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**ftt** FIRE THIS TIME

In English / En Español

Free Mumia Abu Jamal!



**FREE  
THE CUBAN 5!**

**IRAQ**

**5 Years of Occupation**

**1.2 Million Civilian Deaths**

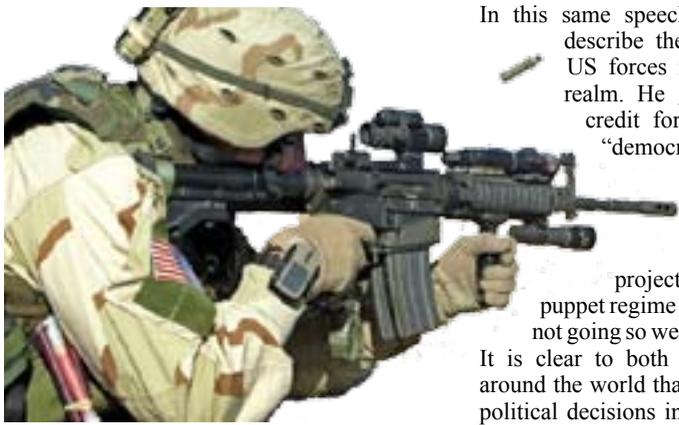
**4000 US Troop Deaths**

**5 Million Displaced**

**2.5 Million Refugees**

**WHY?**





By Shannon Bundock

For more than five years – half of a decade – the US, UK and their allies have been bludgeoning Iraq with all means of bombs, guns, ground troops and political stranglehold. After more than sixty months have passed it is wise to look at the tally thus far. What has been gained? What has been lost? What has the war and occupation of Iraq meant for the Iraqi people? Furthermore, what has it meant for all human beings living in this new era of war and occupation?

### What Has Five Years Cost for the Iraqi People?

More than five years of war and occupation have brought unspeakable rates of death to Iraq. According to the think-tank Foreign Policy in Focus (FPF), during the initial invasion by US/UK led forces, it is estimated that more than 7,500 Iraqis were killed.

On March 23rd 2003, American B-52 bombers carried out heavy raids on Baghdad, killing 106 civilians in that single night. On March 24th 2003, a US missile hit a Syrian passenger bus near the Iraqi border killing five innocent people. That same day, the Red Cross warned of a humanitarian emergency as water supplies began to run out in Basra. The bombing of civilian targets continued throughout the invasion and on March 26th 2003, a US missile struck a busy Baghdad market, killing many civilians. By March 27th – only one week after the invasion – air raids

alone had killed more than 350 Iraqi civilians.

In the fall of 2007, a staggering figure was released by the UK-based Opinion Research Business Group (ORB), which found that as many as 1.2 million Iraqis had been killed since the turbulence of war began to shake Iraq in March 2003. But this tragedy does not end at 1.2 million - there is much beyond the horrifying deaths rates in Iraq. As of September 2007, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, there were believed to be "...well over 4 million displaced Iraqis around the world." It also estimated that, due to violence, 60,000 Iraqis are being forced to leave their homes every month.

Another 60,000 Iraqi civilians are being held in detention camps and prisons run by the US military and Iraqi puppet forces, the vast majority of them without charges, much less trials. As the world saw with the Abu Ghraib scandal, torture in Iraq's prisons runs rampant.

According to a July 2007 report released by Oxfam and the NGO National Coordinating Committee in Iraq (NCCI), more than 43% of Iraqis suffer from "absolute poverty" and as many as "eight million people are now in need of emergency assistance". The report indicates that four million people are "food-insecure and in dire need of different types of humanitarian assistance" and there are "more than two million displaced people inside Iraq".

According to the Brookings Institute, Iraq's unemployment rate sits at an average of 40%, reaching higher than 50% unemployment in some regions.

In March, US President Bush recognized the 5th anniversary of this military endeavor. Ironically enough, he declared the 2007 troop surge a "success" and insisted that these troop levels must be maintained to prevent further "chaos and carnage."

In this same speech Bush went on to describe the "successes" of the US forces in the Iraqi political realm. He gave the occupation credit for helping to build a "democracy in the heart of the Middle East" that "will serve as an example for others". The project to build a US-puppet regime in Iraq, however, is not going so well for the occupiers.

It is clear to both Iraqis and people around the world that those who make the political decisions in Iraq are stationed in Washington DC. 160,000 armed soldiers swarming the country prevents Iraqi people from determining their political fate.

"In four years of occupation, our sons were murdered and our women widowed," explained Ahmed al Mayahie, who participated in a Najaf protest against the occupation on April 9, 2007. "The occupiers say that Iraq was liberated. What liberty? There is only destruction. We do not want their liberation. We are asking them to leave our land."

"The fall of Saddam means nothing to us, as long as the alternative is the American occupation" said Interior Ministry employee, Haider Abdul Rahim Mustafa who also participated in the protest.

### The US Master Plan

In February 2003 the first issue of the Fire This Time Newspaper was published. This was before the invasion of Iraq and amidst the massive worldwide outrage and protest against the US government's threats of war. In that inaugural issue, Fire This Time predicted "...US war makers have made a clear and decisive decision to plan an attack on Iraq that will be the bloodiest ever in the Middle East. Washington is trying to play this game with or without the UN's stamp of approval: if the inspectors find WMD or something that implies the existence of WMD, then Iraq lied, and war is justified. But, if UN inspectors do not find anything, Washington will claim that the Iraqis have hidden the weapons so well that

US intervention is required to find the truth. This is how the law of the jungle prevails."

This prediction was not made because of a lack of faith in the ability of the anti-war movement to stop the war, but rather based on a sober analysis of the state of world politics. In February 2003 we summed it up as follows,

"The continuous war drive by the US government in Afghanistan and Iraq is their response to the depression and slowing down of the world wide capitalist economy. These global economic conditions have had a dire affect on the internal American economy while bruising capital interests abroad. The declining rate of profit and continuing trend of bankruptcy for giant financial and industrial institutions has intensified the level of tense competition between them. For the imperialist countries, which the profiteers behind these corporations live in, this competition translates into a race for control of the plundering of the world's natural resources. In spite of the economic and political dominance of multi-national and trans-national corporations, ultimately, each imperialist nation-state pursues its own national interest. George Bush is the executive management chief of the ruling capitalist class of United States, and he understands what he was hired to do: consolidate the hegemony of the US in the broadest territory possible."

Five years later this assessment rings even more true. This was not a small matter of simply accessing major oil reserves. The invasion of Iraq was masterminded as part of a long term plan. After five years this invasion and war has proven to be a long term occupation – perhaps as much as 100 years (!) according to US Republican presidential hopeful John McCain. We may

# I R A Q

# 5 Years of War, Occupation & Resistance



not be able to predict how long it will be before the Iraqi people can declare victory against the illegal occupation, but we can see clearly that the US government wants to establish a permanent occupation, with permanent military bases.

### The State of a Country Waging War

According to the latest admission by President Bush, "There's still hard work to be done in Iraq. The gains we have made are fragile and reversible."

It is interesting that after five years the world's most powerful nation has been unable to "conquer" Iraq. Iraq was invaded after more than a decade of severe economic sanctions. Iraq is a small and poor nation. The US is the wealthiest country in the world. The US is the most heavily armed country in history.

Let's look at how the humble nation of Iraq has brought the United States of America to its knees.

First of all, the most telling sign of crisis for the US is the record number of soldier deaths that they have faced. March 2008 brought the total to over 4,000 dead US soldiers. We may rhetorically ask, 'why are US soldiers still dying at this rate if the US is "winning" this war?'

war-leaders are left to paint a picture of great progress in Iraq to attempt to dupe the people in the US. At the same time they are crossing their fingers and hoping the disillusionment with the occupation of Iraq does not reach that critical point where mass anti-war sentiment will turn into mass anti-war action. Now the US government has found itself in a catch-22 situation. They continue the mass killing and destruction in Iraq and face the consequences of Iraqi resistance and the anti-war movement at home, or they pack their bags and flee - which means a more massive defeat for the US than any they've ever seen before. Neither of these are viable options for the US government."

Hand in hand with the political crisis comes the economic crisis. According to Brian Katulis, of the Center for American Progress, "Spending \$12 billion a month on Iraq while cutting taxes year after year obviously had an impact on our economic standing, hampering our ability to remain an economic powerhouse."

### No to War and Occupation!

For five years Iraq has been brutalized, but the Iraqi people have not taken this lying down. In fact, it is their heroic resistance that has caused and escalated the crisis for the US war machine. Striking oil workers, protesting students, picketing journalists, and Iraqis of all ages and regions have been joining



World Against War rally on 5th anniversary of the war on Iraq, London England, March 15th 2008

More than 126,000 mercenaries are working in Iraq as a shadow military to the 160,000 US-led forces. Even with this extra support to take the pressure off the occupation army it has been a constant struggle to meet recruitment quotas. After missing recruitment targets in 2005, the army lowered standards and doubled enlistment bonuses. Last year, it raised the maximum age for recruits from 35 to 40, and then to 42.

A study was released by the Pentagon in May 2007 regarding the mental health of troops in Iraq which found:

- 45% of junior enlisted Army soldiers rated their unit's morale as "low" or "very low"
- 38% of soldiers, 31% of marines, 49% of National Guard members and 43% of marine reservists exhibited symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety or other psychological problems within 3 months of returning from active duty.
- 40% cited events that made them feel "intense fear, helplessness, or horror"

The Pentagon's mental health taskforce also reported that US troops are undertaking higher levels of sustained combat duty than during Vietnam and Second World Wars.

The conclusion of the US government's political crisis at home was adeptly assessed in a January 2007 issue of Fire This Time. "While often the US government will barrel ahead with its plans despite the opinions of the people of the US, the factor of mass sentiment cannot be completely ignored. For now the

resistance against occupation. Sometimes the demonstrations are so large and broad that the US media must acknowledge them, such as the April 2007 1-million strong march in Najaf.

In order to continue the pressure for a full withdrawal of occupation forces, people around the world must follow the lead of the Iraqis. People in the US can be a second front to this resistance against war and occupation by taking action to

protest the war machine. US dock workers from the ILWU are doing just that on May 1 2008 when they will take action against war by shutting down the docks on the west coast of the US.

People in Canada also have a reason to take the anti-war, anti-occupation message to the streets. The Liberal government of Canada, back in 2003 under mass pressure and under the division of labour within the imperialist war drive, did not deploy troops on the ground in Iraq. However, this government is fully complicit in the crime against Iraqi people by providing logistical and security work as well as arms and advisory military personnel. The Conservative government, since coming into power, eliminated every obstacle that makes this support difficult. People in Canada must demand that the government of Canada completely withdraw all support for this criminal and unjustifiable war. The first and most necessary step to put Iraq on a path toward rebuilding and healing is to recognize self-determination for this once-sovereign country and to immediately withdraw all occupation forces. Solving the problems of violence, instability, unemployment, lack of education and infrastructure, etc. can only begin with a truly independent Iraqi government. To build an effective anti-war movement, all peace-loving people around the world must unite behind the demands:

**End the Occupation of Iraq!  
Self-Determination for Iraq!  
Out Now!**



# The True Face of British Columbia

## THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF WOMEN BY THE GORDON CAMPBELL LIBERAL GOVERNMENT

Employment rates give an inaccurate impression of economic security as in BC full-time, year-round work is no guarantee of being able to pay the bills. The "Still Waiting for Justice" report states that: "In 2005, BC had the highest proportion of 'working poor' families (those with children living below the poverty line in which at least one adult held a full-time full-year job): [the rate is] 14.5 percent in BC compared to a national average of 8.7 percent."

Many women in BC are at very real risk of joining the estimated 11,750 people already homeless in this province. Housing costs in BC have skyrocketed and BC rental vacancies are barely above 1%, making accommodation for low-income earners, the majority of whom are women, unaffordable and unobtainable.

### The BC Liberals Don't Care About Child Care

Beginning April 1, 2007 a total of \$35 - \$40 million was cut from BC's Childcare programs and all major child care capital funding was stopped, meaning no new child care spaces will be built even though BC is already in a deficit. Eighty percent of single parent families in BC are headed by women leaving them wondering where they will find affordable child care. Working while rearing the next generation of this province's workers without access to quality, reliable child care has been another one of the BC Liberal's blow to women.

### BC Liberals Attack Women Workers & Pay Equity

Since 2001, the BC Liberals have systematically dismantled agencies and legislation that regulate and report on the situation of women.

One of the first tasks of the BC Liberals in government was to dismantle BC's pay equity legislation. Next, they removed the pay equity provision from the Human Rights Code of BC and dissolved the entire BC Human Rights Commission, the only provincial body with a mandate to eliminate discrimination. These completely backward measures left BC with no legislation or policy on pay equity whatsoever. Statistics Canada reports that women working full-time year-round still earn only an average of 70.5 percent of the wages of male counterparts.

The Liberals also scrapped the Ministry of Women's Equality, with its pro-active mandate to 'advance equality' for women. Instead women's issues have been lumped together with services for seniors, "First Nations Relations" and many others in the catch-all "Ministry of Community Services". And no one can forget the April 2004 BC government 100% funding cut to all 37 women's centres in BC.

Changes to the *Employment Standards Act* in order to increase "flexibility" in the labour market in BC simultaneously weakened safeguards for workers, particularly part-time, temporary and low-wage staff who are primarily women and immigrants. Across Canada, women make up two-thirds of minimum wage workers. Without legislation requiring equal pay for equal work for women and without policies and agencies women can appeal to to enforce their rights, women as workers in BC have become increasingly vulnerable to working low-wage, dead-end jobs.

### We Must Defend Women's Rights Against the BC Liberals' Attacks!

Globally, the capitalist economic system is in the throes of crisis and BC is not exempt from this picture. The BC Liberals cuts are in response to this downturn. Since 2001, they've ensured women make up the most vulnerable pool of labour for sale to BC's businesses and

have enforced women's exploitation in the unpaid work of producing and caring for the next generation of workers.

In order to avert a state of complete crisis for women in BC, women, working, poor and oppressed people, activists and women's advocates must join together to reverse the backward moves of the BC Liberal government. As women have shown internationally for nearly 100 years of International Women's Days, each gain in the struggle for women's rights must be dearly protected and defended in order that we will be in a better position to fight for the next stage. We must call for an end to the BC Liberal government's cuts and a reversal of the all of the BC Liberals' regressive measures that have legislated women into poverty in the last 7 years.



Hospital Employees Union Strike Rally, May 1st 2004

By Kira Koshelanyk

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008 the streets of Vancouver were host to hundreds of women, men and children chanting "No to Poverty, No to War!" and marching in step for International Women's Day (IWD), the international day of struggle and recognition of women's rights. Just one day earlier, the BC Federation of Labour released a shocking new report titled "Still Waiting for Justice: Provincial Policies and Gender Inequality in BC 2001-2008". The 51-page study exposes how the actions of the BC Liberal government have turned women in British Columbia (BC) into one of the poorest demographics in all of Canada, highlighting that the struggle for women's rights at home is far from won and has urgent priorities.

### Women's Poverty by the Numbers

British Columbia and the Vancouver area in particular have the highest rates of poverty in all of Canada. Within this region women, and especially single mothers, Indigenous women and women of colour, are the most likely to live in poverty.

# IT IS THE TIME OF MOBILIZATION, OF MARCHING TOGETHER...

## CONFERENCE FOR WORLD EQUILIBRIUM IN CUBA - A HUGE SUCCESS!

By Tamara Hansen

"We can no longer be a people of leaves, living in the air, our foliage heavy with blooms and crackling or humming at the whim of the sun's caress, or buffeted and tossed by the storms. The trees must form ranks to keep the giant with seven-league boots from passing! It is the time of mobilization, of marching together, and we must go forward in close ranks, like silver in the veins of the Andes."

-Jose Marti (Our America)

January 2008 marked the 155<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jose Marti's birth. This

was celebrated this year in Cuba with a conference attended by more than 400 intellectuals, politicians, academics, writers, journalists and students from 35 countries. The 2nd International Conference for World Equilibrium, held in Havana January 28-30, discussed the most pressing issue today: the crisis of humanity created by imperialism and the importance of the Battle of Ideas and creating a better world.

In November 2007, the Fire This Time Newspaper Editorial Board was sent a warm invitation from the organizing committee of the conference. This organizing committee was

cultivated by the Office of Marti's Program, the Cultural Society José Martí and the Centre of Marti's Studies of the Republic of Cuba, under the valuable auspices of UNESCO (United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization). Aaron Mercredi, Shannon Bundock and I were honoured to be able to attend this monumental event on behalf of the FTT Editorial Board.

On the opening day in Havana, we sat as close to the front as we could to hear the opening talk by Armando Hart, the director of the Jose Marti Program Office. He is a very well-known revolutionary in Cuba who

joined the anti-Batista forces before the triumph of the Cuban revolution, and after the revolution held the post of Minister of Culture. Hart explained part of the reasoning behind organizing this conference: "We hope that this conference will be a new point of departure for the systematic defence of peace, the preservation of life on the planet and the realization of the better world that we need so much."



### The First Day

The first day of the conference also featured an address by Frei Betto, a prominent Brazilian writer, religious scholar and liberation theologian. Frei Betto dared participants in the conference to believe in the fight for a better world, saying, "with the upcoming commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, the island constitutes an unavoidable reference for those of us who believe that a just world, like the one Marti dreamed of, is possible."

Throughout all three days the conference broke out into smaller sessions in different areas of the Plaza de las Convenciones and we had a good chance to chat with people from the every continent in the world!

The warm feeling of the conference was augmented by an infusion of anti-imperialist culture. This could be seen from the opening which featured a musical performance by the Pioneers (a group that is like scouts or girl guides in Canada - but revolutionary!). This continued with the opening of the art exhibit "For an Honest Man" by Kamil Bullaudy,

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The Newspaper Of

## FIRE THIS TIME MOVEMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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If you would like to help with a donation, please make cheques payable to "Shannon Bundock"

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By Aaron Mercredi

"We have said it before and we will say it again. No exploration means no exploration. Which part of NO doesn't the Ontario government understand?"

— Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig Chief Donny Morris

Six activists from the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig (KI) First Nation sit in Ontario prisons. Their crime? Defending their homeland and Oji-Cree community from a mining development. On March 17<sup>th</sup>, Chief Donny Morris, Deputy Chief Jack McKay, Head Councillor Cecilia Begg, and Councillors Samuel McKay and Darryl Sainnawap, now known as the KI 6, were all sentenced to six months in jail. They were charged with contempt of court for refusing to comply with an injunction allowing Platinex, a mining exploration company, to begin drilling in their traditional territory about 1,200 km north of Thunder Bay, Ontario.

For many years, the people of KI have opposed resource corporations coming in to their territory, ruining their environment, trapping and hunting grounds, and violating their treaty rights. Despite this, Platinex has been determined to begin developing its project on and under their land.

In the winter of 2005-06, Platinex first tried to drill on KI land. In October 2005, KI, along with four other neighbouring First

Nation communities declared a moratorium on mining exploration and logging on their territories. Platinex violated this moratorium with the justification of the Ontario Mining Act, which follows a free-entry system, an old Wild West-style law that allows anyone to stake a claim on Crown land. There are no clauses on how this works on Indigenous land. The violating the moratorium was not the only offence that Platinex committed. Platinex and the Province of Ontario undermined Treaty 9, which the KI signed in 1929, protecting their ability to hunt, fish and trap, and to prevent the encroachment of early miners and loggers on their homeland. The area of land threatened by the mining development is traditional KI land. In February 2006, the people of KI rose in response and blockaded a winter road that provided Platinex access to KI's traditional lands.



# MINING IN ONTARIO

## Colonial Conquest of Indigenous People

In April 2006, Platinex stepped up its offensive on the people of KI by seeking an injunction against any further protests. Furthermore, Platinex decided to sue the community of KI for \$10 Billion in damages, the largest lawsuit by a company against a First Nation in Canada. Already, the community of KI has gone bankrupt after accruing

was sentenced to 6 months in prison, along with crippling fines, for trying to stop Frontenac Ventures from mining uranium on AAFN lands near Sharbot Lake, Ontario.

*"He [Lovelace] is a political prisoner of the Government of Ontario and Ardoch Algonquin First Nation places blame for his*

outlined 6 central points:

1. No Parliamentarian, be it a federal or provincial member, is allowed in the Homelands of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig;
2. No more free entry to Kitchenuhamaykoosib lands by Platinex or any other mining entity including First Nation

*incarceration on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Michael Bryant. We have repeatedly asked for consultations on the mineral claims on our lands within the larger Algonquin homeland. We have offered Ontario a variety of options to enable consultation. Every option was rejected out of hand. Ontario's position has been consistent: Drilling on our land must occur. Our position has equally been consistent: Meaningful consultation must occur before any of our land is damaged or alienated to mining companies."* - Chief Paula Sherman

### Resistance continues

The response from the people of KI, who have been devastated by the arrest and criminalization of the KI-6, has been swift and strong. They mobilized and on March 20<sup>th</sup>, the remaining Council members, with the support of a community assembly and the arrested council members, to send a strong united message to the Ontario government, mining companies, and other Indigenous people about this issue. They

mining companies;

3. Ongoing blockade will be more protected and secured in order to protect our KI Homelands;
4. Assembly of First Nations must abandon the partnership agreements with the mining industry in Canada;
5. All First Nation political territorial organizations in Ontario do not speak directly for or on behalf of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig, but their support on the issue is welcome;
6. Ontario must respond to our proposal made with our brothers and sisters of the Ardoch Algonquin First Nation, to establish a joint panel on mining on First Nations lands.

These demands no doubt have an impact on the hostile environment in Ontario. Already, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) and the First Nations Summit (FNS) have responded to this call by pressuring the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to tear up its MOU with mining companies in Canada.

Letters of support and solidarity have been pouring in to KI from across

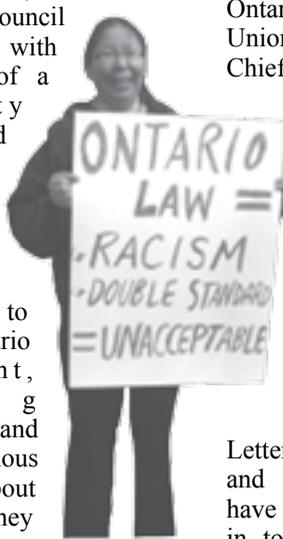
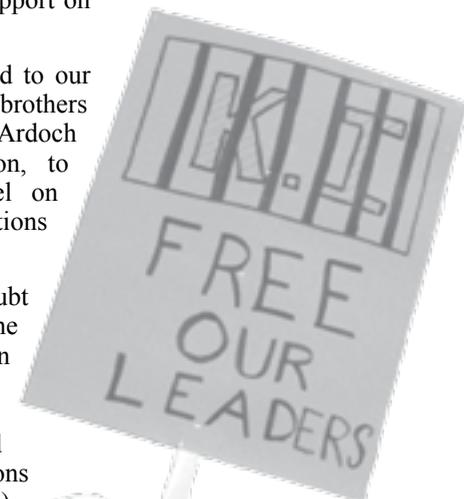
the country from people who are shocked at how these Indigenous activists were treated.

**Free the KI-6! Free Robert Lovelace! Self-determination for Indigenous nations!**

Behind Platinex's attempted land-grab and the Province of Ontario's criminalization of Indigenous activists lies an ugly colonialism whose goal has remained the same for hundreds of years. A land grab today is not much different than when settlers first arrived on the shores of what is now called Canada. Although the brute force method has been mostly replaced (but not completely) with the more drawn-out process of laws and court processes, the aim is still to take the land and resources from Indigenous people. For Indigenous people in the North, this is becoming a larger problem as more and more resource companies, with politicians in tow, move in and try to develop exploration projects on their traditional territories with absolutely no interest in the well-being or rights of Indigenous people to their lands.

What are Platinex and all the other resource companies who want to get rich off Native land afraid of? What is the government of Ontario afraid of? The same thing that the country of Canada is afraid of: that Indigenous people will one day have control over their land, and not let it be stripped away for the profit of a corporation. This is why Canada voted against the rights of Indigenous people at the UN.

This is why Ontario created a Caledonia. The people who rule this country are afraid that self-determination for Indigenous nations would decrease their profits. The community of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwig and the Ardoch Algonquin are strong examples of people who are fighting back for what has been taken from them and all working, poor and oppressed people in Canada need to support their case.



# ◆ FIDEL WON ◆ THE BATTLE



By Manuel Yepe\*

The outcome of this story couldn't have been more frustrating and unexpected for the enemies of the Cuban revolutionary process, nor more promising for its heroes: the Cuban people.

In truth, the dramatic plot created by the propaganda machine of the empire intended to impose an end agreeable to their convenience for the epic insistence of the Cubans to forge their own sovereign, just and honest present.

But, none of the apocalyptic forecasts of a form of violent death of the leader, military or armed uprisings...

No forced surrender through diplomatic isolation, economic blockade, street protests, international condemnation or financial ruin...

Lately they hung on the death or illness of the leader through natural or accidental causes as a means to achieve their purposes, when they failed, wasting many millions of dollars to finance dissidents; slanderous campaigns throughout the world; radio, television counterrevolutionary broadcasts and through other media; brain drain and other measures which moved to indignation and a popular unity

more than unrest.

They wasted tons of paper in plans for an impossible transition to capitalism in which, in exchange for heavy funds, they wasted the neurons of many well-paid talents – greater and lesser – all aware of the uselessness of the intent.

While the empire increasingly conditioned the offensive in charge of its intelligence institutions to the election objectives of the party in government, the Cuban leader managed – in spite of physical limitations – the course, rhythm and character of events with such wisdom that each enemy action turned against its own promoters.

The message of Fidel Castro to the Cuban people, in which he announces his decision to not aspire to or accept a renewal of his functions as President of the Council of State and Commander-in-Chief, has meant the successful outcome of another battle of the Cuban revolution against its enemies. This is because Cuban constitutional order was achieved, that the people have promoted on its own, without submission to foreign powers.

For many months, after serious health problems affected Fidel Castro, the empire unleashed

a media campaign about his replacement as Head of the Cuban State with all kinds of speculations of how or should the succession be. They purposely ignored that the revolution in Cuba had, for a long time, achieved levels of institutionalism and enough organization to solve this legal problem, not technically complex but serious from the point of view of the security of the nation.

But it wasn't even necessary to submit Cuban institutions to this test, through the awareness of the role of Fidel in the revolution, the discipline he assumed in his process of recovery and the popular identification with his leadership.

The vast majority of the Cuban people have developed such a confidence in their revolutionary leader for so long, that when hearing from him, with in full control of his faculties, making the decision to not continue in his position, approved his decision without objections.

Many tears have wet the cheeks of the Cubans upon learning of this decision of their maximum revolutionary guide. They see him as the hero of all the victories and honors of the nation he has achieved in half a century. But they have accepted it as the best solution, because Fidel said so!

The air breathed in all of Cuba is of great confidence in the future of the revolution because Fidel has given assurance that the country has leadership cadres with the necessary authority and experience to guarantee the substitution, as well as the capacity to continue forming others, thus guaranteeing the continuity of the revolutionary process.

The government of the United States is very concerned over the continuity of the Cuban revolution since observing the bloody defeat of the Batista tyranny which Washington supported until his overthrow on January of 1959.

The United States has always pretended to

ignore that the current Cuban political phenomenon is part of a revolutionary process begun during the mid-19th century which today is headed by Fidel Castro as it had been, previously, by José Martí and other heroes. The Communist Party of Cuba is a continuity of the Cuban Revolutionary Party founded by José Martí as an organization gathering all Cubans to fight for their independence from Spain and to prevent absorption of the country by the United States, Fidel will continue to lead the revolution, as Jose Marti has been doing in every moment.

Fidel shall be present in the leading actions of Raul Castro, for they are the same person, not by means of cloning, but because of their common revolutionary and patriotic roots, those that define their political projections and their ideals, as well as their influence in the revolutionary process and the popularity stemming from their merits in the popular struggle, always in the vanguard since the times of the Moncada barracks' attack in 1953.

Fidel will continue in charge for many thousands of cadres will see to it that neither capitulation nor any other trend different from the revolutionary one defined by him will prevail.

Fidel will keep leading the Revolution because it is mainly thanks to him that nowadays Cuba is a nation of educated, healthy and patriotic people, ready to cultivate unity and solidarity in order to maintain and defend their independence, their cultural identity and their social justice, achieved all along the last half century.

When someone asked me what sorts of changes could be expected to take place in Cuba after the 24th of February session of the National Assembly, I answered, based on Fidel's recent message to the Nation: "A very big change!" And my answer is based in the fact that the Revolution will count on the intelligence of the most outstanding revolutionary leader of our time, free of the everyday managerial responsibilities, entirely dedicated to serve the cause with his talent.

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Por Manuel Yepe\*

El desenlace de esta historia no ha podido ser más frustrante e inesperado para los enemigos del proceso revolucionario cubano; ni más prometedor para sus héroes: el pueblo de Cuba.

En realidad, la trama dramática fue creada por la maquinaria propagandística del imperio que pretendía imponer un final de su conveniencia para la épica insistencia de los cubanos por labrarse un presente soberano, justo y digno.

Pero, nada de finales apocalípticos augurados en forma de muerte violenta del líder, levantamientos militares o alzamientos armados...

Nada de rendición forzada mediante aislamiento diplomático, bloqueo económico, protestas callejeras, condena internacional o ruina financiera...

Se aferraron en los últimos tiempos a la muerte o invalidación del líder por causas naturales o accidentales como vía para lograr sus propósitos, cuando fracasaron dilapidando muchos millones de dólares con el financiamiento de disidentes; campañas difamatorias en todo el mundo; transmisiones contrarrevolucionarias por radio, televisión y otros medios; robo de talentos, y otras medidas que movían a indignación y a unidad popular más que a descontento.

Gastaron toneladas de papeles en planes para una imposible transición al capitalismo en los que, a cambio de gruesos pagos, se agenciaron las neuronas de muchos bien remunerados talentos -menores- y mayores-, todos concientes de la inutilidad del empeño.

Mientras el imperio condicionaba cada vez

más la ofensiva a cargo de sus órganos de inteligencia a los objetivos electorales del partido en el gobierno, el líder revolucionario cubano manejaba -no obstante sus limitaciones físicas-, el curso, el ritmo y el carácter de los acontecimientos con tal sabiduría que cada acción enemiga se revertía contra sus promotores.

El mensaje al pueblo cubano de Fidel Castro, en el que anuncia su decisión de no aspirar ni aceptar la renovación de sus funciones como Presidente del Consejo de Estado y Comandante en Jefe, ha significado la coronación exitosa de otra batalla de la revolución cubana contra sus enemigos, porque se logró imponer el orden constitucional cubano, el que el pueblo se ha dado por propia voluntad, sin sumisión a poderes extraños.

Por muchos meses, a partir de los graves problemas de salud que asaltaron a Fidel Castro, el imperio impuso una campaña mediática en torno a su reemplazo en el cargo de Jefe del Estado cubano, con especulaciones de todo tipo acerca de cómo podría y cómo debía ser la sucesión. Ignoraban deliberadamente que la revolución en Cuba hacía tiempo que había alcanzado niveles de institucionalidad y organización suficientes para resolver ese problema jurídico, no tan complejo técnicamente como grave desde el punto de vista de la seguridad de la nación.

Pero, ni siquiera fue necesario someter a la institucionalidad cubana a esta prueba, gracias a la conciencia de su papel en la revolución de que dio muestra Fidel, la disciplina con que asumió el proceso de recuperación y la identificación popular con su liderazgo.

Una vasta mayoría del pueblo cubano ha desarrollado una confianza tal en su líder revo-

lucionario durante tanto tiempo que al conocer directamente de él que, con pleno dominio de su mente, tomaba la decisión de no continuar en el desempeño de su cargo, lo aprobó sin objeciones.

Muchas lágrimas han corrido por las mejillas de cubanas y cubanos al conocer de esta determinación de su máximo guía revolucionario, en quien aprecian al héroe de todas las victorias y honores que la nación ha alcanzado en el último medio siglo. Pero han aceptado esto como la mejor solución ¡porque lo dijo Fidel!

Los aires que se respiran en toda Cuba son de gran confianza en el futuro de la revolución porque el propio Fidel ha proporcionado seguridades de que el país cuenta con cuadros de dirección con la autoridad y la experiencia necesarias para garantizar el reemplazo, así como con la capacidad de seguir generando otros nuevos que garanticen la continuidad del proceso revolucionario.

Al gobierno de los Estados Unidos le ha preocupado mucho la continuidad de la revolución cubana desde que se avizoraba la derrota de la sangrienta tiranía de Batista que Washington respaldó hasta su derrocamiento el primero de enero de 1959.

Siempre Estados Unidos ha pretendido ignorar que el actual fenómeno político cubano forma parte de un proceso revolucionario iniciado a mediados del siglo XIX que hoy tiene al frente a Fidel Castro como antes tuvo a José Martí y a otros próceres. El Partido Comunista de Cuba es continuidad del Partido Revolucionario Cubano fundado por José Martí como organización aglutinadora de todos los cubanos para la lucha por la independencia de España y para evitar la absorción del país por los Estados Unidos.

Fidel continuará de cualquier manera al frente de la revolución, de la misma forma que lo ha estado José Martí en todo momento.

Fidel estará presente en la acción y la conducción de Raúl Castro, porque ellos son la misma persona, no por clonación, sino porque raíces revolucionarias y patrióticas comunes identifican sus proyecciones políticas e ideales y su ascendencia en el proceso revolucionario y popularidad derivan de sus méritos en la lucha, siempre en la primera línea de combate desde los tiempos del ataque al cuartel Moncada en 1953.

Fidel seguirá al mando porque son muchos miles los cuadros revolucionarios que no aceptarían la capitulación ni otra línea que la de la revolución consecuente hasta el final que él ha enseñado.

Fidel permanecerá en la proa de la revolución de todos los cubanos, porque ahora hay en Cuba un pueblo educado, culto, sano y patriótico, dispuesto a cultivar la unidad y la solidaridad en aras de mantener y defender la independencia, la identidad cultural y la justicia social logradas en el último medio siglo.

Cuando me preguntan qué cambios sobrevendrán en Cuba a partir de los que disponga la Asamblea Nacional el 24 de febrero de 2008, a la luz del reciente Mensaje de Fidel, respondo que espero: ¡Uno muy grande! Porque la revolución contará, desde entonces, con el intelecto del más destacado dirigente revolucionario de nuestros tiempos, liberado de responsabilidades operativas y de cargas administrativas, enteramente dedicado a servir a la causa con su talento prodigioso.

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# WHO USES WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

## From Vietnam to Iraq, the Use of Chemical Weapons by the US and Canada

By Alison Bodine

### Depleted Uranium is the Agent Orange of the Iraq War

For the Vietnamese, it started as a grey cloud falling from the sky. In the 10 years between 1961 and 1971, 72 Million litres of the herbicide Agent Orange would be dropped on 10 percent of Vietnam. Vietnamese scientists have estimated that as many as 4.8 million Vietnamese citizens were directly exposed to these chemical weapons. Sprayed indiscriminately over Vietnamese people and farmlands, the active ingredient in Agent Orange, dioxin, not only destroyed foliage and the environment, but also has been directly linked to severe health problems of people who came in direct contact and generations of Vietnamese to follow.

*"When we initiated the herbicide program in the 1960s, we were aware of the potential for damage due to dioxin contamination in the herbicide. We were even aware that the military formulation had a higher dioxin concentration than the civilian version due to the lower cost and speed of*

*manufacture. However, because the material was to be used on the enemy, none of us were overly concerned."*

- Dr. James R. Clary, a former senior scientist at the Air Force Armament Development Lab

For Iraqis, it started in the 1991 Gulf War and has continued in the current Iraq war. From white phosphorus, to the modern equivalent of napalm (Mark 77 firebombs), to thousands of tons of depleted uranium (DU) "Bunker Buster" bombs and armour penetrating bullets, the US-led war and occupation has brought weapons of mass destruction to Iraq.

*"Why are we using these weapons? We are poisoning the soldiers. We're poisoning Iraq. We're poisoning the world. Depleted uranium is the Agent Orange of the Iraq War"*

- March 2008 Winter Soldier testimony of US Marine Matt Howard

### Depleted Uranium is a Weapon of Mass Destruction

Depleted uranium is the radioactive by-product of nuclear power used to make death and destruction more efficient and affordable for the occupying forces. DU is denser than lead, and therefore can penetrate surfaces to a greater degree than conventional weapons. After contact, DU bombs create both a depleted uranium oxide dust that is able to be inhaled and a by-product that is water soluble.

