot down a Colombian plane, blame Venezuela to generate a conflict and thus get a TIAR-sponsored international (US military) intervention.

Most weapons were recovered and most of the terrorists were captured.

Since 2019 the US has constantly threatened Venezuela with military action — “all options are on the table” — coupled with aggressive statements from the US southern command and persistent violations of Venezuela's air and sea space.

Previously US Vice-President Mike Pence on tour in Latin America sought to create a “coalition of the willing” to undertake military action against Venezuela.

But all US efforts, though wreaking havoc on Venezuela's economy and inflicting horrible hardships, shortages and hyperinflation on millions, have failed.

Trump, “who has made the restoration of democracy in Venezuela one of his signature goals,” faces “a stinging defeat” where military action “is not a realistic option,” concluded a Washington Post editorial (January 8 2020).

With Guaido out of the picture, defeated by another section of the opposition, Washington has lost a key lever.

This section of the opposition is in dialogue with the government to jointly prepare elections to the national assembly to be held this year.

The world's corporate media plays a perfidious role by persistent and systematic

misrepresentation and demonisation of Venezuela's Bolivarian government.

But almost nothing else legitimises US policy on Venezuela more than the slavish endorsement it gets from Europe, whose continuous support for Guaido is scandalous — but its almost total silence on repression in Chile, Ecuador, Haiti and Bolivia and

its timidity when it comes to the killings of hundreds of peace activists in Colombia is a disgrace.

Faced with a year of brutal US economic aggression, any other government in the world (Cuba excepted) would have collapsed or capitulated.

The socio-economic model represented by the Bolivarian revolution explains Venezuelans' resilience and resistance.

The model is so structured as to defend the poorest and most vulnerable, such as the CLAP food programme that benefits six million families.

Venezuela refuses to apply neoliberal policies — its tenacious commitment to free universal healthcare and education and pensions to 100 per cent of those entitled are further examples.

All that — and the building of three million houses for the poor, aiming to reach five million in the coming period — explain why the people of Venezuela support the Bolivarian socio-economic model. Imagine this with no US sanctions or US financial aggression.

The capacity of the model to deliver explains something even more fundamental: the civil-military alliance, cornerstone of the Bolivarian revolution.

The Bolivarian People's Militia currently stands at 3.3 million, rapidly being expanded to five million. Bolivarian Venezuela wants dialogue, elections, democracy and peace, not war. But if the US goes for military aggression, millions are willing and ready to defend the patria. No pasaran! Not in 2002, the year of recovery, not ever.

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OUR HERITAGE



Clara Zetkin

German Marxist theorist, activist, and organizer of the first International Women's Day in 1911

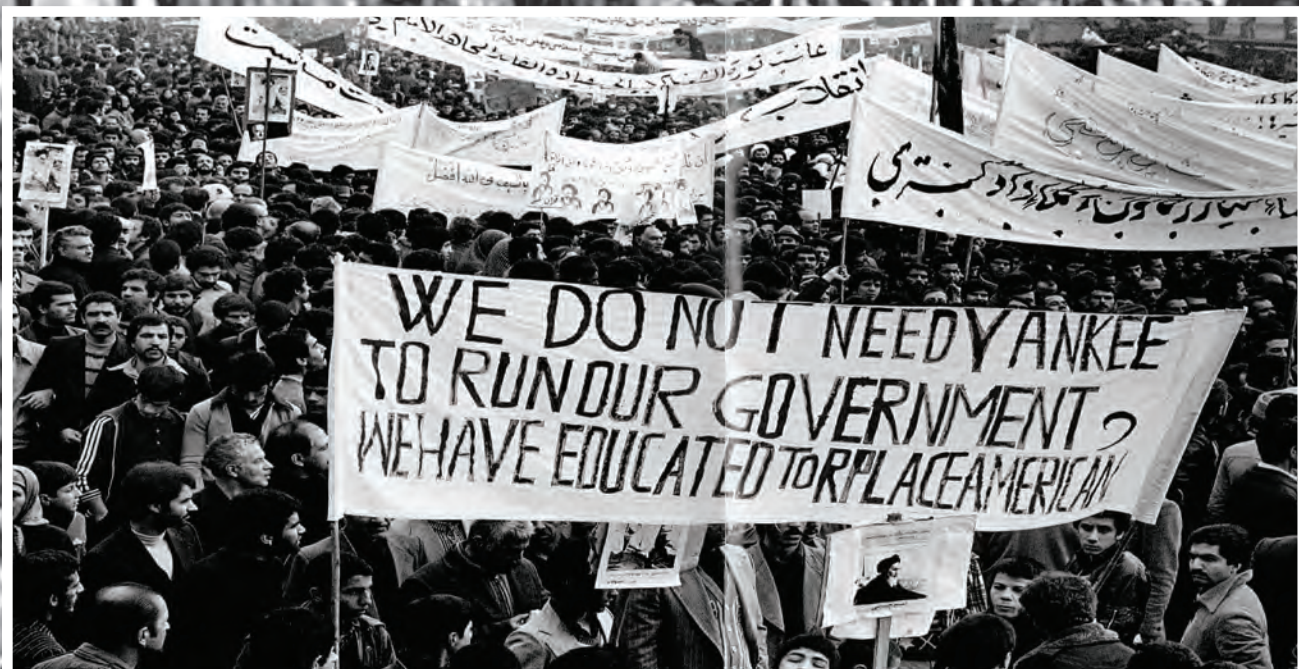
Rosa Luxemburg:
Her Fight Against the German
Betrayers of International
Socialism (1919)

Imperialism, born of capitalistic development, confronts us as an international phenomenon in its radiations and influences, accomplishing with its brutal unscrupulousness of conscience, its gigantic, insatiable appetites, its tremendous means of power, very different wonders from “the construction of the Egyptian pyramids and Gothic cathedrals,” as expressed in the Communist Manifesto. It gives new and deepened content to the difference between Germany and France created by the war of 1870-71; it extinguishes old differences familiar to world-politics between the great powers of Europe and creates new fields of conflict between them; it is tearing the United States and Japan into its powerful current. Dripping with dirt and blood it traverses the earth, destroying ancient civilizations and converting entire despoiled nations into slaves of European capitalism.

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Interview with Cuban 5 Hero Fernando González

*Interview by Max Tennant
Transcription by Azza Rojbi*

Fire This time: So, this is the fifth year, since you've been out of the U.S. jails and being among the great Cuban people. I just want to know what you feel being with the Cuban people and being finally free.

Fernando González: I feel home. I was in the United States just for the reasons that you all know, what we were doing in the United States, but I belong in Cuba.