Through two wars, the people of Iraq have been bombarded with this deadly weapon. 700-800 tons of depleted uranium was used in the 1991 bombing of southern Iraq. 970 radioactive bombs and missiles were dropped in Iraq during that time.

In the current war and occupation of Iraq that began in 2003, the depleted uranium arsenal has been unleashed over Iraqi people indiscriminately. As early as April of 2003, US/UK forces used an estimated 2000 tons of DU (Christian Scherrer, "DU and the Liberation of Iraq"), mostly in high-population areas of Baghdad during the

"Shock and Awe" campaign. After five more years of occupation, the amount of DU sent into Iraq is considerably higher. The US and allies invaded Iraq under the guise of looking for weapons of mass destruction. Internationally, depleted uranium is considered a weapon of mass destruction. In the UN Human Rights Commission 1996 session, they concluded that the use of DU constitutes a crime against humanity. Again in 2002, the Human Rights Commission stated the use of DU shells and bombs by US/UK forces violated numerous international human rights codes and conventions.

### Beyond Depleted Uranium

Chemical weapons have also been widely used against the Iraqi resistance. In 2004, this fact was widely publicized after the release of an Italian documentary showing

that the US had used white phosphorus in their attack on the city of Fallujah. White phosphorus is a chemical that burns in oxygen, and when it comes into contact with skin, will burn all the way to the bone. Also in use are Mark 77 firebombs, a combination of jet fuel and a gel that means the burning bomb sticks to skin, the modern day equivalent of the napalm used in Vietnam.

### Continued War: the Lasting Effects of DU and Agent Orange

The most extensive studies about the effects of exposure to DU and Agent Orange have been performed on the US citizens di-



rectly affected - soldiers. Working and poor people that were drafted or joined the military due to the "poverty draft" have faced severe health problems. The same health crisis brought on US soldiers was also dropped on people

*continued on page 22*

# Vancouver International Women's Day 2008

## - A Big Success!



### IWD Committee Organizes Successful Day of Action

By Nita Palmer

### The Global Struggle for Women's Rights in 2008

For women around the world, coming together to mark this year's International Women's Day (IWD) was more important than ever, as women's rights are coming under more and more attack both locally and internationally. In BC for example, women's services have been slashed by the BC Liberal government, which cut 100% of the funding to women's centres in 2004. This same government has cut funding to social housing programs which many women, especially single mothers, rely on. According to a 2003 Statistics Canada survey, 42% of single mothers have trouble finding affordable housing for their families.

Women across Canada are reminded

every day that the struggle for our rights is not over, with 51% of our sisters experiencing at least one act of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime (Statistics Canada). We still earn, on average, only 70.5 cents for every dollar a man earns (BC Federation of Labour). Despite these factors, in 2007 the Government of Canada removed the goal of "women's equality" from the mandate of the government agency "Status of Women Canada", claiming that women in Canada had already achieved equality. Our long-fought-for right to access abortion if we so choose, is also being threatened by the "Unborn Victims of Crime Act" (C-484), which, if passed in parliament, will give fetuses a type of legal 'personhood', paving the way for anti-abortion legislation. The situation for Indigenous women in Canada is even worse. At least five hundred Indigenous women

have gone missing or have been murdered across Canada, and the number of Indigenous women who die as a result of violence is three times higher than the Canadian average (Health Canada).

Internationally, the situation of women's rights is no better. In Latin America, 70% of women suffer from domestic violence. In Asia, millions of women are forced into prostitution out of economic necessity. Across Africa, an estimated 130 million girls and women are affected by female genital mutilation. One out of every five women in Europe has been a victim of violence inflicted by her partner. Women are also the first to suffer from the brutal wars and occupations being carried out in Iraq and Afghanistan. 15% of Iraqi women whose husbands have been killed by war are forced into prostitution to survive; and increasing numbers of Iraqi girls are

victims of sex trafficking. Despite claims they are being "liberated" by Canada and the US, Afghan women face increasing levels of domestic violence, and a soaring maternal mortality rate of 1,600 deaths per 100,000 births (UNICEF).

With these increasing attacks on women, IWD 2008 was an important day for women to raise our voices with our sisters around the world to say "we will not stop fighting for our rights". Historically and today, this is an important day to celebrate our rights, our dignity and our sisterhood; but also to come together to fight for the many, many rights we are still denied. Although the fight for women's rights continues every day, International Women's Day is one day a year for us to come together and reflect on the past year of struggle and reaffirm our commitment for the struggle for women's liberation for the years to

come.

### Not an Easy Road

All around the world, women held marches, rallies, cultural events and celebrations to mark International Women's Day. In Vancouver, a series of successful and informative events were hosted on March 8 by the Vancouver International Women's Day Committee, which has been organizing in Vancouver for nearly 20 years.

However, despite the big success of IWD 2008, organizing for this year's IWD was not as smooth as it seems from the below report on the day's events. One challenge that we face in the women's movement is the struggle against bourgeois feminist, ultra-leftist and Islamophobic tendencies. It is politically important to mention some of these challenges which the *continued on page 9*

# GAZA

## the Acid Test for Palestinian Liberation



**Palestinian women rally against Israel.  
March 4th 2008**

By Mike Chimenti

### A Failure Before the Start

This past November 27<sup>th</sup> 2007, the world was supposed to witness the dawning of a new era in the relations between Palestinians and Israelis. George Bush had called for an international meeting in Annapolis, Maryland to re-start the 'peace process' between Palestine and Israel. Delegates and representatives from more than 40 different countries attended the summit. Noticeably absent were any delegates from Hamas, the real representative of Palestinian people, who swept Palestinian parliament elections with 73.5 percent on Jan 26<sup>th</sup> 2006.

Even before the conference began, most fair minded people held out little hope for the Annapolis Conference, and for good reason. The world has already seen two different 'peace' plans designed to end the 60 years of violence initiated by Israel. Both of these plans have ended in total failure.

### Saying Peace, Making War

In 1993, the Oslo process began. By September 1993, this process was being portrayed as real progress. US President Bill Clinton stood with outstretched arms as Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman, Yasser Arafat, and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin,

shook hands on the White House lawn. The Oslo Accords saw the PLO renounce violence and officially recognize Israel. In turn, Israel officially recognized the PLO (but not a Palestinian state).

The Accords were designed to give Palestinians 'self rule' in the Occupied Territories, with control over the economy, taxation, and education. Israel, for its part, was to immediately stop the expansion of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, eventually removing them entirely.

By 2000, the Oslo process was dead. Settlements were expanding and Israel still controlled Palestinian economics and politics through military occupation. In June of 2002, as Israel was beginning construction of the Apartheid Wall,

(ie. renounce violence), and in turn, Israel would stop expanding settlements in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Almost six years later, the same issues are still at the forefront of the debate, and still unresolved. The final outcome of the Annapolis Conference was that the PA and Israel would "immediately launch good-faith bilateral negotiations in order to conclude a peace treaty, resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues without exception", and that both sides would "make every effort to conclude an agreement before the end of 2008", just before Bush leaves office.

*"The state of Israel has no interest in holding negotiations with those that refuse to accept the basic principles of the Quartet."*

— Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, December 23, 2007, Al Jazeera

Regardless of the language and grand plans of this newest 'peace document', the summit's true purpose was to bolster the strength of the PA and Mahmoud Abbas in the West Bank against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. By 'rewarding' the West Bank with less aggressive assaults, and punishing Gaza with relentless air and ground raids and slow death via the economic blockade, the Israeli government hopes to undermine Hamas' support within Gaza, thereby putting the PA back in control of both of the Occupied Ter-

ritories.

### Brutality Reminiscent of the Holocaust

*"Gaza cannot survive for very long at all without supplies and we are teetering here for the last seven months on the brink of a catastrophe"*

— John Ging, head of UN Relief and Works Agency in Gaza, Reuters

The Government of



**Rally in support of Hamas  
Gaza City, March 28th 2008**

Israel's relentless pressure on the population of Gaza over the last eight months led to one of the most striking acts of Palestinian resistance in recent history. At dawn on the morning of January 27<sup>th</sup>, Palestinians destroyed a section of the steel wall that separates them from Egypt. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians poured through the breach in the barrier in search of food, medicine, and fuel. The Rafah crossing into Egypt had been closed completely for six months. One week previous to the wall being destroyed, Israel had closed all of Gaza's crossings completely, choking off the last trickle of food, fuel and medicine going into Gaza.

Figures on the International Middle East Media Centre website show that since June 2007, 90% of Gaza's local industries have disappeared under Israel's blockade and 70,000 people have been left jobless. Poverty in the Gaza Strip has risen to 79%, up from 66% in the fall of 2007.

*"We are not prepared to show any tolerance, period. And we will respond. Our reaction is not limited to a specific operation or day,"*

—Ehud Olmert, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008, France 24

In January, Israel began another wave of particularly vicious and deadly attacks on Gaza and the West Bank. The pretext for Israel's newest wave of aggression was the launching of rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israel. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, a rocket landed further into Israel than ever before, reaching the city of Ashkelon – injuring no one and causing no property damage.

### Heroic Palestinian Struggle Continues

From the close of the Annapolis conference on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007 until the 1<sup>st</sup> of April this year, Israel killed at least 363 Palestinians (Al-

jazeera). In 2007, 373 Palestinians were killed, and 11 Israelis. This recent wave of killing is the clearest indication of which kind of peace the Israeli ruling class has in mind: peace through annihilation.

While the Israeli government trumpeted the intransigent 'terrorism' of Hamas and berated the PA for not bringing an end to violence, they also announced hundreds of millions in funding for Israeli settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank in order to build 1,400 new homes this year. All of these new settlement expansions were issued after the Annapolis conference.

Despite almost two decades of promises of 'peace' and of the creation of an independent Palestinian state, daily life for the millions of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has become only more violent and desperate. Israel has made clear to the world that the only state they will tolerate for Palestinians is a perpetual state of fear, misery and humiliation. Palestinians have made clear to the world that justice can only come in a unified and restored Palestine. No justice, no peace.

**Dismantle the Israeli Apartheid State!  
Free Palestine!  
Right of Return for Palestinians!  
End the Occupation!**

*Annex to the letter dated 24 January 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General:*

### Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba on Escalation of Aggression by Israel

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba has followed with great concern the recent escalation of aggression against the Palestinian population by the Government of Israel, which has led to dozens of deaths and injuries.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs finds the encirclement of the Gaza Strip and the cutting off of electricity and food supplies to a million and a half Palestinian civilians unacceptable and criminal as well as a flagrant breach of international law and of the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba vigorously condemns these acts by the Government of Israel, which are designed to annihilate and subjugate through starvation and thirst, the Palestinian people, including children, women, the sick and the elderly, who are suffering from the forced and illegal occupation of their territory and are now being subjected to further inhuman collective punishment by the occupying forces.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba demands that the Government of Israel should immediately lift the inhumane blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip. It also calls upon the international community to mobilize for the purpose of demanding respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the establishment of an independent and sovereign State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the unconditional return of the Arab territories occupied since 1967, as the only way to achieve a just and lasting peace for all the peoples in the region.

Havana, 23 January 2008

*Anexo a la carta de fecha 24 de enero de 2008 dirigida al Secretario General por el Representante Permanente de Cuba ante las Naciones Unidas*

### Declaración del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Cuba

El Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Cuba ha seguido con extrema preocupación la reciente intensificación de las acciones agresivas del Gobierno de Israel contra la población palestina, que han causado decenas de muertos y heridos.

El Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores considera inadmisibles y criminales el cerco sobre la Franja de Gaza, incluido el corte del suministro eléctrico y de alimentos a un millón y medio de civiles palestinos en flagrante violación del Derecho Internacional y de los Convenios de Ginebra de 1949.

El Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Cuba expresa su más enérgica condena a estos actos del Gobierno de Israel dirigidos a aniquilar y rendir por hambre y sed al pueblo palestino, incluidos niños, mujeres, enfermos y ancianos que sufren la forzosa e ilegal ocupación de su territorio y son objeto del inhumano castigo colectivo impuesto una vez más por las fuerzas ocupantes.

El Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Cuba exige al Gobierno de Israel poner fin de inmediato al inhumano bloqueo a la Franja de Gaza y llama a la comunidad internacional a movilizarse para exigir el respeto a los derechos inalienables del pueblo palestino, incluido el establecimiento de un Estado independiente y soberano, con su capital en Jerusalén Oriental, y la devolución incondicional de todos los territorios árabes ocupados en junio de 1967, como la única vía para alcanzar una paz justa y duradera para todos los pueblos de la región.

La Habana, 23 de enero del 2008

### International Women's Day Address

continued from page 9



Pay Equity, Rights for Indigenous Women, Rights for Women Migrant Workers, Freedom, Equality and Social Justice"

We have resolved to organize against War and Poverty, as these two factors which are prevalent in our world today target women especially and also prevent women from organizing for women's rights, as they are forced to fight to survive.

We unite against violence against women in all of its forms: whether physical, verbal, emotional, psychological, sexual or life threatening. We must call for an end to domestic violence, rape, sexual abuse and harassment, genital mutilation, trafficking of women and girls, state violence, and the murder of women.

We fight for the basic right of housing for all women, under their own name and not compromised by social standing, marital status, war or poverty.

We struggle for women's right to universal childcare, whether at schools, workplaces or in the community, to ensure that women's place in society extends past the home. We also recognize that women's right to work includes pay equity and equal pay for equal work.

We recognize that Indigenous women in North America and around the world face discrimination, racism, a lowered standard of living and their human and inherent rights are denied. We resolve to unite with Indigenous women in Vancouver on International Women's Day, to ensure they are represented and their voices and demands are supported. We recognize that migrant working women face similar conditions and resolve to organize for their rights to status and to good working and living conditions.

We, the International Women's Day Organizing Committee members, in Vancouver BC Canada, on unceded Coast Salish Territory, raise our voices together with the women of the world. On March 8, 2008 we will let the world know that the movement for women's liberation is marching forward internationally, uniting for freedom, equality and social justice.



Canadian Forces tanks in Afghanistan, March 21st 2008

By Nita Palmer

On Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup> 2008, Government of Canada passed a motion in Parliament to extend Canada's war in Afghanistan for two more years. The decision was based on a recommendation from the Government of Canada's so-called Independent Advisory Panel on Afghanistan (a panel hand-picked by right-wing Conservative Party leader and Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper) to extend the mission. After weeks of debate among the political parties in Parliament, the Conservatives and the Liberals (the two biggest parties in Parliament) agreed on the motion to extend the mission. The New Democratic Party (NDP) and the Bloc Quebecois both voted against the motion. Although the decision to extend the mission came with the condition that NATO provide 1,000 more troops to assist in the combat mission in Kandahar, where most Canadian Forces are stationed, it is clear that getting these additional troops won't be a problem. Already France has agreed to send more troops (though possibly not directly to the south); other countries are looking at doing the same.

#### Poor and Working People Left Out of Decision

Despite all the debate in parliament, the disagreement between parties is not so much a disagreement on whether or not Canadian

troops should be in Afghanistan, but instead in what way the occupation should be continued. In the interest of being able to continue the occupation, the Conservatives and the Liberals put aside their differences on the strategy of the mission to agree that the occupation would continue forward with an increased focus on "reconstruction" and training of Afghan military and police. The Liberals also got an important concession from Prime Minister Harper that they would put a cap on the mission's date and limit it to the end of 2011. This made both parties' moves and maneuvering meaningful, giving false hope to working people and creating room for further maneuvering to extend the mission beyond 2011. However, practically this will not change anything about the character of the occupation or how many Afghans Canadian soldiers are killing. The NDP, although they voted against the extension of the mission, support Canadian Forces participating in a UN-mandated "peacekeeping" mission. Again, in practice this would not mean much difference in the lives of Afghan people - occupation is occupation, whether the occupiers' helmets are green or blue.

Outside of the halls of Parliament, there is a real opposition to Canada's war drive in Afghanistan. However, poor and working people who oppose Canada's occupation of Afghanistan have had no input into the decision to carry out and extend Canada's war drive in Afghanistan. All of the decisions made on this issue have taken place between political parties and behind closed doors, with no opportunity for public consultation or debate.

# CANADA VS. AFGHANISTAN:

## Parliament in Ottawa Votes for Two More Years of Occupation and Bloodshed

### Two More Years of Destruction and Plunder

So what does the extension of Canada's occupation really mean for people in Afghanistan? It means two more years of plunder, two more years of destruction, and two more years of fighting back against the Canada/NATO occupation. Canada's "achievements" in Afghanistan since 2001 include:

- Afghanistan becoming the supplier of 90% of the world's opium (UN World Drug Report)
- A rapidly expanding epidemic of AIDS, a disease not found in Afghanistan before 2001.
- A 40% increase in physical violence against women in the home since March 2007 alone. (United Nations)
- Over 2,764 air strikes on Afghanistan in 2007 alone. There were 1,140 in Iraq in the same time period. (USA Today, October 21<sup>st</sup> 2007)

By all counts, conditions of life have deteriorated in Afghanistan. Why would they improve under two more years of occupation? In 2005, when the government of Canada extended the mission in Afghanistan until 2007, they promised that they needed "just two more years" to accomplish their goals in Afghanistan. In 2007, when they extended the mission to 2009, they promised the same thing. The extension of the mission from 2009 to 2011 will be no different.



Afghans protest occupation, March 5th 2007

### The Growing Afghan Resistance

"Make no mistake, NATO is not winning in Afghanistan."