I always assumed that my presence in the United States was temporary. No matter how long it was, it was temporary. I was always ready to come back to Cuba and now I'm where I belong.

FTT: Are you still closely in touch with the other Cuban four heroes? And is there any mutual plan or work that you're planning on doing together?

Fernando: Well we stay in touch. It's not easy to put us five together in the same place because we are all involved in different responsibilities and everyone has a family to attend to, a job to fulfill. And there is always somebody that is away from Havana or somebody who's got a family situation. So even though we stay in touch and we see each other frequently, putting the five of us together in the same place is a task for superman. But I guess superman is going to be around this holiday. We're going to get together, commemorate the anniversary of our return.

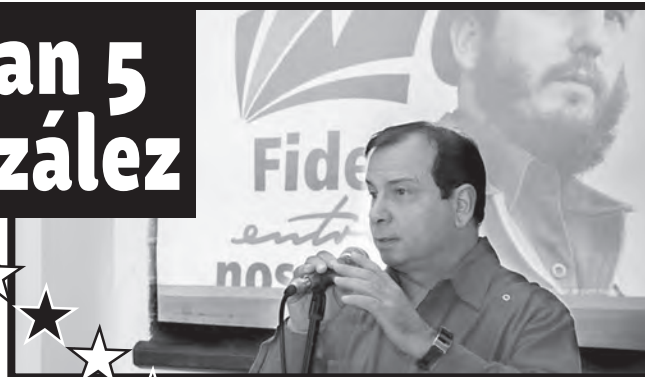
FTT: I just want to thank you again and ICAP for the great planning and helping with making the Calixto Garcia Brigade a great success. I just also want to know about the successful Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Meeting, for Democracy and Against Neoliberalism that ICAP held. I just want to know what is your assessment

of the conference and what is planned for the next step?

Fernando: Well, it is hard for me to evaluate the results of the conference, because I was part of the organizing committee. So basically, I don't like to evaluate what I was a part of. But in general terms I could tell you that it was, in my opinion, a very good conference.

The goals that we set for ourselves with the conference were achieved. I think it's the first time that so many social movements and political parties got together in the same event. And I think it was important because the struggle was the same no matter where you come from. If you looked at it from the perspective of a political party, if you look at it from the perspective of a social movement or if you look at it from the perspective of the solidarity movement all of them are working in solidarity not just with Cuba, but with all the just causes. We mentioned the Palestinian people right and Puerto Rican right to self-determination or the Syrian people having their right of sovereignty in deciding their own future without a war that has been imposed from abroad. We talk about the people of Western Sahara who have the right to have their own country and territory.

The message of unity was a very moving message that we tried to make during the event. I think the message was clear and was very well taken. It's not that it



L to R: Gerardo Hernandez, Fernando Gonzalez, Antonio Guerrero, Rene Gonzalez and Ramon Labañino, the Cuban 5 Heroes celebrating their return to Cuba

wasn't before but I get the feeling that the political parties, the social movements, the solidarity movement are working, and are walking towards consultation of actions. Actions that are really with a bigger impact in terms of the struggle of the peoples, in terms of their solidarity with Cuba.

I think it's also important to convey the fact that we've been struggling against the blockade for almost 60 years now, the solidarity movement has been fighting along with the Cuban people all these years. But we're living in a very particular and special juncture in the economic war against Cuba and no other U.S. administration had gone so far, as far as this administration in its efforts to strangle the Cuban people.

The blockade is a set of rules and regulations and laws that have been put together through the years. We were living, and we have been living for decades under that blockade and we were able to advance and develop the country despite those regulations and we could have done way more if we didn't have the blockade against Cuba.

This administration has gone beyond this set of rules that is the blockade itself. And they are really carrying out an economic war against our country, trying to really cut off every single source of financing for our country. And we need these sources. We need them, we need the oil to keep the economy going. We need the oil to have power in our houses. We need the finances to invest in the country. We need foreign investment to carry out our governments' plans. It is really a special moment and we're trying to convey the urgency of this moment. And I get the feeling that the delegates to the event got the message.

FTT: Leading on what you were saying about the blockade, what are the important projects for ICAP right now?

Fernando: Whoever we meet now, wherever we go, and with anybody that we receive, we try to explain this, we try to explain to many people. I don't have to explain to you because you've been involved in solidarity with Cuba for so long and I know of the Fire This Time's knowledge about the Helms-Burton law and what the application of that law means. But we try to explain that to ordinary people. So, we try to raise consciousness and raise awareness about what this specific moment implies for the Cuban people and not only for the Cuban people. It has implications also for the Canadian people because something that is not very well known, and most people are not very familiarized with is that the extraterritoriality of the blockade and the Helms-Burton law and the application of Title 3, imposes on other countries laws that were not passed by the Parliaments of this countries. Why would a Canadian company have to limit itself to doing business with Cuba because the government of the United States passed a law?

That is an unlawful thing in itself. But even if it were lawful, which is not, we can go on and on explaining why it's not. But even if it were lawful it was not passed by the Canadian parliament. And I could say the same for the Italian parliament or for the English House of Commons or any other country. So why a Canadian company have to abide by this regulations and laws that have never been voted in Canadian

parliament. it is an infringement on the Canadian, Italian, English sovereignty. And I will say if I were a Canadian, or an English individual or a Swedish individual or whoever I will be very much offended because they are limiting my freedom, my liberty and my sovereignty.

FTT: Since you've become president of ICAP, you've been at the centre of a lot of ICAP projects and planning. What is your assessment of the Cuba Solidarity movement right now around the world? How do you think it could be improved?

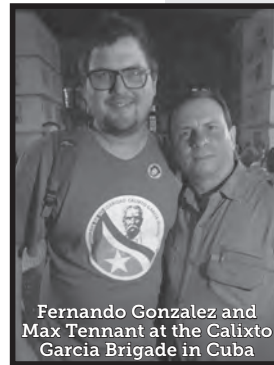
Fernando: Well, I think Cuba has enjoyed the company of a solidarity movement that is unheard of before. I mean no country, no social project, no struggle has been accompanied by so many people for so long. The Cuban revolution has had solidarity movement since the very beginning. So, it's 60 years of solidarity with Cuba. I could say even that we can find expressions of solidarity even before the revolution. But organized solidarity has been since the very beginning of the revolution and we are soon going to celebrate the sixty first anniversary. And it is spread out around the world, we have links with 2010 friendship associations in countries.

So, we can say that

there is a responsibility to think about the future. It is the responsibility not only of Cuba but of those members of associations in countries around the world to think about what is the future of solidarity with Cuba. What the solidarity with Cuba will be 20 years from now. So, the responsibility to work for the continuity of solidarity movements, I would say is a priority for what we do at ICAP.

There are countries in which younger generations are more involved than in others. And it is important to have the younger generations join the solidarity movement. The younger generations throughout the world live in a world that is very different than the world in which I grew up. I would say that an individual that is 40 years old has lived all of his or her life under a neo-Liberal ideology, that is not only an economic policy but it is an ideological view of the world that has been tried to be imposed over all other views. And people under those ideological schemes are led to believe that they are isolated individuals. They are not trying to find solutions in a collective way. They just see themselves as an isolated individual fighting against forces that most of the times they don't even understand where they are come from.

And that's something that has an impact on political movements, on solidarity movements. You can see it in political parties, that it is hard for



Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver picket at the U.S. consulate on April 5, 2014.

them to find younger individuals to get involved in the struggle. The youngsters receive so much influence from the media, from the society in general, that it is hard for them to get involved in social issues. On top of that you have younger generations that don't believe in politicians anymore. They don't believe in political parties; they just look at the political world and they don't think that the politicians and the political parties would solve any of their problems. So, they become cynical. They don't believe that we need to find the solutions through collective efforts. And that has an impact also on the solidarity movement.

We must work against those ideological influences, to get the younger generations to understand the value of being a part of collective, something that is bigger than an individual. I don't think happiness would be found just by trying to live for the well-being of myself. As a person, I need to be part of something else bigger than myself, being part of my family, being part of my country, being part of the world.

FTT: What do you think is the most important campaign for solidarity groups, not just around the world, but especially in the U.S. and Canada?

Fernando: Canada is so close to the United States that it is important for the Canadian solidarity movement with Cuba try to convey this special juncture of the blockade to the Canadian people, to the Canadian political structure, work towards making aware those lawmakers in Canada of how unjust the blockade is, and also how the blockade impacts Canada.

And I am not only talking about parliament, I am talking about city councils and regional elected bodies to denounce this blockade, to pass resolutions against the blockade. Maybe

the city council in Vancouver, if there is a political balance of forces there that we can have a resolution against the blockade passed by the city, it is important. Anything that makes the United States government feel the pressure, the same

The Cuban 5 Heros celebrating the 5th anniversary of their release together in Havana, December 17, 2019.



FTT: times going to be to Canada for tour. But always something comes up. I was just wanting to see if you could put on record when you were going to finally be coming to Canada.

Fernando: Listen I was in Canada in Toronto for the solidarity meeting in May 2015. I feel I still owe all the Canadian solidarity groups a visit in which I could travel to different cities of Canada. That is something that I need to do. I want to do that. It won't probably be during 2020 but I will try to schedule it for at least 2021.

FTT: And then my last question, what is your message for Cuba Solidarity activists in Canada?

Fernando: The fact is that Canada is very close to the United states. The impact of Canadian solidarity movement with Cuba on the United States is so important in many ways. When I say close it is not just geographically close and physically close, it is that there is so much inter relationship between the Canadian political structure and the United States

political structure. What the Canadian solidarity movement does for us is of the utmost importance, as what the United States solidarity movement does. I don't see much difference between the solidarity movement in the United States and that

in Canada. I see it equally strategic in the solidarity struggle in support of Cuba.

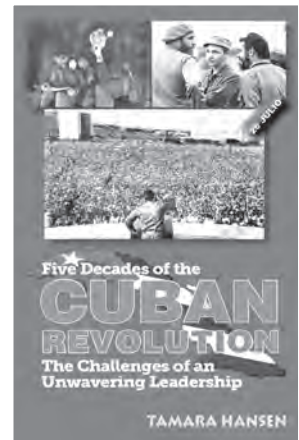
FTT: Thank you so much for your time and I wish you all the success and the friendship with building the Cuba solidarity work around the world.

Fernando: Well, good to have you here.

FTT: Thank you.

Battle of Ideas Press

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



By Tamara Hansen

Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba over a dozen times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.

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Cuba Resists! Cuba Wins!

Fifth Anniversary of Freedom Of The Cuban Five!

On December 17, 2014 Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, and Gerardo Hernández returned to their beloved Cuban homeland and were finally reunited with their families and the people of Cuba, after spending over 16 years held unjustly in U.S. prisons for defending Cuba against U.S. backed terrorism. They were also reunited with their comrades Fernando González and René González, who had also been wrongfully imprisoned by the empire. Together these five heroes defiantly faced down U.S. imperialism.

On December 17, 2014, bowing to international opinion and acknowledging its inability to defeat the Cuban Revolution, the United States government, under then President Obama, in addition to freeing the Five Heroes, agreed with the Cuban government to reopen embassies. This restored formal diplomatic relations between the countries, which Washington had ruptured in 1961. While, the Obama policy represented a new - and perhaps more subtle - way of achieving U.S. imperialism's ultimate goal of eliminating the Cuban Revolution, the world rejoiced at this change from Washington's previous bellicose pronouncements. The international community hoped that relations between the two countries would be normalized and that a most regrettable page in the relations amongst the nations of the Americas had been finally and permanently turned.

However, under the regime of Donald Trump, we have witnessed a return to the policy of overt and ever escalating hostility and aggression against Cuba. Washington's illegal, immoral and genocidal economic embargo - tantamount to a blockade - of Cuba has been intensified, together with its ongoing campaign of subversion. The U.S. economic war against Cuba continues unabated, with the objective of negating and extinguishing Cuba's right to self-determination and independence.

Nevertheless, the fifth anniversary of the freeing of the Five Cuban Heroes is an historic victory not only for Cuba but for all those who struggle for justice,

human rights and dignity. It illustrates what can be achieved with unbending revolutionary integrity, epitomized by Fidel's declaration in 2001, ¡Volverán (They Will Return)!

The Five Heroes are ineluctably and organically bound to the deepest aspirations of the Cuban people. Their fidelity to principle, their resilience reflects the unbending commitment to justice, dignity and independence that has characterized Cuba since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution on January 1, 1959. This commitment to humanity is mirrored in more than 2,000 Cubans who gave their lives to defeat the racist apartheid regime in South Africa and the tens of thousands of Cuban medical personnel and educators who have served and continue to serve around the world, battling in the global trenches against disease and illiteracy.

On the occasion of this fifth anniversary of this historic victory of the Cuban Revolution, the Canadian Network on Cuba, on behalf of the Canada-Cuba friendship and solidarity movement, extends our warmest and most heartfelt greetings to Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, Fernando González and René González, and to the Cuban people, the Cuban government and Cuba's revolutionary leadership.

Today, the Cuban people continue to renew their Revolution, a living example that it is possible to build societies based on social relations of genuine solidarity and social love. We are confident that the Cuban people will continue to prevail, overcoming all the challenges and difficulties they face.