-Atlantic Council of the United States (US-based international affairs think-tank)

Besides the fact that Canada and NATO have done nothing to improve the lives of Afghan people, they have failed to achieve their own goals of gaining control over Afghanistan as well. According to the Senlis Council (a major policy think-tank), "The Taliban are entrenched in the South, running parallel governments in several districts and controlling the majority of secondary roads." (Afghanistan: Decision Point 2008) As of November 2007, the Senlis council, "concluded that the Taliban has a permanent presence in 54 per cent of Afghanistan". The Taliban has gained strength in Afghanistan as more and more ordinary Afghans join to fight against the occupation of their country. "...we're seeing the growth in this insurgency from the local grievances," said Joanna Nathan, a senior analyst with the International ...continued on page 22

# The Fight for a Living Wage: No to the Minimum Wage, Yes to a Dignified Wage!

By Thomas Davies

On January 17<sup>th</sup> 2002, Gary Collins, then the British Columbia Finance Minister under the BC Liberal Party government, announced a new provincial budget that went down in history as "Black Thursday". It was defined by an onslaught of cuts to social spending, which have been characteristic of the BC Liberal government since the minute they came to office in May 2001. Already they had created a new low \$6-an-hour "training wage" for new workers. Seven years later they are still refusing to raise the minimum wage beyond \$8 an hour, guaranteeing poverty for hundreds of thousands of BC's poorest workers. The fight to raise the minimum wage to a living wage is an important flashpoint in the overall struggle of poor and working people against the BC Liberal Government and their pro-business, anti-worker agenda.

#### The Campaign for \$10

The drive has so far been led by the BC Federation of Labour (BC Fed), and their campaign to raise the minimum wage to \$10 an

hour. The campaign has collected over 50,000 petition signatures, and has a poll which shows that 80 percent of British Columbians support their proposal. Over 115,000 people in BC make minimum wage, and another 135,000 make less than \$10 an hour.

Over 30 municipalities have already supported the initiative, and the campaign continues to do vital work highlighting the terrible conditions forced upon those who work for minimum wage. According to a March 2007 study by the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), a full-time minimum wage worker earns over \$4,000 less than the poverty line annually. The BC Fed has consistently pointed out that over 60% of these poverty-stricken workers are women, and that the 1976 minimum wage, if adjusted only for inflation, would have already be over \$10 an hour.

#### Poor and Working People Under Attack Across Canada

According to the "Summoned to Stewardship: Make Poverty Reduction a Collective Legacy" report released by the BC Fed, BC is now the province with the highest child poverty rate in Canada, with 1 in 5 children now living in poverty. However, these kinds of attacks are across the board. The CCPA recently found that "Canada's income gap is growing: In 2004, the richest 10% of families earned 82 times more than the poorest 10% - almost triple the ratio of 1976," and "All but the richest 10% of families are working more weeks and hours in the paid workforce (200 hours more on average



since 1996), yet only the richest 10% saw a significant increase in their earnings - 30%."

In BC, the Liberals have not only attacked minimum wage workers. They changed the minimum shift requirement from four hours to two, loosened overtime regulations in favour of employers and overtime "agreements" they make with their employees, and also legalized child labour for kids as young as 12 years old. Not only that, farm workers are now excluded altogether from regulations related to hours of work, overtime and statutory holiday pay.

According to a study funded by Status of Women Canada, under the BC Liberals, cuts and privatization resulted in a total loss of approximately 20,447 public sector jobs in BC between 2001 and 2005. Nearly 75 per cent of these were held by women.

The day Gordon Campbell took office he declared that BC is "open for business", and since then has continued to repeat that the economy is booming. Why then is it that BC's workers have actually gone backwards in quality of life? Beyond the many studies which refute the argument that an increased minimum wage would force employers to cut jobs, isn't it a fundamental right for someone

to be able to properly feed, shelter, and take care of themselves and their families? Why are so many people who are working long hours in British Columbia unable to do this while Gordon Campbell recently voted himself a 54% increase in wages?

#### The Rights of All Poor and Working People

The BC Fed \$10 campaign continues to be at the forefront of exposing the BC Liberal government's unfair and destructive policies, but at \$10 an hour, a full-time minimum wage worker would still not live above the poverty line. Emily Ottewell, Co-Chair of the BC Fed Young Worker Committee said in a recent Georgia Straight article, "I don't know how anyone on their own can live on that wage. So the minimum should be at least \$15 or \$16 an hour; \$10 is not a living wage, but the problem [with organizing] is, you gotta start somewhere."

All those involved in the fight for social justice in BC should support the BC Fed campaign to raise the minimum wage, but we should be clear that the place to start should at least be above the poverty line. A minimum wage of \$15 an hour would guarantee that a full-time worker would not spend over a third of their income on average housing costs (a common measure of poverty), and would be a huge step forward in the rights of all working people. Across BC, poor and working people have the opportunity to make these important demands, to fight back against the BC Liberals, and to unite with all forces working for a better life. A "minimum wage" by its definition clearly shows the poverty line of hundreds of thousands of working people. Therefore, in our opinion, this terminology must be dropped and dismantled in favour of starting to use a term that should indicate a good life for all workers: a "Dignified Wage."

**Working People Unite for a DIGNIFIED WAGE!**



# JUSTICE FOR FRANK PAUL

Interview with *Kat Norris*, coordinator of *Indigenous Action Movement*

By Esteban González Arteaga

Frank Paul was the victim of Vancouver police department brutality and racism. They brutalized him and dropped him in the alley to freeze to death. *Fire This Time* has published a number of articles about this injustice against Frank Paul and Indigenous people in Canada. Kat Norris, the founder and coordinator of Indigenous Action Movement is the most active organizer for Justice for Frank Paul. Kat Norris also is a long time prominent social justice activist in British Columbia and Canada. Recently *Fire This Time* had the opportunity to interview her on the latest development of the Frank Paul case.

**Fire This Time: What are some of the recent developments in the inquiry into the death of Frank Paul?**

**Kat Norris:** What's happening is that the inquiry is starting up again. On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, Peggy Clement, Frank Paul's cousin, is flying into town to support the testimony of Dana Urban. Dana Urban was a former assistant to Don Morrison, who was one of the principal people rejecting the call for a public inquiry. He didn't see that there should be any charges laid, and didn't even want to get into the investigation of what really happened to Frank Paul. It's a really important day for people to show up to support.

So, we are just seeing how that plays out. We're organizing the rally, simply because there should be more noise made around this injustice.

Anyone that is supporting the call for justice for Frank Paul is at the low end of the totem pole in terms of the justice system, because a lot of them work within that system, and they're in the minority. The government worked with the

justice system to ensure that our people don't achieve justice, that the police and RCMP, their views and their actions, are favored. Which is something that affects all of society not only Indigenous people. We're looking for society, to come on board to support this case, because if Frank Paul doesn't get justice then it favors interests and it favors the police. Basically they have complete freedom to do what they do without worrying about being accountable for their actions.

The other development is that the BC Criminal Justice Branch is looking to get a judicial review for the ruling on Frank Paul's Case. I feel that that is very race-based because what they are doing is trying to fight the decision of the judge who is asking why wasn't anything done, why were no charges being laid, why wasn't it looked at more in depth. The fact that they're fighting for that shows that the system is again supporting the police.

The commissioner William Davis, who is the one who is heading the inquiry into the death of Frank Paul, ruled last month that he wants five prosecutors to provide information on what procedures they followed in deciding not to recommend charges against the officer who left Paul in the alley. He wants to know what steps they took, but Stan Lowe, who speaks for the crown, is trying to stall that. I don't understand, he's saying that if they're made to do that "special interest groups" will put pressure on the crown prosecutor. We Indigenous people are those "special interest groups" and putting that cliché name to people that are interested in justice, real justice, it's downplaying, and making it look like we are just interested in what we gain out of it. But, what we are gaining out of it is justice.

**FTT: What are your expectations for the Case in the coming period?**



**Kat Norris during FTT interview with Esteban Gonzalez Arteaga.**

**KN:** Bottom line - what we are looking for is accountability, whether for police brutality or for justice system inaction. Those two things are really important. So many of our people have died at the hands of the police, died in police custody, all across what is now called Canada, all across Turtle Island. I think that with Frank Paul's case, it's so big, that it can set a big precedent as to how our people are dealt with. If justice is shown, it's going to be a big victory for the people, a big victory for justice, a big victory for society.

**FTT: What does the outcome of this case, the case itself, mean to Indigenous people, how is it connected to other struggles of Indigenous people?**

**KN:** Indigenous people around the world that face injustice at the hands of an oppressive government, colonialism, which speaks for the fact that they work with the other powers that be, global interests, it's all about the almighty dollar, lands and resources. Lands and resources are the be all and end all of private property and capitalism. All the lands and resources belong to different Indigenous cultures around the world, and to continue to oppress

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## Support Rally for Frank Paul

By Kerri Goodwin

On mid day of January 7<sup>th</sup> 2008, the Indigenous Action Movement organized a rally in memory of Frank Paul, at the Federal Court Building downtown Vancouver, just moments before the inquiry into his death took place. Over 45 supporters gathered along with various media covering this important case.

Who is Frank Paul? He was a 47-year-old Miqmac man from New Brunswick who was living on the streets of the Downtown Eastside. He was left to die in the alley by the hands Vancouver police on December 6<sup>th</sup> 1998. He was also known to the Vancouver police. A day earlier he was taken into custody by the police for being intoxicated, he spent time in the drunk tank until he had sobered up. He was released, but later that same day he was found completely intoxicated again, to the point where he couldn't walk on his own. Yet, the officer on duty claimed he was fit to be released. The officers then dragged him out of the police department, into a paddy wagon, and placed him against the wall in an alley. The next morning the same police officers who had left him there, found his lifeless frozen body.

The officers that left him to die didn't receive any punishment at all. They both received a suspension from work of two days and one day. This unjust "punishment" is an example of Canada's racist police agencies, and how they can get away with killing an innocent

## Justicia para Frank Paul

Entrevista con *Kat Norris*, coordinadora del Movimiento de Acción Indígena

Por Esteban González Arteaga

Frank Paul fue víctima de la violencia y el racismo del departamento de policía de Vancouver. Lo violentaron y después lo dejaron en un callejón donde se murió del frío helado. *Fire This Time* ha publicado varios artículos sobre esta injusticia cometida en contra de Frank Paul y los pueblos Indígenas de Canadá. Kat Norris, fundadora y coordinadora del Movimiento de Acción Indígena, es la organizadora más activa por Justicia para Frank Paul. Kat Norris también es una reconocida activista por la justicia social en Colombia Británica y Canadá con una larga trayectoria. Recientemente *Fire This Time* tuvo la oportunidad de entrevistarla sobre los acontecimientos más recientes en el caso de Frank Paul.

**FTT: ¿Cuales han sido los acontecimientos recientes en la investigación sobre la muerte de Frank Paul?**

**Kat Norris:** En este momento se vuelve a iniciar la investigación. El 2 de Abril, Peggy Clement, la prima de Frank Paul, viene a la ciudad para apoyar las declaraciones de Dana Urban. Dana Urban, fue asistente de Don Morrison, quien fue uno de los principales en rechazar el llamado por una investigación pública, y que no pensaba que se deberían de levantar cargos, e incluso no quiso hacer una investigación de lo que realmente le paso a Frank Paul. Es muy

importante que en este día llegué la gente a apoyar.

Bueno, estamos viendo como se desenvuelve esto. Estamos organizando el mitin, simplemente porque se tiene que levantar la voz en contra de esta injusticia.

Cualquier persona que apoye el llamado de justicia para Frank Paul se encuentra en la parte

más baja del tótem en términos del sistema de justicia, porque muchos de ellos trabajan dentro del sistema, y se encuentran en una minoría. El gobierno trabajo con el sistema de justicia para asegurarse que nuestros pueblo no logren la justicia, que se favorezca a la policía y al RCMP (La Gendarmerie Real de Canadá), y a su punto de vista y a sus acciones. Esto es algo que afecta a toda la sociedad y no solo a los pueblos Indígenas, buscamos que se incorpore toda la sociedad a este caso, porque, si Frank Paul no recibe justicia se favorece a intereses y se favorece a la policía, prácticamente tienen la libertad total para hacer lo que se les da gana sin procurarse por rendir cuentas por sus acciones.

Otro acontecimiento es que la Sección de Justicia Criminal de BC esta pidiendo un reviso judicial del veredicto del caso de Frank Paul. Yo siento que esto se hace a base de raza, porque lo que ellos intentan hacer es luchar en contra de la decisión del juez que esta preguntando ¿Por qué no se hizo nada? ¿Por qué no se levantaron cargos? ¿Por qué no se investigo más profundamente? El hecho de que combaten esta decisión demuestra que el sistema apoya a la policía.

El Comisionado William Davis quien dirige la investigación de

la muerte de Frank Paul, decidió el mes pasado que quiere que cinco fiscales den información sobre los procedimientos que se siguieron cuando se decidió no levantar cargos en contra del policía que dejo a Paul en el callejón. El quiere saber que medidas tomaron, pero Stan Lowe, que representa al gobierno, intenta detener eso. No comprendo, el dice que si se les obliga a hacer eso que entonces "grupos con intereses especiales" podrán presionar a los fiscales del gobierno. Nosotros los pueblos Indígenas somos esos "grupos con intereses especiales" y al ponerse ese nombre cliché a personas que les interesa la justicia, la justicia verdadera, es minimizarnos, y hacer ver como que lo único que nos interesa es como nos podemos beneficiar. Pero lo que ganamos es la justicia.

**FTT: ¿Cuáles con tus expectativas del caso en el periodo inmediato?**

**KN:** Esencialmente lo que buscamos es que nos rindan cuentas, sea por la brutalidad policíaca o por la inacción del sistema judicial. Estas dos cosas son de gran importancia, tanta de nuestra gente a muerto en manos de la policía, muerto en custodia policíaca, en todo lo que hoy se llama Canadá, la Isla de la Tortuga. Y yo pienso que con el caso de Frank Paul, es de tal magnitud que puede dejar un precedente de cómo se trata *continuado en la página 9*



**Kat Norris**

Indigenous man.

For over nine years, Frank Paul was left in the dark. There was no justice for his case, until recently when people from the Indigenous community who had been organizing and getting the word out about his death for many years, were victorious in their battle for an inquiry into his senseless death. This was an important effort to shed light on what really happened to Frank Paul.

Kat Norris, a long time social justice activist in Vancouver and organizer with the Indigenous Action Movement MC'ed the rally. She and a group of women and men opened with drumming and sang a song to honour Frank Paul. Kat also demanded, "Justice for Frank Paul!" and "Stop Police brutality against the Indigenous People!"

She then asked Phillipa Ryan, an Indigenous elder and on the elder's council of the Downtown Eastside Women's Center, to give the opening prayer. Followed by Phillipa, were various speakers from the Indigenous community.

One of the speakers, Stewart Phillip, is the Grand Chief of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. As the ceremonial burning of sage was taking place, the crowd stood silent as he revealed a never before seen photo of Frank Paul.

As the rally was coming to a close, the leaders sang a closing song and many hugs and hand shakes went around. Soon after people made their way into the Federal Court Building to hear the results of the Frank Paul Inquiry.

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IWD committee in Vancouver faced this year, as a learning experience for other IWD committees around the world which may face the same problems. The IWD committee began meeting in early October and by the beginning of February had a series of events planned. But just one month before the IWD events, a small group of women began attending meetings with the goal of taking over IWD in Vancouver to focus solely on condemning the government of Iran for their treatment of women. This minority group, with their anti-Iran and anti-Islam agenda, was defeated by the majority of women who felt that focusing on women's rights in Iran only, ignores the women's rights abuses and the struggle for women's rights taking place in 193 other countries around the world. Furthermore, organizers also felt that condemning Islam (and other religions as well) for oppressing women would only serve to isolate religious women, who have as much right to participate in IWD as non-religious women. International Women's Day is a day to celebrate women, our ongoing struggles, our victories, our dignity and our rights. To build the struggle for women's rights, we must unite internationally, regardless of our background, our age, our religion, our sexual orientation, or any of the other things that too often divide us.



Info Fair



Celebration

Park to Victory Square. The chanting was loud and the flags, banners and signs were held high as the energetic crowd took to the streets under the theme of "Women of the World Unite Against War & Poverty".



Rally

The IWD march and rally were carried on Working TV, CTV, and in the Langara Voice newspaper. When the march reached Victory

Square, Payvand Pejvack and Rosa Arteaga, IWD Committee organizers and MCs of the rally, welcomed everyone and explained the importance of IWD and necessity of building unity in action between women across Canada and around the world. They explained how this fight for unity and rights is becoming more important in this time of worldwide attack on women's rights. The rally was opened with a song by Coast Salish elder, Kelly White. The woman invited to represent women's struggle locally was Kat Norris, coordinator of the Indigenous Action Movement. Kat spoke powerfully about the struggle for women's rights in BC, including the struggle for housing, the struggle against poverty, and particularly the struggle for Indigenous women's rights. "We shouldn't have to stand here yelling for our rights. We shouldn't still be struggling, but that's what we have to do. And as long as we do, change is going to happen!" Kat said to a cheering crowd. Rosa Quiro of the Solidarity Coalition for a United Latin America spoke about women abroad, focusing specifically on the situation of women in Latin America. IWD Coordinating Committee member Kerri Goodwin read the 2008 IWD address (also featured on this page). At the end of the rally all women and men promised to come back next year, even stronger and more dynamic, to celebrate International Women's Day and continue the struggle for women's rights and for a better

International Women's Day 2008 Resolution  
In Solidarity with Women's Struggle Internationally

On the occasion of the 98<sup>th</sup> anniversary of International Women's Day, we resolve the following, in celebration of the gains that women of the past have fought for and in recognition of the struggles that the new generation of women must continue to fight.

**Women of the world:** the first women of this land, Indigenous women, today face unparalleled discrimination, poverty, and racism, due to centuries of colonial occupation of their land – there are currently at least 500 Indigenous women that have been murdered or are missing and are presumed dead, across this country.

**Women of the world:** today an estimated 170 million Indigenous women worldwide suffer widespread discrimination and other gross abuses.

**Women of the world:** 600,000 – 800,000 persons are trafficked across international borders each year and approximately 80% are women and girls, the majority for commercial sexual exploitation.

**Women of the world:** half a million of our sisters, women and girls, are currently held in prisons and jails internationally – about one third of these, estimated at almost 200,000 women, are held in the United States.

**Women of the world:** the overwhelming majority of the world population lives in

countries where abortion is illegal, there is no access to safe abortion, and a woman's right to choice is denied. Every 8 minutes a woman dies because of an unsafe abortion.

**Women of the world:** more than 1 billion people in the world live on less than \$1 a day and 70% of these are women. One in every seven women, that is 2.4 Million women, in this country alone live in poverty.