As the Cuban people confidently march forward, the Canadian Network On Cuba reaffirms its commitment to strengthen and deepen the ties of friendship and solidarity between the peoples of Canada and Cuba, resolving to do the utmost to defeat the U.S. economic blockade of Cuba, end Washington's ongoing campaign of subversion and ensure the return to Cuba of the illegally occupied territory of the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay.

¡Volvieron!
They have Returned!
¡Viva la Revolución Cubana!

Statement by the Canadian Network on Cuba
CNC

Isaac Saney, CNC Spokesperson
December 17, 2019

**SCAN TO SIGN
THE PETITION! →**



**CANADA MUST FULLY REOPEN THE IRCC OFFICE
& ALL VISA SERVICES TO CUBANS IN HAVANA, CUBA!**

**#CDNVISAS4CUBA
#UNBLOCKCUBA #NOMÁSBLOQUEO**

www.change.org/p/justin-trudeau-canada-must-reopen-ircc-office-all-visa-services-to-cubans



VETERANS FOR PEACE STRONGLY CONDEMNS ANY AND ALL U.S. AGGRESSION TOWARDS IRAN

The assassination of Qassem Soleimani, a senior Iranian military leader, is just the latest unilateral action by this administration that has brought us to the brink of war.

This latest act is part of a long list of hostile actions the U.S. has taken against Iran. Trump has filled his cabinet with warmongers like Mark Esper and Mike Pompeo; pulled out of the historic and successful Iran nuclear deal; embarked on a "maximum pressure" campaign that sent thousands more U.S. troops to the Middle East; and imposed crippling economic sanctions on Iran.

War with Iran would be yet another bloody disaster in the region and initiate another endless war. It is clear, based on extensive evidence, including the release of the Afghanistan Papers just last month, that the U.S. has had no strategy or accountability in conflict zones and only perpetuates chaos, confusion and violence.

Iran is a nation of 80 million innocent people, most of whom do not want war and oppose the actions of their own government. Similarly, Iraq is a nation of 38 million who deserve peace after the devastating U.S. war on Iraq. The people of both Iraq and Iran have long been working to achieve justice within their own governments. The actions by the U.S. government only work to destabilize these people's movements.

Furthermore, we condemn continued escalation against Iranian targets in Iraq. The Iraq Parliament has voted for the removal of all U.S. troops from Iraq. If the U.S. does not honor the request by withdrawing military forces, we violate the very democratic sovereignty the U.S. has claimed to fight for since 2003 and further prove that the U.S. is there only to serve their colonial and economic interests.

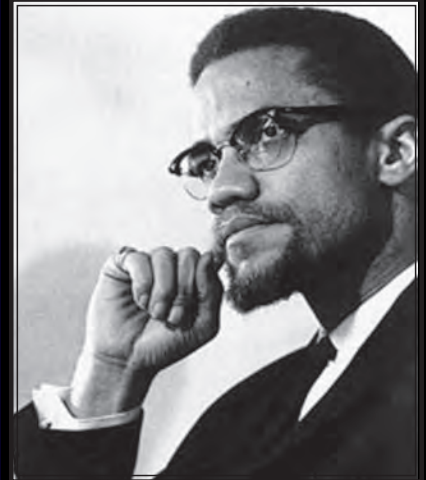
The Trump administration's actions are a blatant violation of both international law and the constitutional mandate that only Congress is granted the power to declare war. Not to mention this administration continues to disregard every international standard and agreement by threatening to attack Iranian cultural sites and denying entry to members of the Iranian delegation to the United Nations.

As veterans who have been involved in illegal wars, we know too well the dangerous and disastrous consequences of wars that seek to benefit only defense contractors and corporations.

Veterans For Peace is sick of the lies, the massacres of innocent people, the waste of our national resources, and the deaths and injuries to our own soldiers. We want peace - not war - with the people of Iran and Iraq.

From www.veteransforpeace.org

"By Any Means Necessary..."



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

It's a science that they use, very skillfully, to make the criminal look like the victim, and to make the victim look like the criminal. Example: In the United States during the Harlem riots, I was in Africa, fortunately. During these riots, or because of these riots, or after the riots, again the press, very skillfully, depicted the rioters as hoodlums, criminals, thieves, because they were abducting some property...

But again, the press is used to make the victim look like the criminal and make the criminal look like the victim.... This is imagery. And just as this imagery is practiced at the local level, you can understand it better by an international example. The best recent example at the international level to bear witness to what I'm saying is what happened in the Congo. Look at what happened. We had a situation where a plane was dropping bombs on African villages. An African village has no defense against the bombs. And an African village is not sufficient threat that it has to be bombed! But planes were dropping bombs on African villages. When these bombs strike, they don't distinguish between enemy and friend. They don't distinguish between male and female. When these bombs are dropped on African villages in the Congo, they are dropped on Black women, Black children, Black babies. These human beings were blown to bits. I heard no outcry, no voice of compassion for these thousands of Black people who were slaughtered by planes.

Why was there no outcry? Why was there no concern? Because, again, the press very skillfully made the victims look like they were the criminals, and the criminals look like they were the victims.

NO WAR ON IRAN!

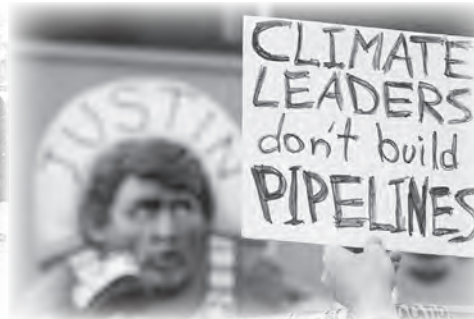


www.veteransforpeace.org



Solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en Nation No Coastal Gas Link Pipeline!

*In defense of
Mother Earth*



No Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion! People and Planet Before Pipelines and Profit!

As 2020 begins, two key struggles against massive polluting pipeline projects are already ramping up. This presents urgent challenges and opportunities for the growing climate justice movement. As global warming and the climate crisis escalate to increasingly dangerous levels – united and committed mass opposition to both the Coastal Gas Link (CGL) and Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) Pipelines are key to setting the tone for this decisive decade.

The government of Canada and their corporate partners are sticking to same game plan led us down this treacherous path to begin with – giving lip service to environmental concerns and Indigenous rights – while going full bore ahead with massive resource extraction projects which completely disregard both.