**Women of the world:** today there are approximately 50 million refugees and people displaced internationally because of war – 75-80% are women and children.

**Women of the world:** gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgendered/transsexual women still face persecution and discrimination internationally, including in employment opportunities, access to social assistance, child custody and legal and democratic rights.

**Women of the world:** more than 16.4 million women today are infected with HIV/AIDS and women account for 58% of infections of AIDS in Africa.

**Women of the world:** 1 in 5 women worldwide are victims of rape, often used as a tool of war.

**Women of the world:** we are still fighting for women's human and democratic rights - the right to vote is still denied to women in some countries.

We, Vancouver's International Women's Day Committee 2008, have united on the theme "Women of the World Unite Against War & Poverty" and "Women Marching For: An End to All Violence Against Women, Housing, Universal Childcare, continued on page 6

### Interview with Kat Norris

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our human rights, our very lives, is key to their success.

Frank Paul, represents all of our people who have suffered through the residential schools system, he was a victim of the residential school system, therefore of colonialization and the reserve system. He represents much more than just himself, he represents all of us who have gone through all the abuses that you can name, sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and spiritual abuse. He represents all of that.

That is why so many of our people are following this case, because they know that he went to residential school, so they know why he was in the downtown east side, why he became an alcoholic.

As long as more and more people, more and more of society, more indigenous cultures, are supporting this cause, groups like the Human Rights Commission, Amnesty International, all the grass-roots groups, there are so many blogs, there are so many independent newspapers are publicizing the reality, not the

covered up stuff, that's pretty cool.

**FTT: This is a battle that you've been in for a really long time, what do you think has been achieved thus far?**

**KN:** As I mentioned all the support that we're gaining. Even our leaders, organizations that normally wouldn't work together, are working together and are forming specific groups just for this cause. There are groups that are coming together to work with the police, because of Frank Paul's case. So many things are happening right now because of change, and he will continue to.

**FTT: Thank you very much.**

world for men and women alike.

### Information Fair

After the rally, participants visited the IWD info fair at the BCIT downtown campus. The room was full with the participation of 21 women's groups, labour unions, NGOs, and grassroots organizations. These groups represented many of the women's rights struggles today, such as struggles for pay equity, for abortion rights, for universal childcare and against violence against women. Participants had the chance to get involved in further organizing and activities for women's rights and social justice throughout the year.

### Celebrating Sisterhood

Just a few hours after the closing of the information fair, a program of politics, music and dance entertained and inspired around 100 people, the majority of whom were women, at the IWD 2008 Celebration held at Trout Lake Community Centre. The evening featured performances by amazing women artists, featuring acoustic guitar, drumming, hip hop, Latin American folk dancing and finally a 5-piece Cuba-inspired salsa band. The evening ended off with dancing to world music and inspiration to continue the next year of fight for women's rights, justice and equality!

The IWD 2008 Organizing Committee would like to thank all the women and organizations who helped make IWD 2008 a success. For more information or to get involved in planning for IWD 2009, contact the IWD committee at [iwdvancouver@gmail.com](mailto:iwdvancouver@gmail.com) or 604-780-7604.

### Entrevista con Kat Norris

continuado de la página 8

a nuestra gente, y si hay justicia será una gran victoria para nuestros pueblos, una gran victoria para la justicia, una gran victoria para la sociedad. Porque demuestra la falta de preocupación por la causa Indígena, y por la justicia Indígena.

**FTT: ¿Qué significa el resultado de este caso, y el caso en sí, para los pueblos Indígenas, cómo esta conectado a otras luchas de los pueblos Indígenas?**

**KN:** Los pueblos Indígenas del mundo que sufren injusticia de la manos de gobiernos opresivo, el colonialismo, esto demuestran que trabajan con el otro gran poder, los intereses globales, se trata del todopoderoso dólar, de las tierras y los recursos. La tierra y los recursos conforman la base de la propiedad privada y el capitalismo, y todas las tierras y los recursos le pertenecen a los diferentes pueblos Indígenas del mundo, y la continua supresión de nuestros derechos humanos, de nuestras vidas en si, es clave para su éxito. Frank Paul representa a toda nuestra gente que ha sufrido por el sistema de escuelas residenciales, el fue victima del sistema de escuelas residenciales, y por lo tanto de la colonización y del sistema de reservas. El representa más que su persona, el representa a todos nosotros, que hemos pasado por todos los

abusos que se pueden nombrar, abuso sexual, abuso físico, abuso emocional, y abuso espiritual, el representa todo eso.

Por eso es que mucha de nuestra gente esta siguiendo este caso, porque ellos saben que el fue a las escuelas residenciales, ellos saben porque estaba en el Downtown East Side, porque se volvió alcohólico,

Mientras más y más gente de la sociedad, más pueblos Indígenas, apoyen esta causa, grupos como la Comisión de Derechos Humanos, Amnesia Internacional, y todos los grupos de base, hay tantos blogs, tantos periódicos independientes que publican la realidad, y no esconden información, eso esta muy bien.

**FTT: ¿Esta es una batalla en la que has estado por mucho tiempo, que piensas que se ha logrado hasta ahora?**

**KN:** Como ya mencione, todo el apoyo que recibimos. Hasta de nuestros lideres, y de organización que normalmente no trabajan juntas, ahora trabajan juntas para formar grupos específicos para esta causa. Hay grupos que se estan uniendo para trabajar con la policía, debido al caso de Frank Paul. Tantas cosa estan sucediendo gracias a Frank Paul, el ya hizo cambio y lo seguiré haciendo.

**FTT:** Muchas Gracias.

# "The massive support enjoyed by the Revolution demands from us that we question everything we do in order to improve on it"



Raul Castro Addresses the Cuban National Assembly, February 24th 2008

## Key address by Raul Castro Ruz, President of the State Council and the Council of Ministers at the closing session of the First Session of the 7th legislature of the National Assembly of People's Power. Convention Center Havana, February 24 2008, "Year 50 of the Revolution"

Comrades:

As comrade Fidel alerted us in his fundamental Reflection of last January 14th, the people's mandate to this legislature is very clear: to continue strengthening the Revolution at a historical juncture which demands from us to be dialectic and creative.

The composition of the State Council, which has just been elected by this Assembly, raised much expectation both in Cuba and abroad. The most significant was clarified by comrade Fidel in his Message of February 18th. There is very little that I can add to what he said except to express to our people, on behalf of the Revolution's Leadership, our appreciation for the innumerable expressions of serenity, maturity, self-assurance, and the combination of genuine sadness and revolutionary determination.

I take on the responsibility entrusted to me deeply convinced that, as I have often said, there is only one Commander in Chief of the Cuban Revolution.

Fidel is Fidel; we all know it very

countless hours he previously used to tackle the daily problems.

Despite his steady recovery, his physical condition will not allow him those endless working sessions --often separated by hardly a few hours of rest--that characterized his work practically from the moment he started the revolutionary struggle, the same that grew in intensity through the long years of the Special Period when he did not take one single day off.

Comrade Fidel's decision, a new contribution enhancing his example, ensures as from now the continuity of the Revolution and is perfectly consistent with a life guided by Martí's precept that: "All the glory of the world fits in a kernel of corn."

Likewise, his determination is unchangeable with regards to his decision to continue making his contribution to the revolutionary cause and to the most noble ideas and objectives of mankind, while he has the strength to do so.

Therefore, with the certainty that I am expressing the will of our people, I appeal to this Assembly,

patriots without which a society like ours could not succeed.

The Assembly, in full compliance with the view of the Party's Political Bureau, elected comrade José Ramón Machado Ventura as First Vice President of the State Council and later approved his appointment as First Vice President of the Council of Ministers.

As I explained in my proposal to fill that position, it is convenient that under the present circumstances the same comrade takes on these two responsibilities in the State and Government, as it has been the case until now.

Considering his revolutionary life and convictions, his experience and knowledge, his qualification as a leader and a human being, there is no doubt that he meets the requirements to carry out these high duties.

Likewise, the assembly has agreed, in accordance with Article 75 of the Constitution, to analyze the composition of the Government in a future session later this same year. This is a timely decision, since we are not dealing only with appointments, but rather with decisions about which changes might be required in the system of institutions pertaining to the

various entities, and to make a better use of our cadres.

In summary, our Government's work must be more efficient.

The Assembly has been renovated in a higher proportion than the previous legislature. The number of women deputies has grown over seven percent; they now make up almost half of the legislature, over 43%. There is also an increase from 23 to 36 in the number of those between 18 and 30 years of age, that is, the youngest, although we also have a higher number of deputies who are over sixty.

It is very significant that a higher number of deputies are directly linked to production and services, that is, workers, farmers and other laborers. The same applies to members of the armed institutions, sportsmen, artists, writers, journalists and other professionals who, together with the student leaders and the comrades working in the people's councils make up over fifty percent of the Assembly.

These data and the simple enumeration of the tasks discharged by every one of you --from national cadres to retirees and religious leaders-- allow us to say that those meeting here are a small-scale sample of the Cuban society.

farmers and students to the most humble housewife.

At different stages of the Revolution, including the present, when objectively assessing both the strategic issues and the difficulties of their everyday lives, they have all set an example of political maturity and awareness of realities. Meanwhile, they are increasingly convinced that the only source of wealth for the society rests with the productive work, above all when man and resources are efficiently employed.

The international doomsayers forecasting the death of the Revolution tried to capitalize on the criticisms made during the study and discussion of the speech made on July 26th in Camagüey. They overlooked the fact that it was debate and criticism within socialism. This was confirmed way over, a few months later, by the results of our electoral process which concluded last January 20th.

It is also true that some people are inclined to talk before being properly informed. These make demands without thinking whether they are talking rationally or irrationally. As a rule, they agree with those who claim rights without ever mentioning duties. As Fidel

well. Fidel is irreplaceable and the people shall continue his work when he is no longer physically with us; although his ideas will always be with us, the same ideas that have made it possible to build the beacon of dignity and justice our country represents.

The Communist Party, a sure guarantee of the unity of the Cuban nation, is the sole worthy heir to our people's confidence in its leader. It is the top leading force of our State and society as provided in Article 5 of our Constitution approved by referendum by exactly 97.7% of the voters.

This conviction shall become especially significant when as a fact of life the generation that founded and forged the Revolution is no longer present.

Fortunately, it is not that moment we are living today. Fidel is here, as always, with a very clear mind and his capacity to analyze and foresee perfectly intact and strengthened now that he can dedicate to studying and analyzing the

as the supreme body of the State power, to allow me to continue consulting with the maximum leader of the Revolution, comrade Fidel Castro Ruz, the decisions of special transcendence for the future of our nation, basically those associated to defense, foreign policy and the socioeconomic development of the country.

For this and for many other reasons, I shall rather often today quote some of the fundamental ideas and concepts expressed by him in his Reflections. I avail myself of this occasion to say that we should study them for they are educational and they show his capacity to look into the future. We should always bear in mind something that Raul Roa liked to say to those close to him: "Fidel hears the grass growing and sees what is happening around the corner."

Comrade Deputies:

I am aware of my responsibility to the people as I take on the task entrusted to me. But I am also convinced that as it has been the case until today, I can count on the support of those holding positions of responsibility at various levels, and even more importantly, I can count on the support of my com-

central administration of the State, and this needs more time.

During the first 15 years of the Revolution, the State structures inherited from capitalism were adjusted as we went along to undertake the tasks imposed by the radical economic, political and social changes.

The 1960's institutionalization process, however imperfect, enabled us to structure an articulate system corresponding to those circumstances. We were then able to put ourselves on a level with the socialist countries, in terms of both good and bad experiences.

Finally, in 1994, the most critical moment of the Special Period, considerable adjustments were made leading to the reduction and merging of institutions as well as to the redistribution of the tasks previously entrusted to some of them. However, these changes were undertaken with the rush imposed by the necessity to quickly adapt to a radically different, very hostile and extremely dangerous scenario.

In the fourteen years that have passed since then, the national and international scene has noticeably changed. Today, a more compact and operational structure is required, with a lower number of institutions under the central administration of the State and a better distribution of their functions. This will enable us to reduce the enormous amount of meetings, coordination, permissions, conciliations, provisions, rules and regulations, etc., etc. It will also allow us to bring together some decisive economic activities which are presently disseminated through

This is a basic premise albeit it cannot by itself guarantee the fulfillment of the Parliament's mission. First and foremost an intelligent, organized, creative and strong performance is required from all members, particularly while working in the commissions where there is more time to focus on certain issues and to study them listening to a greater number of comrades.

In my visit last December to the Santiago de Cuba district that elected comrade Fidel a deputy, I said that the massive support enjoyed by the revolution demands from us that we question everything we do in order to improve on it.

I also said that if the people are firmly united behind a single party, this must be more democratic than any other, and so must be the entire society. This society, of course, can be improved, as any other human work, but it is undoubtedly full of justice and everybody in it has the opportunity to express their views and, better still, to work for the materialization of whatever we all agree.

There is no reason to fear discrepancies in a society such as ours, where its very nature precludes the existence of antagonistic contradictions, since the social classes that make it up are not antagonistic themselves. The best solutions can come from a profound exchange of differing opinions, if such an exchange is guided by sensible purposes and the views are uttered with responsibility.

That's how the majority of Cubans have acted, from our best scientists, intellectuals, workers,

put it in his Reflections of January 16th: "...they expect miracles from our determined and dignified Revolution."

We do not deny their right to expression, provided they do it with respect for the law. In the face of such an expression we can neither be extremists nor naives. When the motivation is despair due a personal problem or the lack of information, we should be patient and offer the necessary arguments.

But if anyone intends to put pressure motivated by their wishes to be in the limelight or by ambition, demagoguery, opportunism, simulation, arrogance or any other human weakness of a similar nature, we must face them resolutely, avoiding offense but calling a spade a spade.

We should never forget that the enemy never sleeps, that it is always willing to use our carelessness to do us harm, even if some are bent on ignoring it.

We shall not avoid listening to everyone's honest opinion, which is very useful and necessary simply because of the sometimes ridiculous noise made every time a citizen of our country says something that the very noise makers would pay no attention to if they heard it anywhere else on the planet.

We are aware that such messages are intended to mislead or at least to create confusion; but in case anyone has had the outlandish notion to scare us off with them, I shall say that the reason we are still here --and we will continue to be here-- is that our people and its Revolution have always faced up,

*continued on page 11*



Voting for President in Cuban National Assembly, February 24th 2008

continued from page 10

without fear or hesitation and with the truth, all sorts of aggressions by the greatest military and economic power in the world.

Many examples could be offered; suffice it to mention the incontrovertible dignity of our Five Heroes in their stance before every attempt at breaking their will during a decade of unjust incarceration.

I avail myself of the occasion to express my gratitude, on behalf of our people, for the countless expressions of solidarity, respect, affection, encouragement and legitimate concern over the leader of the Revolution conveyed by Heads of State and Government, political parties, non governmental organizations, outstanding intellectuals and ordinary people from every corner of the world after the publication of his Message last Tuesday. We shall never fail their confidence in us.

At the same time, we take due notice of the offensive and overtly interfering statements of the imperialists and some of their closest allies.

As could be expected, the State Department hastily announced the continuation of the blockade in accordance with the policy of the present Administration.

Others, with certain nuances, are bent on conditioning relations with Cuba to a "transition" process aimed at destroying the work of so many years of struggle.

Little do they know our people, so proud of its full sovereignty and independence!

The Revolution is the work of free men and women and it has been permanently opened to debate; but it has never given an inch to pressures nor has it ever been influenced by them, whether big or small.

I shall only add that Fidel's Reflections, published on Friday, are a masterly response to all of them.

As for the difficulties the country faces domestically, the decision on their priorities and the pace of their solution will invari-

ably be linked to the available resources and the deep, rational and collective analysis made by the corresponding Party, State or Government institutions. In those cases where it is deemed necessary, there will be a previous consultation with the people in the corresponding sector of society, or even with the entire people, if it were a very transcendental issue.

Some things need time for they should be thoroughly studied since a mistake brought about by improvisation, superficiality or haste could have substantial negative conse-



quences. Good planning is most important for we cannot spend more than we have. Then we should organize things well, and work in an orderly and disciplined fashion; this is fundamental.

When discussing these issues we should always bear in mind Fidel's deep conviction, reiterated in his Message of February 18th, that "...the present problems of the Cuban society require more variables for each concrete problem than those contained in a chess game. We cannot ignore one single detail; this is not an easy path to take, if the

intelligence of a human being in a revolutionary society is to prevail over instinct."

I insist on the importance of discipline. We must all be demanding and back up those who are. If it were necessary, we should help them improve their methods and support them resolutely before the collective.

You should understand that I am not talking of acting with extremism or of accepting abuse of authority or injustices; what I mean is that we should all do what corresponds in the strengthening of discipline and social

people suffer as much as possible in order to force it to abandon its decision to be free.

This is a reality that far from intimidating us should continue making us stronger. Instead of using it as an excuse for our mistakes, it should serve as encouragement to produce more and to offer better services, to make efforts to find the ways and means to remove any deterrent to the productive forces and to the exploitation of the significant potential offered by savings and by the correct organization of labor.

From the days of the independence wars until the present, our history teaches us that the greater the difficulties the greater the need for order, discipline and unity. The lacks of cohesion as well as disorder and impunity have always been among the worst enemies of a fighting people.

I repeat that the country's priority will be to meet the basic needs of the population, both material and spiritual, based on the sustained strengthening of the national economy and its productive basis without which, I'll say it again, development would be impossible.

An example of this is the measures proposed to increase the agricultural and livestock production and to better their marketing, which have been analyzed in every province by a large representation of those in charge of implementing them, including the producers themselves.

Thus, we shall continue to act with regards to every issue of cardinal importance for the country.

We are examining, for instance, everything related to the timely implementation of comrade Fidel's ideas on "the progressive, gradual and prudent revaluation of the Cuban peso," exactly as he said it on March 2005. At the same time, we keep delving into the phenomenon of the double currency in the economy.

These are all very sensitive and complex issues when, as in our case, there is a firm willingness to protect and to steadily increase *continued on page 15*

## "El apoyo masivo a la Revolución exige cuestionarnos cuanto hacemos para mejorarlo."



Raúl Castro se dirige al pueblo cubano durante la Celebración del 26 de Julio en Camagüey, 2007

**Discurso íntegro de Raúl Castro Ruz, Presidente de los Consejos de Estado y de Ministros, en las conclusiones de la sesión constitutiva de la VII Legislatura de la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular. Palacio de las Convenciones, La Habana, 24 de febrero de 2008, "Año 50 de la Revolución".**

pre lo estarán sus ideas, que han hecho posible levantar el bastión de dignidad y justicia que nuestro país representa.