The Supreme Court of British Columbia recently issued the predictably terrible decision which sided with the Coastal Gas Link corporation over the Wet'suwet'en Nation, who had set up checkpoints on their traditional territory to stop construction of the fracked natural gas CGL pipeline. CGL wasted no time posting a 72-hour injunction notice allowing the RCMP to arrest anyone blocking access to its work site. The BC NDP government, which approved the pipeline, has been unwilling to defend Wet'suwet'en Nation members. They also refuse to show how this project, which is expected to emit about four megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions every year (the same as adding 856,531 cars to the road) fits within its "Clean BC" climate

commitments.

Meanwhile, Trans Mountain has asked for expedited permits as it promises to "put pipe in the ground" for its massive Tar Sands Pipeline project which the Canadian government spent \$4.5 billion taxpayer dollars in purchasing – and unrevealed billions of dollars more in building. "If we build new fossil fuel infrastructure now, which will lock us into carbon emissions for decades, it will make it very difficult, if not impossible, to keep warming below 1.5 degrees," said Kirsten Zickfeld, a Simon Fraser University associate professor of climate science, and lead author of the United Nations report which warned last year that we only have 12 years to drastically reduce carbon emissions or face catastrophic and possibly irreversible consequences.

In December 2019 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reviewed the government of Canada's so-called Indigenous consultation process for these massive climate destroying projects. They found a deliberate trampling of the right of Indigenous peoples right to free, prior and informed consent. Now, they are calling on the government of Canada to immediately end the construction and suspend or cancel the permits for the TMX pipeline, the Site C Dam and the Coastal Gaslink pipeline.

2019 saw massive growth in the size and political perspective climate justice movement in British Columbia and around the world. Millions are taking to streets in coordinated efforts, while also

being clear that we are not only against these destructive mega-projects, but in favour of a better and sustainable world which prioritizes the lives and well-being of the majority above the mega-profits of the few.

Locally, we have also seen new coalitions and ongoing collaboration between different climate justice organizations. This has improved and amplified our overall work. Climate Convergence has played an important part of these collaborations, and we look forward to making them bigger and even more effective in 2020.

Let's not waver in our commitment to stopping these projects and building a better world. If the government of Canada, any of the major political parties, and these massive corporations had wanted to "do the right thing", they would have done so long ago. This new year gives us the opportunity to show what is possible when we put our confidence in the millions of people mobilizing around the world and commit to our own united and effective participation in the climate justice movement. The fight against the TMX and CGL pipelines, and in defense of Indigenous rights, mother earth and our right to a future, is one and the same. Let's make stopping these two destructive pipelines the first two big steps in this massive and extraordinary undertaking!

Build Our Future Not a Pipeline!

*Statement by Climate Convergence Metro Vancouver
www.climateconvergence.ca*

CHE'S ECONOMIC THOUGHT



Intervention by economist José Luis Rodríguez in the tribute made to Che for the 90th anniversary of his birth at the National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC) in 2018.

PART 2

However, even today, more than 50 years later, we continue to see that it is about controlling the market in that way and the results are in sight: the effect of the market, or the perverse effects of the market, if the market is not controlled. Construction of socialism only by administrative means is not possible.

The ideas in this regard were developed to such an extent that already in his transit through Czechoslovakia when he returns from the Congo and was about to return to Cuba, he concludes very hard that “in the Soviet Union there was a return to capitalism”; and Che defends with emphasis that much more structured idea, which will appear later in this book, which was published in 2006 in Cuba, which would constitute the so-called Critical Notes to Political Economy. He already has a formulation based on the critical analysis he makes of the Manual of Political Economy of the Academy of Science of the USSR, where he bases how, in a socialist economy, the most important decisions must be taken centrally, but at the same time - contrary to what is often thought - a group of decisions should be decentralized and, above all, it indicates participation in decision making down.

There is a huge amount of Che quotes in which he talks about the need for the plan to discuss, for the plan to get rich, for the plan to go from the base to the address, once the management has established certain parameters, which do not contradict central decisions, but



José Luis Rodríguez, during his presentation at The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

which has to be complemented in that way. He was against the atomization of decisions as happened with the Yugoslav model, which he criticizes very strongly throughout these years. That is, in Che's conception, there was no contradiction between decentralization, participation and centralization of decisions, which unfortunately has been mostly misrepresented throughout later history.

For Che it was clear - and I share that appreciation - that the existence of the market in socialism and planning is contradictory. There is no way around that. It may be that, at a given time, it does not seem like it, but in the long term the market is opposed to planning because it is a form of deregulation that does not allow the optimal decision making within society and Che understood it So.

Therefore, the need to regulate the market in socialism has not only economic but social implications that,

if not done properly, lead to what happened in the Soviet Union and in the European socialist countries: the so-called “Market Socialism”, which was giving more and more space to the market and liquidated socialism.

That was what happened with Perestroika next to Glasnost in the Soviet Union of those years.

In Che's economic thinking, the concept of planning is fundamental, to the point of considering it as the essential category of this period of transition and as an economic category since 1964. There are several definitions of Che in this regard since his defense of planning was very strong, from a theoretical and practical point of view.

Little is known about the fact that Che was one of the main leaders of the Central Planning

Board (JUCEPLAN) - an organization created since 1961 - and participated very actively in its direction throughout all those years. In turn, he understood the role and limits of planning, that is, for Che, planning was not ideal, he knew that mistakes were going to be made, but that over those mistakes the advantages of planned management were far superior to what happened if the market was enthroned. Che had a very flexible, very clear understanding of what planning could potentially give, but it was also very clear that this is not achieved overnight, and that the processes were very complicated, just like the issues of popular participation in the discussion of the plans, and in that we are accompanied by the historical experience of how all these processes have been, still today to be traced.

Hence, in Che and Fidel the awareness factor in the construction of socialism is essential. Historical experience has shown it because, if that factor did not exist, the resistance capacity of

the Special Period, for example, would never have existed it was conscience of the people that resisted in those years.

The inheritance of the revolutionary struggle, the thought of Marti, and Social Solidarity and Internationalism - two elements that Che greatly enhances and that have been somewhat submerged in the studies of his thinking - are essential elements in the formation of what It was called "The New Man", a concept developed by Che with concrete ideas and everyday practice.

At present these issues have been retaken.

For example, in the Conceptualization, the market and the necessary measures to regulate it are recognized and it has also been proposed that the concentration of property and wealth in natural and legal persons is not allowed. Although the need to define the limits of the concentration that is generated naturally in the space occupied by the market, are not fully resolved, that is, this is not resolved administratively, this has to be resolved by economic means and by political and social means.

Market regulation methods have had multiple errors: pretending that administrative regulation trends, bans, capped prices, access limitations do not solve the problem. For Che, the elimination of monetary-mercantile relations came from the development of the productive forces, not from administrative prohibitions, and that is a very important idea that we have to rescue, because unfortunately the other ideas still prevail. And very important is what he said already in those years, that the fundamental thing is the state's competition against the non-state sector; that is, the state has to compete, it has to be imposed, but not because the state says so, but because the state shows that it is better than the market. That is a concept that apparently is very trivial, but it is not at all, because it is one thing to say that the state must be and another thing is for the state to do so. That is an element that is very clear in Che's ideas, the secondary role of taxes, the cost role that all these decisions have, and that must be assumed by society. It is essential, therefore, the political decision to compensate for the harmful effects of the market.

That idea is also in Che, it is said now, but the implementation is missing, the way to do it. There is a social differentiation product of the presence of the market that does not come from work, read speculation, mercantilism, a whole series of factors that, if not compensated, pass the bill, erode the conscience of men.

Che argued that this had to be compensated in some way, the socialist conscience for him had a key component to the same extent that it was adopted with popular participation in decision-making and control, underlined "Popular Control" which was what fundamental for Che. No administrative control, no audits, no administrative account passes that may exist; I do not say that this is not done, but it is not the fundamental thing, so that people feel that they are controlling their state, they have to participate in that conflict and that unfortunately is not what prevails so that there is a consensus when it comes

to correcting or when criticizing what is not achieved.

Therefore, for Che, practical political education in the creation of a social conscience was very important, as well as two instruments that were forgotten and today are dismantled: emulation and voluntary work.

It is true that the emulation suffered major distortions, but one thing is the distortions and another its essence. Those of us who had the opportunity to be union leaders - I was in the 70's - we know what moved the emulation and the teachings of Lázaro Peña in that regard. The emulation played an important role as a measure of support for the Revolution, and today I don't have to ask what we do as an emulation because there is practically no such movement and not even talk about volunteer work.

A brief comment is enough to prove it: in the Labor Code of the year

The new Soviet government's postcard depicting heroes of the 1917 October revolution in Petrograd. Top row: Trotsky, Lenin, Lunacharski, Spiridonova. Bottom row: Kollontai, Raskolnikov, Kamenev, and Zinoviev



After the successful socialist revolution of 1917, early Bolshevik leaders in Russia never thought it was possible to build socialism in one country - including their own. They were deeply relying on the prospect of revolutionary developments in Europe - especially in Germany - due to the deep social, economic and political crises facing that continent. As we read through their speeches and writings it becomes clear that after the October Revolution of 1917 they believed that building socialism was possible only through the practice of the most important concept of Marxism: Revolutionary Internationalism. This concept, which manifested itself in Marx and Engels's fundamental call for "Workers of All Lands, Unite," was later reflected by Fidel and Che in the 20th century working class struggle. Setting an example for others by their own actions, as well as educating millions of Cubans and internationalist revolutionaries of this necessity of the revolutionary socialist practice.

1984, voluntary work appeared, but in the last one approved a few months ago, voluntary work disappeared, that is, the concept that was cardinal in Che for training disappeared in the education of people. These ideas simply disappeared from the scene of political work.

Consequently, the study of Fidel and Che's legacy is fundamental. These legacies are seen through the economic history of the Revolution - which is yet to be done, because unfortunately there are more economic stories of the Revolution written outside Cuba than in Cuba - and the history of the construction of socialism in other countries, not to imitate but stop to know what should not be done, because the historical teaching of what should not be done to build socialism is overwhelming.

Likewise, we must identify the differences very clearly, today we speak, for example, of the Chinese and Vietnamese models, but these economies define themselves as socialist market economies, which is different from having a socialist economy that has in mind the market that is what we aspire to. That is, starting there and ending with the consequences of one direction or another, it is an element that must be maintained in history because it is a vital teaching to know how to move forward in this direction and that Che identified very clearly.

The economic literature exists, two books of the editorial project of the Che Guevara Study Center are available: The Great Debate, published in Cuba in 2004 and Critical Notes on Political Economy in 2006; there is also the initial work of Tablada Che's Economic Thought, published in the year 1987 and that Fidel mentions in

Down with capitalism's law of value! By developing and encouraging the concept of volunteer work after the Cuban revolution of 1959, Fidel and Che laid out revolutionary collective humanity or socialist consciousness, against capitalism's individualism. "Socialism and Man in Cuba" by Ernesto Che Guevara is a fundamental text for understanding Cuba's socialist revolution - both its challenges and its revolutionary internationalist perspective.



the speech to which I alluded; the very valuable work of Fernando Martínez Heredia The ideas and the Battle of Che of 2010, which is a very interesting compilation, because it not only reflects what Che said but interprets it applied to our conditions; and two works by interesting foreign researchers in the field of economics, one of the English Helen Yaffe, Che Guevara Economy in Revolution, published by the José Martí Publishing House in 2011 and Che Guevara and the Economic Debate in Cuba of the Brazilian Luis Bernardo Pericá, winner of the Casa de las Américas Essay Prize, which places

Che's entire debate in the international arena at the time it occurs.

To conclude, I would like to raise some criteria that seem to me of the utmost importance.

Assimilating Che's ideas is a process that implies, in the first place, to study in depth his thought and the environment in which it developed if one wants to identify its value and actuality. Secondly, it is about appreciating the universal validity of the concepts presented by him that - in my opinion - define the essence of socialist

construction in Cuba: it is about the creation of a socialist conscience and culture, typical of what he called "the new man", completely oblivious to the submission to the ideology of the capitalist mercantile society and which tends to survive in the transition to the new society.

However, this vision of the revolutionary work does not imply by any means ignoring the complexity of the creation of the material base of socialism in a society emerging from underdevelopment and where, as Che pointed out, it is not about ignoring the presence of the market, or of the material stimuli, but of locating them as phenomena contradictory with socialism, applying in its regulation the principle that they cannot be in any way prevalent in the conscience of the men who fight for a better world.

Dr. José Luis Rodríguez is the author of "Notes on Cuban Economy" and a researcher and professor at the University of Havana. Former Cuban Minister of the Economy and Planning and former Vice President of the Cuban Council of Ministers.

By Janine Solanki

2019 started with a U.S.-backed attempted coup in Venezuela, with the U.S. puppet Juan Guaidó declaring himself interim president of Venezuela. For the entirety of 2019 this failed coup dragged on and desperately tried to assert itself while it became more and more clear that the Venezuelan people were standing behind their democratically elected government of President Nicolás Maduro and defending their Bolivarian revolution.

The message to the U.S. is clear – Venezuelans will not bow to imperialist pressure and will not hand over their sovereignty to the U.S. government. However, the U.S.

This economic warfare has cost the lives of over 40,000 people in Venezuela between 2017 and 2018, as documented in a report by the Center for Economic and Policy Research.