Sólo el Partido Comunista, garantía segura de la unidad de la nación cubana, puede ser digno heredero de la confianza depositada por el pueblo en su líder. Es la fuerza dirigente superior de la sociedad y el Estado y así lo establece el Artículo 5 de nuestra Constitución, aprobada en referendo por exactamente el 97,7% de los votantes.

Esa convicción tendrá particular importancia cuando por ley natural de la vida, haya desaparecido la generación fundadora y forjadora de la Revolución.

Afortunadamente no es ese el momento que hoy vivimos. Fidel está ahí, como siempre, con la mente bien clara y la capacidad de análisis y previsión, más que intacta, fortalecida, ahora que puede dedicar al estudio y el análisis las incontables horas que antes empleaba en el enfrentamiento a los problemas cotidianos.

A pesar de la paulatina recuperación, sus condiciones físicas no le permitirían aquellas interminables jornadas, con frecuencia separadas por escasas horas de descanso, que caracterizaron su trabajo prácticamente desde que emprendió la lucha revolucionaria y aún con

mayor intensidad durante estos largos años de periodo especial, en que no se permitió siquiera un solo día de vacaciones.

La decisión del compañero Fidel es una nueva contribución, con su ejemplo que lo enaltece, en aras de asegurar desde ahora la continuidad de la Revolución, consecuente en quien ha tenido siempre como guía el precepto martiano: "Toda la gloria del mundo cabe en un grano de maíz".

Igualmente es incommovible su decisión de continuar, mientras tenga fuerzas para hacerlo, aportando a la causa revolucionaria y a las ideas y propósitos más nobles de la humanidad.

Por tanto, seguro de expresar el sentir de nuestro pueblo, solicito a esta Asamblea, como órgano supremo del poder del Estado, que las decisiones de especial trascendencia para el futuro de la nación, sobre todo las vinculadas a la defensa, la política exterior y el desarrollo socioeconómico del país, me permita continuar consultándolas al líder de la Revolución, el compañero Fidel Castro Ruz.

Por esta y otras muchas razones, en mis palabras de hoy citaré, no pocas veces, algunas de las ideas y conceptos esenciales expresados en sus Reflexiones, que aprovecho para decir que debemos estudiar, por sus enseñanzas y capacidad de previsión. Tener presente

siempre algo que gustaba repetir Raúl Roa a sus íntimos: "Fidel oye la hierba crecer y ve lo que está pasando al doblar de la esquina".

Compañeras y compañeros diputados:

Estoy consciente de la responsabilidad que entraña ante el pueblo la tarea que se me encarga, y a la vez convencido de contar, como hasta hoy, con el apoyo de quienes desempeñan responsabilidades de dirección a los diferentes niveles y más importante aún, con el de mis compatriotas, sin el cual no hay éxito posible en una sociedad como la nuestra.

La Asamblea, en plena concordancia con la opinión del Buró Político del Partido, eligió Primer Vicepresidente del Consejo de Estado al compañero José Ramón Machado Ventura y posteriormente aprobó su designación como Primer Vicepresidente del Consejo de Ministros.

Como expliqué en mi propuesta para dicho cargo, en las actuales circunstancias es conveniente que el mismo compañero desempeñe, como hasta ahora, estas dos importantes responsabilidades del Estado y el Gobierno.

No hay dudas de que Machado Ventura, por su trayectoria y convicciones revolucionarias, experiencia, preparación, cualidades como dirigente y ser humano, reúne los requisitos para *continuado en la página 13*



# MAWO Expands Antiwar Anti Occupation Struggle:

## 100's became involved in activities organized by Mobilization Against War & Occupation [MAWO]

By Janine Solanki

Only 2 weeks into January 2008, 2 Canadian soldiers died in Afghanistan. From this we must understand that as the occupiers are dying, most definitely the occupied are suffering many times more. In Vancouver, the response to this brutality came through Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO)'s 38th picket action demanding "Canada Out of Afghanistan NOW!" With the presence of

Gorzg Zahed, an anti-war and Cuba solidarity organizer from Toronto, Ali Yerevani, the political editor of the Fire This Time newspaper, and the conference MC, Shohreh Ramsey, an organizer with Canadians Against War. The conference also featured a powerful multimedia presentation "Don't Iraq Iran" created by MAWO and CAW organizers. The day's presentations and discussion put Vancouver's anti-war organizers in a stronger position to move forward in organizing against US threats to Iran.

Following on the heels of the "No War on Iran" weekend, MAWO took to its roots to expand anti-war organizing on campuses! From the first Student Week Against War and Occupation (SWAWO) in 2003, to the 8th SWAWO February 11th to 15th 2008, this coordinated effort of campus anti-war events was a great opportunity to impact students and encourage them to get involved in organizing on their campuses. 1000's of students got anti-war information at tabling sessions and over 200 students came out to events at University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, Uni-

local media, dozens of people picketed the Armed Forces Recruitment Center. Speakers shared many speeches from the historical, US war resister, student, and women's perspectives on this war.

Moving from the important actions countering the occupations that are happening now, MAWO has expanded its relationships with Iranian communities, such as the Iranian Community Against War (ICAW). The continued US threats against Iran make it necessary for anti-war groups to organize against an impending war on Iran. Along with the US military build-up in the Persian Gulf and sanctions against Iran, we are seeing more US propaganda aimed against Iran, with the false claims that Iran is building nuclear weapons and is a threat to world peace.

Acting against this demonization of the Iranian people, ICAW is an organization made up of Iranians in Vancouver who are currently campaigning against US aggressions and sanctions on Iran. (<http://www.icaw.blogspot.com>) Along with the endorsement of the new group Canadians Against War (CAW), MAWO and ICAW joined together to organize a successful "No War on Iran" rally and conference on January 26th and 27th 2008.

Despite cold conditions and snow, the rally brought out over 250 people including many members of the Iranian community to demand "No to Sanctions on Iran!" and "Don't Attack Iran!" MAWO organizers joined CAW member Fariba to MC the rally, which presented a diverse program that brought together many social justice organizations. The program included: Fred Muzin, the President of the Hospital Employee's Union, Payvand Pejvack and Arash, organizers with ICAW, Jasmin Ramsey from CAW, members of Iraq Veterans Against the War, John Waller, the International Coordinator of Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba, along with more local activists and the hip hop crew Influents! The rally ended with Kevin Neasloss, a MAWO and Indigenous Rights and Action Project organizer, who read the rally's resolution to a cheering crowd.

The next day's conference, titled "Iran and the US: History, Realities, Conflicts and Challenges" brought out over 50 people to discuss in depth the US threats against Iran and how the anti-war movement should respond. The conference had three inspiring activists on the panel, all participants of the 1979 Iranian revolution and still active in the anti-war movement today. Guest speaker, Morteza



Morteza Gorz Zahed speaks at MAWO anti-war Conference. January 27th 2008



Phillipa Ryan speaks at "Canada Out of Afghanistan!" picket action. February 27th 2008



SWAWO Forum at Langara College. February 13th 2008

versity of Victoria, Langara College, Capilano College, and Douglas College, organized by campus anti-war groups with endorsement from student unions and social justice centres.

Bringing students together in a citywide event, SWAWO culminated in MAWO's February 17th anti-war rally, again organized with ICAW and endorsed by CAW. Over 150 people joined together, and were welcomed to Coast Salish territory by Kelly White, a Coast Salish elder and Indigenous media activist. The rally then heard via telephone from MAWO co-chair Alison Bodine, who is currently fighting a 2 year ban from Canada as a result of political targeting by the Canada Border Services Agency (<http://alisonbodine.blogspot.com>). The program also included US War Resister Brad McCall, ICAW organizers, and was brought to a close with a dynamic resolution delivered by Meaghan Griffiths, a high school student and MAWO organizer.

For the last action of February 2008, MAWO's Canada Out of Afghanistan campaign continued with Vancouver's 39th picket action. As addressed in the picket's statement read by MAWO co-chair Janine Solanki, the then impending vote in Parliament to extend Canada's occupation of Afghanistan to 2011 means more misery for the Afghan people, and is a decision that poor and working people in Canada need to condemn. Phillipa Ryan, an Indigenous activist and organizer with Grassroots Women, along with Aaron Mercredi, a Métis activist and organizer with the Indigenous Rights and Action Project spoke to further expose Canada's imperialism abroad as well as at home, where Indigenous people continue to suffer under Canadian colonialism.

From the struggles here at home, to our brothers and sisters around the world facing war and occupation, we must organize and mobilize together against this new era of war and occupation. From these first two months of 2008, we must unite with many different communities, students, workers, youth and elders, to build a strong and united anti-war movement! In all these events and actions MAWO capitalized on the demands such as:

- US/UK Out Of Iraq!**
- Canada Out Of Afghanistan!**
- Self-determination For Indigenous Nations!**
- Self-determination For All Oppressed Nations!**
- Out Now!**

## CONFERENCE FOR WORLD EQUILIBRIUM IN CUBA - A HUGE SUCCESS!

*continued from page 2*

dedicated to Jose Marti. The most exciting cultural aspect, for us, was the inauguration of the new monument created by Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer. This impressive piece includes an open oval plaza with a capacity for 13,500 seats and a sculpture of an open-mouthed monster being confronted by a Cuban with a flag in their fist. This work is a striking symbol of the Cuban people's resistance to imperialist aggression.

### The Second Day

On the second day we attended the 'Foro Juvenil' or youth forum. This was a challenge for us as the meeting was held in Spanish, with no translation, however after making some great new friends we participated and learned a lot. The youth forum was 150 youth from the Federation of University Students (FEU) from campuses across Cuba. Interestingly, the majority of these students were not Cuban, but international students studying in Cuba for free! This meant we not only learned about student life in Cuba, but also their experiences in their home countries of Guyana,

Mexico, Guatemala, Western Sahara, Vietnam, etc. Topics covered in the youth forum were equally interesting, from "Che, the new human being, and youth today"; to "Youth and socialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"; to "Young artists and intellectuals in defence of humanity"; to "Youth and the protection of the environment"; and finally "Alternative media in the construction of new ideas & thoughts".

During the discussion period on alternative media, we introduced the Fire This Time Newspaper and why attending the conference was important for our work against war and in solidarity with Cuba in Vancouver. After our short intervention, we were honoured to be invited by the head of International Relations for the FEU to stay with the youth delegation and become better acquainted with the important work they are doing in Cuba. We had a great opportunity to talk one on one with students both from Cuba and other countries about the Cuban revolution, what they have learned from Jose Marti and why they were interested in attending the conference.



Meeting with Ricardo Alarcon, President of National Assembly of People's Power, and Elizabeth Palmiero, wife of Ramón Labaniño who is one of the Cuban 5.

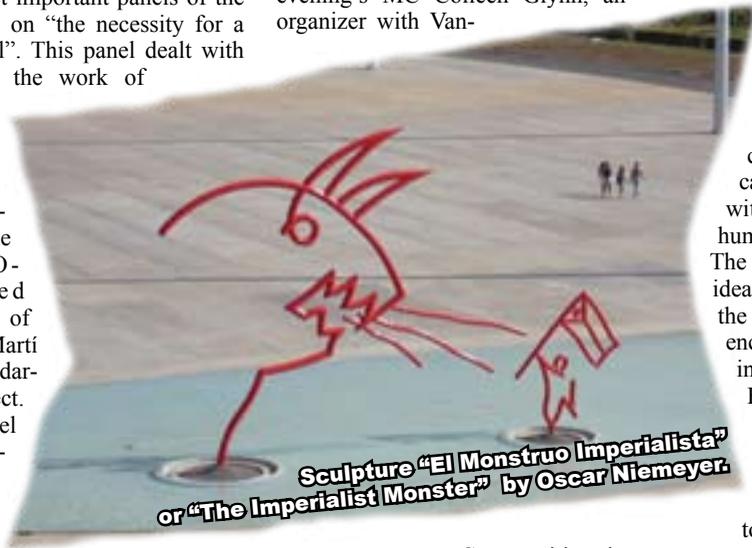
### The Third Day

The third and closing day featured interventions by Abel Prieto, Cuba's Minister of Culture and Ricardo Alarcon, the president of Cuba's National Assembly. Abel chaired one of the most important panels of the conference on "the necessity for a new model". This panel dealt with organizing the work of the International Network in Defence of Humanity and the UNESCO-sponsored Council of the José Martí World Solidarity Project. This panel truly underlined the reason for the conference: intellectuals, writers, journalists, authors, artists, and young people uniting to use culture as a weapon against imperialism and for the development of a better world.

The conference was concluded with a rousing speech by Ricardo Alarcon. Alarcon criticized the US government because in spite of the current situation of hunger and illiteracy that prevails in the world, the US continues with its crazy ideas of world domination. He used his talk to urge all those attending the conference to create new alliances. Why? Because today we live in a time when the ideals of Jose Marti are more valid and important than ever.

Upon our return to Canada, the Fire This Time Editorial Board worked together with Vancouver Communi-

ties in Solidarity with Cuba to organize a report back from this exciting conference. On Saturday February 9<sup>th</sup> a packed room of over 60 people at the Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House was welcomed by the evening's MC Colleen Glynn, an organizer with Van-



Sculpture "El Monstruo Imperialista" or "The Imperialist Monster" by Oscar Niemeyer.

couver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and the president of Richmond New Democratic Party (NDP). The evening featured music performed by Joaquin Ernesto, reading of poetry by Jose Marti, and a multimedia slide show of photos from the conference. Aaron, Shannon and I spoke, outlining the program of the conference, why Jose Mari's ideas are relevant today, why it was important to attend this conference, and what was learned and gained from it. The discussion period was lively with many people raising different questions about the trip and making their own comments about their experiences in Cuba.

### Against Imperialism

You may be wondering, 'why all this talk about Jose Marti?' It is Marti's ideas. Jose Marti said, "Humanity is my homeland." This is a statement that remains a call to all human-lov-

ing people today. While war and occupation is being carried out by imperialist countries trying to divide, conquer and destroy humanity, Cuba and the ideas of the Cuban Revolution (which Fidel has admitted on many occasions, come from the ideas of Marti) are to unite, conquer, develop, progress, and raise human consciousness and spirit. This means confronting the ideas of capitalism and imperialism with our ideas for a better humanity and for socialism. The battle of these opposing ideas needs to translate into the fields of education, science, health and especially into the field of culture. Frei Betto said it best: "Cuba's revolutionary and socialist experience has no right to fail, it has a responsibility and historic commitment to Jose Marti."

What we witnessed in Cuba was the development of a new intellectual and cultural alliance against imperialism. This unification is truly dangerous to the United States and imperialism, because if we continue to unite they will never be able to divide, conquer and destroy us.

The Battle of Ideas is a battle that we take on as social justice fighters here in Canada as well. We need to see that we are directly connected with others who are fighting for the dignity and rights of oppressed people around the world. We need to show our international solidarity. We need to fight back against attacks on workers, immigrants, refugees, women, Indigenous people and all oppressed groups within Canada. For us, the battle of ideas means we organize, we educate and we mobilize for a better world.

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desempeñar esos altos cargos.

Igualmente la Asamblea acordó, en cumplimiento de lo establecido en el Artículo 75 de la Constitución, considerar la composición del Gobierno en una futura sesión en el transcurso del presente año. Es una decisión oportuna, pues no se trata únicamente de nombramientos, sino de determinar qué cambios resulta necesario realizar en el sistema de organismos de la administración central del Estado, algo que requiere un poco más de tiempo.

En los primeros 15 años de la Revolución, se fueron ajustando desde la marcha las estructuras estatales heredadas del capitalismo para asumir las tareas que imponían los radicales cambios económicos, políticos y sociales.

El proceso de institucionalización de los años setenta, con sus imperfecciones, permitió estructurar un sistema coherente y ajustado a aquellas circunstancias, alcanzándose cierta equiparación con el de los países socialistas, incluidas las buenas y también las malas experiencias.

Por último, en 1994, en el momento más agudo del período especial, se hicieron considerables ajustes que conllevaron reducciones y fusiones de organismos, así como redistribución de las tareas de algunos de ellos. No obstante, fueron realizados con la premura impuesta por la necesidad de adecuarnos de manera rápida a un escenario radicalmente distinto, muy hostil y sumamente peligroso.

Desde entonces han transcurrido 14 años, en los cuales ha cambiado considerablemente el panorama nacional e internacional. Hoy se requiere una estructura más compacta y funcional, con menor número de organismos de la administración central del Estado y una mejor distribución de las funciones que cumplen.

Lo anterior permitirá reducir la enorme cantidad de reuniones, coordinaciones, permisos,

conciliaciones, disposiciones, reglamentos, circulares, etcétera, etcétera. Contribuirá además a concentrar algunas actividades económicas decisivas hoy dispersas en varios organismos, y hacer un mejor empleo de los cuadros.

En resumen, tenemos que hacer más eficiente la gestión de nuestro Gobierno.

La Asamblea ha sido renovada en una mayor proporción que en la anterior Legislatura; el número de mujeres crece más de siete puntos porcentuales y ya se aproxima a la mitad de los diputados, algo más del 43%; aumentan de 23 a 36 los que tienen entre 18 y 30 años, o sea los más jóvenes, aunque también son más los que superan los sesenta.



Ciego de Avila, Cuba

Algo muy importante, crece el número de los vinculados directamente a la producción o los servicios, es decir, de los obreros, campesinos y otros trabajadores; también de los miembros de las instituciones armadas, los deportistas, artistas, escritores, periodistas y de otras profesiones, que unidos a los dirigentes estudiantiles y compañeros que se desempeñan en los consejos populares, constituyen más de la mitad de los diputados.

Datos como estos, junto a la simple relación

de las tareas que cumplen cada uno de ustedes, desde dirigentes nacionales hasta jubilados y líderes religiosos, permiten afirmar que los aquí reunidos son una muestra en pequeña escala de la sociedad cubana.