While the U.S. government is financially strangling Venezuela,



VENEZUELA, WE ARE WITH YOU

government is still not leaving Venezuela in peace. Beyond sanctions, the U.S. has imposed a blockade which prevents Venezuela from being able to trade on the world market, blocks imports of essential goods including medicines, and prevents exports including of oil, damaging Venezuela's economy.



front of the U.S. Consulate, where protesters demanded “U.S./Canada Hands Off Venezuela!” with their voices and picket signs, and heard from speakers over the megaphone. To wrap up, everyone gathered for a customary group photo with signs, banners and flags in front of the U.S. Consulate doors, which was shared on social media around the world.

After the picket, the protest moved on to the busy downtown square in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery, where an information table was setup. Passersby couldn't miss the protest

WE WILL DEFEAT IMPERIALISTS



they are funneling huge sums of money to right-wing opposition groups in Venezuela. Since 2017 the U.S. government has spent over \$654 million dollars which have been funneled to these violent groups.

On December 6, supporters of Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution came together for a monthly action, organized by the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign. The action started with a picket in

banners and signs, and many stopped to talk to organizers, pick up information, and sign on to a petition demanding both the U.S. and Canada end its sanctions against Venezuela.

The FTT Venezuela Solidarity Campaign is committed to continuing to organize these monthly actions and other events in defense of Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution. To find out about the next event visit www.firethistime.net or follow on Facebook, on Twitter @FTT_np and on Instagram @ftt.venezuela.

Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki

Our Rights Under Attack

Oppose Bill C-51 & Bill C-59

By Janine Solanki

On November 8, 2019 eight-year-old Muhammad Al-Sabawi was stopped at Toronto International Airport and was not permitted to board a flight with his family. His mother was told that her son was on a no-fly list while the confused and crying boy asked “What’s the problem with my name? They don’t like my name?” This ordeal and the state-sanctioned act of racism and Islamophobia which this boy and his family went through is not isolated – there are thousands of people, including children and even a six-week-old baby, on Canada’s no-fly list.

The no-fly list is one of the many infringements on human and democratic rights in Canada that were passed into law with Bill C-51. The so-called “Anti-Terrorism” bill was passed under the Conservative Harper administration in 2015, and almost 4 years after Justin Trudeau’s election promises to amend

of “disruption”, and CSIS is still able to violate a person’s rights as defined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

To take up the fight to defend our rights, the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 was formed in 2015 and continues to educate, organize and mobilize to repeal Bill C-51 and C-59. Their

events and actions include bi-weekly actions across Metro Vancouver transit stations. On December 2, 2019 the group held its 227th bi-weekly action outside the Langara and 49th avenue skytrain station. Many college students on their way to and from classes took informational brochures being handed out by organizers, or stopped at the table to sign the petition demanding that Bill C-51 and Bill C-59 be repealed. On

December 16 the 228th action was held outside Vancouver City Center skytrain station, where a colorful banner and picket signs reading “Repeal Bill C-51 and Bill C-51!” could be seen by thousands of people commuting through the busy transit point. These actions are mainly met with two reactions – those aware of the bills and grateful that there is still opposition being organized against them, and those learning about it for the first time and outraged that the government of Canada has taken the liberty to strip away their rights.

To find out about the next action, visit www.repealbillc51.org and follow on Facebook and Twitter @stopbillc51 campaign.

Follow Janine on Twitter: @janinesolanki

227th Action to Repeal Bill C-51 & 59 at Langara-49th Avenue Station, December 2nd, 2019.



and “fix” the bill, in the summer of 2019 Bill C-59 was passed. However, the passage of Bill C-59 not only doesn’t address many of the fundamental human rights concerns in Bill C-51, it also creates an even worse cyber surveillance regime. This includes that your personal information can still be shared with up to 17 government agencies without your consent or knowledge, Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) continue to have the chilling and undefined powers

RCMP attack Gidimt'en land protectors defending their land against the Coastal Gaslink pipeline near Houston, British Columbia



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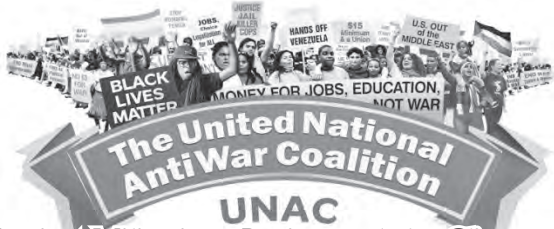
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**Revolution & Counter Revolution
in Venezuela**



By Alison Bodine
Writer and researcher on Venezuela. She is a member of the Fire This Time Newspaper Editorial Board and is the coordinator of the Fire This Time Venezuela Solidarity Campaign. Alison Bodine is an electrical designer based in Vancouver, Canada.

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By Azza Rojbi
Azza Rojbi is a Tunisian anti-war and social justice organizer based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. She is an executive member of Vancouver's anti-war coalition Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) and a member of the Editorial Board of the Fire This Time Newspaper.



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Azza Rojbi

SUPPORT THE EMBASSY PROTECTORS DEFENSE COMMITTEE!

Collecting funds for the Embassy Protectors who defended the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington, DC from U.S. government sponsored pro-coup Venezuelans for 37 days in the Spring of 2019.

Funds will go toward legal defense for the four members of the Embassy Protection Collective that have been charged with "interfering with protective services" and now face up to a year in jail and up to a \$100,000 fine, as well as other supporters.

www.defendembassyprotectors.org



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because it is a mandate from the people.

The good thing about bad times is that they educate us in better practices. And the education and culture acquired in 60 years of Revolution must serve us well, that moral wealth that no material treasure can replace or surpass.

I have mentioned only some of the most notable facts related to the government's activity during the year, because of their impact on the entire population and because reports by our ministers of Economy and Finance have provided the essential details.

Other data and results, by agency, will be published on the Presidency's website and we hope they will be shared on social networks. There is indeed much to be proud of, as there is still much to be resolved. The most pressing issue is that of monetary re-ordering.

We have not forgotten what the Army General said on the subject two years ago:

"No one can calculate, not even the wisest of us, the high cost to the state sector of the persistence of the dual currency and exchange rate, which favors an unjust inverted pyramid, where the greater the responsibility, the lower the pay, and not all able citizens are motivated to work legally, while at the same time discouraging the promotion to higher positions of the best and most capable workers and cadres, some of whom move to the non-state sector.

"I must admit that this issue has taken too long and its solution cannot be delayed any longer."

We have the duty to transform the applause that accompanied his words, at that time, into efforts to meet deadlines.

We can assure you that the monetary re-ordering is in an advanced stage of study and approval. Efforts are currently concentrated on the comprehensive validation of results on each subject; the elaboration of legal norms; the organization and execution of training processes; political assurance and social communication.