Lo anterior constituye una premisa básica, pero no asegura por sí sola el cumplimiento de la misión del Parlamento. Se requiere además, y sobre todo, la actuación inteligente, organizada, creativa y enérgica de sus integrantes, en particular durante el trabajo de las comisiones, donde se dispone de más tiempo, pues al centrarse en determinados asuntos permite estudiarlos mejor y pueden intervenir más compañeros.

En la visita que hice en diciembre pasado al

Distrito de Santiago de Cuba donde fue electo diputado el compañero Fidel, afirmé que el apoyo masivo a la Revolución exige cuestionarnos cuanto hacemos para mejorarlo.

Y añadí que si el pueblo está firmemente cohesionado en torno a un único partido, éste tiene que ser más democrático que ningún otro, y con él la sociedad en su conjunto, que desde luego, como toda obra humana, se puede perfeccionar, pero sin dudas es justa y en ella todos tienen oportunidad de expresar sus criterios, y más importante aún, de trabajar

para hacer realidad lo que en cada caso acordemos.

No hay por qué temer a las discrepancias en una sociedad como la nuestra, en que por su esencia no existen contradicciones antagónicas, porque no lo son las clases sociales que la forman. Del intercambio profundo de opiniones divergentes salen las mejores soluciones, si es encauzado por propósitos sanos y el criterio se ejerce con responsabilidad.

Así ha actuado la inmensa mayoría de los cubanos, desde nuestros mejores científicos, intelectuales, obreros, campesinos y estudiantes, hasta la más sencilla ama de casa.

Todos ellos, en diferentes momentos de la Revolución, incluido el actual, han brindado una ejemplar demostración de madurez política y conciencia de la realidad, al valorar con objetividad tanto los asuntos de alcance estratégico como las dificultades de la vida cotidiana, y sobre todo crece la convicción de que la única fuente de riquezas de la sociedad está en el trabajo productivo, sobre todo cuando emplea con eficiencia los hombres y recursos.

Los agoreros internacionales de la muerte de la Revolución intentaron presentar a su favor las críticas surgidas durante el estudio y reflexión del discurso del 26 de julio en Camagüey, sin comprender que se trataba de un debate crítico dentro del socialismo. Así lo confirmaron con creces, pocos meses después, los resultados de nuestras elecciones, que concluyeron el pasado 20 de enero.

Es cierto que también hay personas que hablan antes de informarse; que demandan sin valorar si dicen algo racional o descabellado. Coinciden, como norma, con quienes reclaman derechos sin jamás mencionar deberes. Como dijo Fidel en su reflexión del 16 de enero: "esperan milagros de nuestra porfiada y digna Revolución", concluyó.

No les negamos el derecho a expresarse, siempre  
*continuado en la página 14*

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que sea en el marco de la ley. Ante un planteamiento de ese tipo no podemos ser extremistas, pero tampoco ingenuos.

Cuando lo motiva el desespero ante una dificultad personal o es provocado por la falta de información, debemos ser pacientes y brindar los argumentos necesarios.

Pero si alguien lo que pretende es presionar con afán de protagonismo o animado por la ambición, la demagogia, el oportunismo, la simulación, la autosuficiencia u otra debilidad humana de similar carácter, hay que enfrentarlo resueltamente, sin ofensas, pero llamando las cosas por su nombre.

Nunca olvidar que el enemigo sigue al acecho, permanentemente dispuesto a aprovechar el menor descuido para hacernos daño, aunque haya quien se empeñe en ignorarlo.

No vamos a dejar de escuchar la opinión honesta de cada cual, que tan útil y necesaria resulta, por la algarabía que se arma, a veces bastante ridícula, cada vez que un ciudadano de nuestro país dice algo a lo que esos mismos promotores del espectáculo no harían el menor caso, si lo escucharan en otro lugar del planeta.

Sabemos que esos mensajes van dirigidos a engañar o al menos crear confusión, pero si alguien ha tenido la peregrina idea de asustarnos con ellos, le recuerdo que la principal razón de que sigamos aquí -y seguiremos estando-, es que nuestro pueblo y su Revolución han dado siempre el frente, sin la menor muestra de temor y enarbolando la verdad, a las



Jovenes Pioneros

frenta en el plano interno, la determinación de las prioridades y el ritmo de su solución partirá invariablemente de los recursos disponibles y del análisis profundo, racional y colegiado, por los órganos competentes del Partido, el Estado o el Gobierno, y en los casos que sea necesario, previa consulta directa a los ciudadanos que corresponda de cualquier sector de la sociedad e incluso a todo el pueblo, si fuera un asunto de gran trascendencia.

Existen cuestiones cuyo estudio requiere tiempo, ya que un error motivado por la improvisación, la superficialidad o el apresuramiento, tendría consecuencias negativas considerables. Hay que planificar bien, pues no podemos gastar más de lo que tenemos, después organizar y trabajar con orden y disciplina, que son fundamentales.

Al abordar estos asuntos es preciso tener siempre presente la profunda convicción de Fidel, reiterada en su Mensaje del 18 de febrero, de que los problemas actuales de la sociedad cubana requieren más variantes de respuestas para cada problema concreto que las contenidas en un tablero de ajedrez. Que ni un solo detalle se puede ignorar, y no se trata de un

camino fácil, si es que la inteligencia del ser humano en una sociedad revolucionaria ha de prevalecer sobre sus instintos.

agresiones de todo tipo de la mayor potencia militar y económica del mundo.

Infinidad de ejemplos pudieran citarse, basta mencionar la inmovible dignidad de nuestros cinco héroes, frente a cada intento de doblegarlos durante una década de injusto encarcelamiento.

Aprovecho la ocasión para agradecer, en nombre de nuestro pueblo, las incontables expresiones de solidaridad, respeto, cariño, aliento y legítima preocupación para con el líder de la Revolución que emitieron jefes de Estado y de Gobierno, partidos políticos, organizaciones no gubernamentales, destacados intelectuales y simples ciudadanos de todos los confines del mundo tras la publicación de su Mensaje el pasado martes. No fallaremos jamás a la confianza que ellos depositan en nosotros.

Al propio tiempo, hemos tomado debida nota de las declaraciones ofensivas y abiertamente injerencistas del imperio y algunos de sus más cercanos aliados.

Como era de esperar, el Departamento de Estado se apresuró a anunciar la continuación del bloqueo en correspondencia con la política de la actual administración.

Otros, con matices, se empeñan en condicionar las relaciones con Cuba a un proceso de "transición" dirigido a destruir la obra de tantos años de lucha.

¡Qué poco conocen a nuestro pueblo, tan orgulloso de su plena independencia y soberanía!

La Revolución es obra de mujeres y hombres libres y ha estado permanentemente abierta al debate, pero nunca ha cedido un ápice ante las presiones ni se ha dejado influir por ellas, ni por las grandes ni por las pequeñas.

Solo añadiré que las Reflexiones de Fidel, publicadas el viernes, son una magistral respuesta a todas ellas.

En relación con las dificultades que el país en-

Insisto en la importancia de la disciplina. Todos tenemos que ser exigentes y respaldar a quienes lo son. Si es necesario, ayudarlos a mejorar sus métodos y apoyarlos resueltamente ante el colectivo.

Entiéndase que no hablo de extremismos ni de aceptar abusos de autoridad o injusticias, sino de que todos hagamos correctamente la parte que nos corresponde en el fortalecimiento de la disciplina y el orden social. De lo contrario, las consecuencias las paga nuestro pueblo.

Es verdad que hay limitaciones objetivas -las conocemos bien y sufrimos diariamente tratando de resolverlas cuanto antes. Somos conscientes de los enormes esfuerzos que requiere fortalecer la economía, premisa imprescindible para avanzar en cualquier otro ámbito de la sociedad, frente a la verdadera guerra que libra el gobierno de los Estados Unidos contra nuestro país.

La intención es la misma desde el triunfo de la Revolución: hacer sufrir todo lo posible a nuestro pueblo hasta que desista de la decisión de ser libre.

Es una realidad que lejos de amilanarnos debe seguir haciendo crecer nuestra fuerza. En lugar de utilizarla como excusa ante los errores, debe ser acicate para producir más y brindar mejor servicio, para esforzarnos por encontrar los mecanismos y vías que permitan eliminar cualquier traba al desarrollo de las fuerzas productivas y explotar las importantes potencialidades que representan el ahorro y la correcta organización del trabajo.

Nuestra historia enseña, desde las guerras de independencia hasta el presente, que mientras mayores sean las dificultades, más exigencia, disciplina y unidad se requieren. El desorden, la impunidad y la falta de cohesión han estado siempre entre los peores enemigos de un pueblo que lucha.

Reitero que el país tendrá como prioridad satisfacer las necesidades básicas de la población,

tanto materiales como espirituales, partiendo del fortalecimiento sostenido de la economía nacional y de su base productiva, sin lo cual, repito una vez más, sería imposible el desarrollo.

Un ejemplo es la propuesta de medidas dirigidas a incrementar las producciones agropecuarias y perfeccionar su comercialización, las cuales se han analizado, provincia por provincia, con una amplia representación de los encargados de llevarlas a la práctica, incluidos los propios productores.

Así se continuará haciendo en cada asunto de importancia cardinal para el país.

Estamos examinando, por ejemplo, todo lo relacionado con la implementación oportuna de las ideas del compañero Fidel sobre la "progresiva, gradual y prudente reevaluación del peso cubano" -son los términos exactos que empleó en marzo del 2005-. Al propio tiempo, profundizamos en el fenómeno de la doble moneda en la economía.

Estas cuestiones son realmente sensibles y complejas, cuando, como es nuestro caso, existe la firme voluntad de proteger e ir incrementando de modo paulatino los ingresos y ahorros de la población, en especial de quienes reciben menos.

Para evitar efectos traumáticos e incongruencias, cualquier cambio referido a la moneda debe hacerse con un enfoque integral en el que se tengan en cuenta, entre otros factores, el sistema salarial, los precios minoristas, las gratuidades y los millonarios subsidios que actualmente suponen numerosos servicios y productos distribuidos de una forma igualitaria, como los de la libreta de abastecimiento, que en las actuales condiciones de nuestra economía resultan irracionales e insostenibles.

Constituye hoy un objetivo estratégico avanzar de manera coherente, sólida y bien pensada, hasta lograr que el salario recupere su papel y el nivel de vida de cada cual esté en relación directa con los ingresos que recibe legalmente, es decir, con la importancia y cantidad del tra-

bajo que aporte a la sociedad.

Como nos dijo Fidel en su Reflexión del 16 de enero: "Tampoco debe regalarse nada a los que pueden producir y no producen o producen poco. Prémiese el mérito de los que trabajan con sus manos o su inteligencia", sentenció.

Se estudian simultáneamente otros temas siguiendo una prioridad y el ritmo de avance dependerá de la complejidad y los recursos.

Tenemos lo fundamental para encontrar las mejores soluciones al alcance de las posibilidades materiales y las capacidades organizativas, que deben irse incrementando: un pueblo instruido, de elevada cultura política y firmemente unido bajo los principios que resumió el compañero Fidel en su reflexión del 24 de enero, cuando dijo:

"Unidad significa compartir el combate, los riesgos, los sacrificios, los objetivos, ideas, conceptos y estrategias, a los que se llega mediante debates y análisis. Unidad significa la lucha común contra anexionistas, vendepatrias y corruptos que no tienen nada que ver con un militante revolucionario", fin de la cita.

Insisto en lo expresado aquí durante la anterior sesión de esta Asamblea: para que las enormes posibilidades de esa unidad se conviertan en resultados tangibles, es imprescindible que todos los organismos y organizaciones trabajen con la necesaria integración.

La institucionalidad, repito el término: la institucionalidad, es importante sustento de ese decisivo propósito y uno de los pilares de la invulnerabilidad de la Revolución en el terreno político, por lo que debemos trabajar en su constante perfeccionamiento. No creernos nunca que lo que hemos hecho es perfecto.

Nuestra democracia es participativa como pocas, pero debemos estar conscientes de que el funcionamiento de las instituciones del Estado y del Gobierno aún no alcanza el nivel de efectividad que nuestro pueblo exige con todo

derecho. Es un tema en que debemos pensar todos.

En diciembre hablé del exceso de prohibiciones y regulaciones, y en las próximas semanas comenzaremos a eliminar las más sencillas. Muchas de ellas tuvieron como único objetivo evitar el surgimiento de nuevas desigualdades, en un momento de escasez generalizada, incluso a costa de dejar de percibir ciertos ingresos.

La supresión de otras regulaciones, aunque a algunos pueda parecer sencillo, tomará más tiempo debido a que requieren un estudio integral y cambios en determinadas normativas jurídicas, además de que influyen en algunas de ellas las medidas establecidas contra nuestro país por las sucesivas administraciones norteamericanas.

Pasando a otro tema, también está la tendencia a aplicar la misma receta en todas partes. Como resultado de ello y quizás su peor consecuencia, muchos piensan que cada problema exige medidas de alcance nacional para resolverse.

La iniciativa local es efectiva y viable en muchas cuestiones, así lo ha demostrado la distribución directa de la leche, como expliqué el pasado 26 de julio. Ya la experiencia abarca a 64 municipios de 13 provincias del país, 40 de ellos totalmente cubiertos. En los restantes y en la propia industria láctea también se avanza.

Además de garantizar con puntualidad y calidad este esencial producto, que es el objetivo fundamental, en los últimos meses del pasado año este programa permitió ahorrar más de 6 mil toneladas de leche en polvo cuya adquisición hubiera excedido los 30 millones de dólares, considerando el precio promedio en el período de 5 mil cincuenta dólares la tonelada.

Adicionalmente se redujeron gastos en divisas por un valor de 2,6 millones, incluidos en esta cifra unos 600 mil litros de combustible.

Y pudieran citarse otros casos de diversos sec-

tores, por lo que hay que continuar pensando en soluciones similares en todos los niveles de la administración.

Compañeras y compañeros:

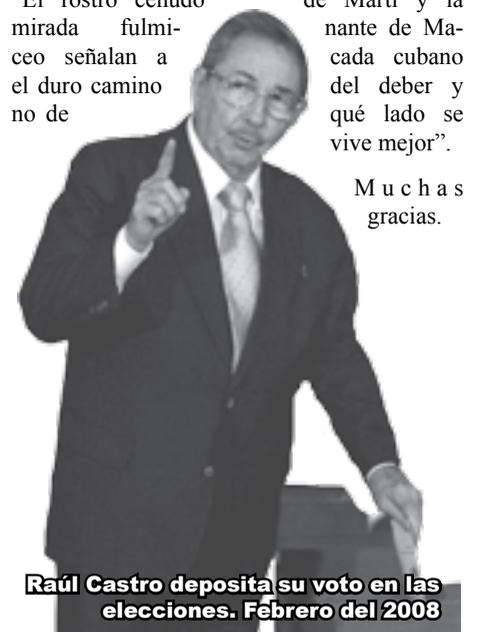
Un día como hoy, en 1895, al llamado de Martí, los Pinos Viejos y Nuevos reiniciaron la lucha por la independencia, frustrada por la intervención militar de los Estados Unidos. Medio siglo después logramos unirnos nuevamente y presentar combate al mismo enemigo de siempre.

No fue casual que se escogiera esta fecha, hace 50 años, para la primera transmisión de Radio Rebelde en la Sierra Maestra, ni que fuera el día en que proclamamos nuestra Constitución socialista en 1976.

En este aniversario 113 del inicio de la Guerra Necesaria, son realmente muchos y difíciles los retos. Ante ellos, tengamos presente lo expresado por Fidel en su Reflexión publicada el pasado 10 de diciembre, cuando nos alertó:

"El rostro ceñudo de Martí y la mirada fulminante de Macaca cubano señalan a la dura camino del deber y qué lado se vive mejor".

Muchas gracias.



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the incomes and savings of the population, particularly of those least favored.

To avoid traumatic effects or inconsistencies, any changes related to the currency shall be made with a comprehensive approach, mindful, among other things, of the wage system, the retail prices, the entitlements and the subsidies running in the millions presently required by numerous services and products distributed on an egalitarian basis, such as those provided by the ration card which under the present conditions of our economy become irrational and unsustainable.

It is our strategic objective today to advance in an articulate, sound and well-thought out manner until the wages recover their role and everyone's living standard corresponds directly with their legally earned incomes, that is, with the significance and quantity of their contribution to society.

As Fidel pointed out in his Reflection of January 16th: "...nor should we give away anything to those who could be producing and who don't produce, or who produce very little. Reward the merits of those who work with their hands or their minds."

We are simultaneously studying other issues following a priority, and the pace of progress will depend on their complexity and the resources available.

We have the basics to find the best possible solutions within our material possibilities and organizational capabilities, which shall continue to grow: an educated people, with a high political culture and firmly united under the principles summed up by comrade Fidel in his Reflections of January 24th, when he said:

"For me, unity means sharing in the struggle, the risks, the sacrifices, the aims, ideas, concepts and strategies assumed after discussion and analysis. Unity means a common struggle against annexationists, quislings and corrupt individuals who have nothing in common with a militant revolu-

tionary," end of quote.

I insist on what I said here during the previous session of this Assembly: "For the enormous possibilities of this unity to turn into tangible results, it is indispensable that all the institutions and organizations work with the necessary integration."

Institutionalization, --I repeat-- institutionalization is an important support of this decisive purpose and one of the pillars of the Revolution's invulnerability in the political field; therefore, we must work for its continued improvement. We should never believe that what we have done is perfect.

Our democracy is as participatory as few others are, but we should be aware that the functioning of the State and Government institutions is not yet as effective as our people rightfully demand. This is something we should all think about.

On December, I referred to the excess of prohibitions and regulations, and in the next few weeks we shall start removing the most simple of them. Many had had the purpose of preventing the emergence of new inequalities at a time of general shortages, even when that meant relinquishing certain incomes.

The suppression of other procedures, even if they might sound simple to some, will take more time for they require a more comprehensive study and changes of certain legal regulations, in addition to the fact that some of these are influenced by measures taken against our country by successive U.S. administrations.

Changing subject, there is also the tendency to apply the same recipe everywhere. As a result of this --and this is perhaps its worst consequence-- many believe that the solution of every problem demands a national measure.

In many respects, local initiative can be effective and viable; this much has been proven with the direct distribution of milk, as I said last July 26th. This experience has already been extended to 64 municipalities

from 13 provinces in the country; 40 of them are completely applying this system. We are also advancing in the remaining municipalities and in the dairy industry.