The far-reaching nature of the process and its complexity has been confirmed, since it includes closely interrelated aspects that will have an impact on the entire society, which will be addressed in the planned sequence, minimizing effects on the population.

This process is not just a currency exchange, so I reiterate what I have said on previous occasions that bank deposits in foreign currencies, convertible pesos, Cuban pesos, as well as cash in the hands of the population, will be protected.

All related measures will be reported to our people in a timely fashion.

Compañeros and compañeras:

We have set ourselves three priorities to face the attacks of our adversary without giving up our development programs. The first is ideological and is directly related



Top & bottom: Cuban doctors assist victims of cyclone Idai in Mozambique, Africa April 2019

to our defense, to our deepest convictions. The Cuban people, shaped and trained by Fidel in legendary battles, is prepared to understand and assume any problems posed by the enemy's aggression.

They only need to be informed and receive explanations in a timely manner.

We demonstrated this when we reported the situation created with the availability of fuel and called for turning an attack by the enemy into an opportunity to unleash creativity and recover knowledge from other times.

Strengthening ourselves ideologically means turning resistance into learning, and that learning into emancipatory solutions, while freeing ourselves from old dependencies and ties to obsolete work methods.

When we advocate thinking as a country and thinking differently, we are calling for creativity. Cuba is a people of creators. What has our long resistance been if not a perpetual act of creation?

Another priority is the economic battle. And note that I do not say the second battle, I say "another priority", because they all have importance.

The enemy has made the Cuban economy the first target to be destroyed. Not only because this is the path to the destruction of the Revolution, but also because it is a way to show that socialism is not a viable system. And every minute of resistance to their aggression is saying just the opposite: that only socialism makes possible the miracle of a small nation defeating a powerful empire that has not been able to subjugate it.

But we are not only interested in resisting. We conquered that merit long ago. The challenge, amidst this very war, is to conquer the greatest



possible prosperity. To that end, we need greater, more diverse and better quality production, with the added value of science and chains that should enable us to reduce imports and increase exports, within a sustainable project that is at the level of scientific knowledge and the proven skills of the Cuban people. With such conviction we will defend the 2020 Economic and Budget Plans approved in this session.

Along with these priorities is the legislative work, in accordance with the schedule also approved in this Assembly.

Over the coming months and years, we must adopt new laws and prepare to legislate on issues that are highly sensitive, including some that have been a source of concern for

many people, related to gender violence, racism, animal abuse and sexual diversity.

All four are being addressed and monitored to reinforce and strengthen the law, but without giving any space to confrontation and division, which exogenous forces promote in an attempt to interfere in matters that are sacred to our national sensibilities.

The Cuban government, born of the Revolution that freed women from domestic slavery, that made all citizens equal, that punishes and condemns violence in all forms, knows and shares the dissatisfaction of sectors of the population affected by the vestiges of abuse that survive in their midst, despite official policies directed toward the conquest of "all justice", as Martí advocated.

What we must not lose sight of is that we will only reach that total justice as we have reached it, despite the worst omens and gales; with unity and in unity.

It is not by dividing society, by accusing others, seeking what divides us, that we will be able to settle our debts to what is most just for all: United we have won! United we will win! (Applause)

We have recently approved a government program to confront racial discrimination. That is the spirit that encourages us as we prepare to face a new year with the certainty that this one leaves us: Together everything is possible! A society where women have climbed in 60 years from the darkest corner of the house to the podium of the country's professional majority; a mixed-race nation, in which we are all so light that we look white and so dark that we look black, as Don Fernando Ortiz would say; a people so sensitive that we believe in life and exalt it every day, with all the conditions to confront and definitively resolve any vestige of mistreatment, exclusion, discrimination or submission that has survived the Revolution's

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro with Miguel Diaz Canel and Raul Castro at the closing ceremony of the III Anti-Imperialist Congress against Neoliberalism in Havana, November 2019



work for social justice. And we will do it! (Applause)

This is how we see the progress of our society in equally profound, though less tangible, areas. I am referring to spirituality in all its dimensions, to the need to grow in strengthening the values that should distinguish a society like ours. And in the eradication of attitudes that are contrary to the morals of the society in which we see ourselves.

The Army General has commented more than once how, in the school where he was educated as a child, he was taught an exercise of self-critical introspection that he still practices after all these years: to consider, at the end of every day, what he had done that was good and useful, and what was not.

In La Edad de Oro, Martí wrote that not a day should go by without doing a good deed, a fundamental educational principle of the Colmenita (children's theater company) which we admire so much.

It is not only for children that this recommendation is made. It is for all ages and all citizens. The beautiful society we owe ourselves will come sooner to the degree that we demand civic behavior as an obligation.

To give a couple of examples: What is the value of works completed for Havana's 500th anniversary that have adorned the capital, if

the city's hygiene disappears again below mountains of garbage, and neither those who are responsible for removing it - or those who live with these practices at their own doorstep - are duly sanctioned?

And another example: What is the use of controls, audits, severe sanctions, when as soon as the law is applied, we begin to see the offender as a victim?

Paternalism is another of those vices that undermine the speed and depth of our progress. During the debates in standing committees, the abusive practices of those who complicate

and negotiate with the simplest procedures were discussed more than once. But, what a job we have on our hands, to generalize moral sanctions, denunciation, the refusal to be bribed or bribe.

I have extended my reflections on these issues because those of us here we almost all responsible, not only for making and approving laws, but for enforcing them, as well. And it is our duty to turn them into living words. (Applause)

There is much to be said and done, but we also need to take the time to celebrate the year that is coming to an end, full of tension and challenges, but just as much, full of victories.

Let us live the next days and hours as if the Revolution were triumphing again. The Revolution triumphs every time we snatch a victory for our cause from the empire. And in 2019 we did it many times.

May our urban and rural squares be filled with music and joy.

There is every reason to celebrate. In the 61st year of the Revolution, they threw us to our death and we are alive. Alive, celebrating and determined to continue winning.

Homeland or Death!
Socialism or Death!
Veneceremos!

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1. PROTEST ACTION 4:00-5:00pm
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2. INFO TABLING & PETITION 5:30pm
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II. FREE PUBLIC FORUM

SPEAKERS:

1-WALA ZAIDAN, IRAQI POET &
 SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVIST

2-ALI YEREVANI, POLITICAL
 EDITOR OF FIRE THIS TIME NEWSPAPER &
 PARTICIPANT IN 1979 IRANIAN REVOLUTION

MC:AZZA ROJBI, JOURNALIST,
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 AUTHOR OF 2019 BOOK "U.S. & Saudi War
 on the People of Yemen"

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