In addition to ensuring prompt and proper distribution of this essential product, which is the main objective, in the last few months of this past year said program allowed us to save more than 6 thousand tons of powder milk whose purchase would have cost in excess of 30 million USD, at the average price in the period of 5 thousand USD a ton.

Additionally, the hard currency expenses were reduced in 2.6 millions, including in this figure the cost of 600 thousand liters of fuel.

Other examples could be taken from the most diverse sectors; therefore, we must continue to think of similar solutions at all levels of the administration.

Comrades:

On a day like this, in 1895, responding to a call from Martí, the Old and the New Gen-

erations resumed the struggle for the independence thwarted by the United States military intervention. Half a century later, we again managed to be united and to fight against the same enemy.

It was not by chance that this date was chosen, 50 years ago, for the first broadcasting by Radio Rebelde on the Sierra Maestra, nor that this was the date in 1976 when we proclaimed our Socialist Constitution.

On this 113th anniversary of the Necessary War, we are faced with many really difficult challenges. In order to face them, let's bear in mind what Fidel wrote in his Reflections published last December 10th, when he alerted us:

"For every Cuban, Martí's frowning countenance and Maceo's withering look point to the arduous path of duty, not to a more comfortable life."

Thank you, very much.

Rally to Celebrate the Anniversary of the July 26th Movement addressed by Raul Castro in Camaguey, Cuba.



# FREE MUMIA

# ABU JAMAL

## US RULING CLASS MOVES AGAINST MUMIA ABU JAMAL

By Thomas Davies

On March 27, a US federal appeals court refused to reinstate the death penalty of US political prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal. This was an important partial victory for the former Black Panther and award winning journalist who was convicted and sentenced to death for the 1981 murder of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. His politically and racially motivated conviction sparked a 26 year long international campaign for his release. This campaign must now continue with renewed dynamism to fight for his right to freedom, as the three-judge panel refused to overturn his initial conviction.

The appeals court has also left the door to death row partially open, saying that the state has six months to hold a new sentencing hearing, or Mumia will be sentenced to life in prison. The National Lawyers Guild, of which Mumia is a Vice President, issued a statement saying, "Yesterday's decision is a somber reminder that the criminal justice system has been unable to eradicate the continuing impacts of racism."

Robert Bryan, Mumia's attorney, called the death penalty decision a "real victory", but emphasized that both he and Mumia will continue to pursue Mumia's total freedom.

### History of Injustice

Mumia Abu-Jamal was a well known social justice and media activist in 1981 who had already been targeted by police when Faulkner was shot and killed during a traffic stop of Mumia's younger brother. A cab driver at the

time, Mumia was sitting in his cab across the street when he heard shouting, saw a police vehicle, and heard the sound of gunshots. Upon seeing his brother appearing disoriented across the street, he ran to him from the parking lot and was himself shot by a police officer.

Taken from hospital to prison, he was convicted by a jury of 10 white and 2 black jurors, after 11 qualified black jurors had been systematically removed by the prosecution. This in the state of Pennsylvania where the racial bias of the courts has resulted in the death penalty for 120 people, all but 13 of which were non-white.

The bias against Mumia was so thick, that court stenographer Terri Maurer-Carter later submitted an affidavit stating that the judge in Mumia's case, Albert Sabo, had once exclaimed, "Yeah, and I'm going to help them fry the nigger," when referring him.

Since his conviction, several of the prosecutions key witnesses have recanted their statements, new ballistic and forensic evidence has further shown his innocence, and a man named Arnold Beverly has actually confessed to the killing. Mumia has been continued to fight it out through appeals in the US legal system, while continuing to write and record radio messages from death row.

Mumia is also not the only political prisoner in US jails, American Indian Movement leader Leonard Peltier has been in jail over 30 years for the framed-up murder conviction of two FBI officers. Mumia himself has also written about the case of Cuban Five, who face long prison sentences and isolation after exposing right-wing anti-Cuba terrorist organizations in Miami. The list goes on...

### The Campaign for Freedom

"I remain innocent. A court cannot make an innocent man guilty. Any ruling founded on injustice is not justice. The righteous fight for life, liberty, and for justice can only continue." Mumia Abu-Jamal, Oct. 31, 1998

More than 25 cities have made Mumia an honorary citizen, including Paris and Montreal. He has received support from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, The European Parliament, the Detroit and San Francisco City Councils, Amnesty International, and hundreds

of thousands of people around the world who have read his books, signed his petition, and demanded his freedom.

April 19th has been called for a day of mass mobilization in Philadelphia, and other cities are calling similar actions. It has been this campaign which has continually saved his life, as twice Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge has signed Mumia's death warrant. It is also this campaign which can win his freedom in this new stage of the struggle for justice.

FREEDOM FOR MUMIA ABU JAMAL NOW!

For further information you can visit these websites:

- [www.partisandefense.org/](http://www.partisandefense.org/)
- <http://www.mumia.de/special/a%20life%20in%20the%20balance.eng.pdf>
- <http://www.freemumia.com/>
- <http://www.prisonradio.org/mumia.htm>
- <http://www.mumia2000.org/>

Another Try for Justice

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

For five Cuban men held in U.S. gulags, there is at least a chance of justice as they try to reverse what happened in 2001, when they were convicted of spying, conspiracy and unregistered foreign agent charges.

The men, known as the Cuban 5 in the

U.S., and simply Los Cinco back in their homeland, came to the U.S., not to hurt Americans, or to engage in acts of terror. They came because Miami was the site of a fevered campaign of attacks on Cuban tourism sites, and thus, they came to protect their country from aggression planned, armed, and propelled from these shores.

In the eyes of the U.S. government, however, *continued on page 16*

By Max Tennant

In July 2007 the United States based Pastors for Peace Caravan successfully challenged the US blockade of Cuba for the 18<sup>th</sup> time by taking 135 people and 60 tons of humanitarian aid to Cuba. Last year in 2007, I had the opportunity to meet John Waller when I participated in the Caravan. It was an amazing experience where I had the opportunity to discuss with hundreds of people in the US, from different cities, why there needs to be an end to this unjust and immoral blockade of Cuba. As well I had the opportunity to see first hand the example of hope that Cuba demonstrates in its fight for a better humanity.

Below the caravan coordinator John Waller talks to Fire This Time about that caravan and the next one in June/July 2008.

**FTT: How did Pastors for Peace first become involved with Cuba?**

**John Waller:** Our first caravans in the late 80s were to Nicaragua at the time of the progressive Sandinista government there, which the US government was also trying to overthrow. In Nicaragua we were

approached by Cuban pastors, who asked us to start caravans to Cuba as well, bringing both aid and challenging the blockade. And we responded – starting in 1992.

**FTT: Could you say more about challenging the blockade?**

**JW:** US citizens and organizations cannot legally visit or send aid to their brothers and sisters in Cuba without getting a license from the US government, which is usually denied. As a matter of principle, we go without a license. By taking ourselves, and the aid, we are symbolically breaking the blockade. The aid is helpful, but more important is the publicity we generate, the people we educate as we go, and the contribution we make to challenging, and one day ending the US government's policy of trying to blockade Cuba and grind down its people to submit to US domination.

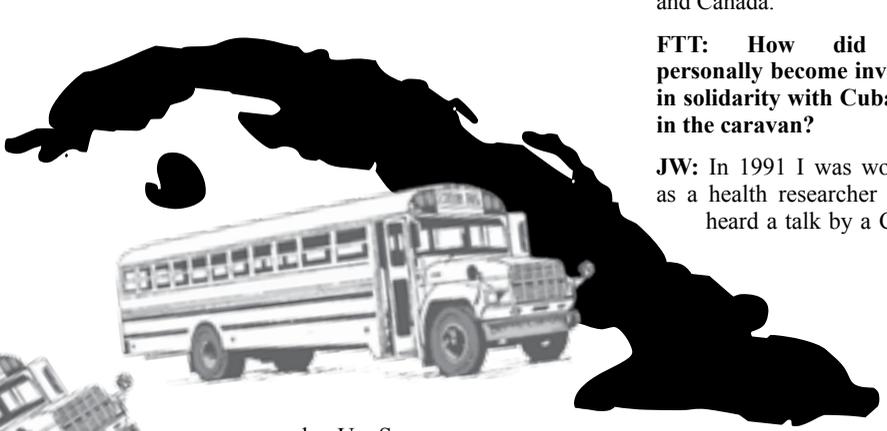
**FTT: A year ago in FTT you were predicting that there could be a major border confrontation - what actually happened?**

# Break the US Blockade

## Join the Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba

**JW:** A year ago the Bush administration was threatening to stop all aid going to Cuban churches. We carried on regardless, and they simply backed down for fear of the publicity it would generate. At the border only local customs officials met us. They had instructions under general customs rules to 'detain' any computers to ascertain whether these could be potentially used for

military purposes. They searched two vehicles, took just 12 CPUs and then stopped searching for the other 60 computers we were carrying. The local officials had made a token attempt to follow their



and US president there will be a rethinking of Cuba policy because the blockade has failed. That will present both challenges and opportunities. We will have to maximize our efforts to intervene in those debates.

**FTT: Can you talk about the Canadian role in the caravan?**

**JW:** In 2007 five of fourteen routes started in Canada. There were 12 caravanistas from Canada including seven from BC and four of which are part of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC), including yourself. At your border crossing at Blaine you

We also plan to donate five school buses to Cuba, each decorated in honor of one of the Cuban Five, and to hold

caravan events about the Five in the cities closest to their prisons.

**FTT: This is election year in the US. What difference do you think a new president will make?**

**JW:** Everybody knows that nothing will change under Bush. But after? Well McCain and Clinton are both talking tough on Cuba. Obama has partially broken ranks, stating that he will allow Cuban Americans to travel freely to Cuba and send as much money as they like to their relatives. That would be good in its own right, but would also

open the door to a deeper challenge – how could he allow Cuban Americans the freedom to travel to Cuba but bar other US citizens?

But there is a deeper issue that will come into play for whoever wins. For several years US policy has been to wait till Fidel Castro goes, assuming everything would then immediately fall apart in Cuba. Well Fidel Castro has not been in the presidential role for 19 months and everything in Cuba has carried on normally. Under the next

doctor and trade union leader. Having told us about Cuba's many achievements in bringing free quality healthcare to all its people. He said "Don't just believe me – come and see for yourself". So I went to Cuba in 1992. By going on a study tour of Cuba's health service – and I was immensely impressed with what they had achieved, but also deeply angered by what the US was doing to try and destroy their society. I have been active in solidarity and sending aid to Cuba ever since.

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had 150 people participating, which was amazing. Randy Caravaggio from the Victoria Goods for Cuba group launched a country-wide appeal for funds to send a vehicle to Cuba with us and nearly \$9000 was raised to donate a large truck full of aid. This year we are planning something similar to raise funds for one of the school buses in honor of the Cuban Five.\* And I am hoping for even more caravanistas from BC including maybe some hip hop artists from Vancouver?

**FTT: For Vancouver hip hop artists who might be interested in going, could you say more about the hip hop exchange?**

**JW:** Once in Cuba our artists, hip hop and maybe other types of musicians will have opportunities to perform, workshop, discuss and interact with Cuban artists—as well as attending many of the caravan visits to social projects. We would also like them to be participating in caravan outreach events on the road in the US

and Canada.

**FTT: How did you personally become involved in solidarity with Cuba and in the caravan?**

**JW:** In 1991 I was working as a health researcher and I heard a talk by a Cuban

doctor and trade union leader. Having told us about Cuba's many achievements in bringing free quality healthcare to all its people. He said "Don't just believe me – come and see for yourself". So I went to Cuba in 1992. By going on a study tour of Cuba's health service – and I was immensely impressed with what they had achieved, but also deeply angered by what the US was doing to try and destroy their society. I have been active in solidarity and sending aid to Cuba ever since.

I first heard about Pastors for Peace Caravans in 1993 and

continued from page 15

they are now part of the so-called 'war on terror', and at their original trial, the prosecutor argued that they were "bent on the destruction of America."

Such an argument would be dangerous anywhere, but in Miami, where the original trial took place, it was virtually lethal.

Miami is the core of an anti-Castro community that breathes enmity for the revolutionary government in Havana.

A trial in such an atmosphere, where Cuban-Americans wield economic and political power, is the very antithesis of a fair trial before one's peers, and could only have one result. The men moved for a change of venue, but



the trial court denied the motion.

Of the 5 men, Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labanino, and Antonio Guerrero, are facing life sentences. Two others, Rene Gonzalez, and Fernando Gonzalez, face 15 and 19 year bits, respectively.

To call them "terrorists" is to misuse the term for, if anything, they are anti-terrorists, for they tried to find ways to halt attacks on their homeland, Cuba.

In an interview with the BBC in July, Hernandez explained why he and the others came to the US: "They are people who've got training camps there in paramilitary organizations and they go to Cuba and commit sabotage, bombs and all kinds of aggressions"\*

The case of the Cuban 5 is one in stark contrast to the legal proceedings around 79-year old Luis Posada Carriles, who was released from U.S. jails, despite the fact that he is wanted in Venezuela and Cuba for his role in hotel bombings and even airline bombings from the 1970's to the '90's.

To the U.S., this guy who did his deeds at the behest of the CIA isn't even a criminal, he's not a terrorist!

Bombing hotels and airplanes is apparently acceptable, if the US government doesn't like the people on the planes.

The struggle for the Cuban 5 is growing into an international movement.

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John Waller, Coordinator of the Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba.

interrogations in 2004, 2005 and 2006. Since then not a single caravanista has heard anything more from the US government.

**FTT: So what does that mean for this year? What are your plans?**

**JW:** We have to occupy the space they have ceded to us by organizing as large a caravan as possible. We particularly hope to take many more young people. In 2007 almost 40% of the caravan was under 30, and we had eight aspiring hip hop artists from Albuquerque



Vancouver Caravanista, Nita Palmer, helps with bus maintenance.



Vancouver Caravanista, Sophie Ziner, enjoys some dancing with fellow Caravanistas.



Breaking the US Blockade on Cuba!

# Gutiérrez Discovers the Cuban Dilemma

By Manuel Yepe\*

Vietnam and China are countries led by communists but they are not anti-US like Cuba is. That is the reason why this Caribbean island should be placed in the pantheon of nations under the most rigid trade controls.

That was the explanation given by US Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutiérrez, addressing the United States Wheat Association (USW) to its board meeting in the capital of that country on February 12, 2008. Gutiérrez, Cuban by birth, and taken to the United States at the age of 7 shortly after the revolutionary triumph of 1959, is one of a group of leaders of that national origin known as the Batista followers due to their ideological identification and, in many cases, family ties, with politicians and military associated with the Fulgencio Batista tyranny which, with strong US support, washed Cuba in blood during the greater part of the fifties of last century.

In 2004 he was named Commerce Secretary in the cabinet of George W. Bush who also named him co-president, together with Condoleezza Rice, of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba. (CAFC). That Commission prepared the second version of the Bush Plan with measures aimed at overthrowing the Cuban government and returning the island to its previous semi-colonial status.

Gutiérrez tried to argue the idea that Cubans do not want friendship with the United States. "I know that this sounds dramatic... but Cuba is essentially an anti-US country. This is not noted when visiting there and are wined and dined but since the early 60s the scenario in Cuba is one of a world without the United States. It is difficult to do business with a county that wants to see one disappear", he assured his skeptical listeners.

"They don't want our friendship but blame

us of all the problems of their country", he assured. "Cubans say that the poverty of the island is caused by the embargo, not because they spend all their money on defense and complain that the Central Intelligence Agency has agents spread out in the island, as a reason given for the arrest of political dissidents and imposing a police state."

The subject of trade with Cuba is a ticklish issue for the USW, whose Executive Board president, Ron Suppes, a grain farmer from Kansas, recently wrote an article which declared that the "embargo" has little political sense since it damages the majority of US citizens and seri-



ously damages the ordinary Cuban.

Suppes wrote his article upon his return from Cuba where he observed that US wheat was highly appreciated and that friendship was genuine. In his opinion, the US blockade policy pushes Cuba to find economic interests with countries that are not friends of the United States, in clear reference to Bolivarian Venezuela headed by Hugo Chavez.

The Commerce Secretary and close collabora-

tor of President George W. Bush was not very convincing according to political commentators. Scott Yates, who covered the event for Capital Press of Spokane, Washington, specifically pointed out when he said that a pre-requisite for lifting the blockade of Cuba is a change in its leadership.

"I know that you are not satisfied with this but a change is just around the corner. The pre-requisite is a change at the top. When Fidel Castro is no longer head of Cuba ... the situation will change." About 46 years ago, as of February 2, 1962, President John F. Kennedy made the blockade official. It had really begun since January 1, 1959 from the moment of the flight of the US-backed tyrant. Already in July 1960, President Eisenhower

had decreed a reduction of the Cuban sugar quota. That refers to the quantity of sugar importers could acquire, as the main export product of Cuba, then the basis of its economy.

After the "embargo" was made official, it initially excluded "for humanitarian reasons", some food products, medicines and medical supplies".

That gradually increased, prohibiting the purchase of Cuban merchandise or products from third countries which used Cuban raw materials. Special requirements were also added requiring specific approval for any export to Cuba of food and medicines.

Far from weakening since the end of the Cold War in 1991, which render almost all the arguments used to justify the blockade obsolete, it has been strengthened to grotesque proportions.

For 14 consecutive years the United States has suffered humiliating condemnation from the international community of nations. It almost unanimously, calls on Washington to lift the economic blockade. The United States is only accompanied by the Marshal Islands and Palau (two of its protectorates) and Israel which, however, does not follow the policy of sanctions against the island since it maintains economic ties.

In an article published on February 3, 2008, one of the most hostile newspapers against Cuba in the United States, the Miami Herald, journalist Don Bohning acknowledged that "in recent years the debate on the embargo has crossed some lines in the parties, when Republican congress persons and state and local officials, mostly from the agricultural states have met - unsuccessfully- with the Democrats to put an end to it".

It is evident that the political cost of maintaining the blockade of Cuba grows constantly instead of decreasing. The arguments used by the Commerce Secretary and co-president for the annexation of Cuba, that it should be maintained because Cubans are not friendly and because Cubans use the blockade to repress its opponents, are highly contradictory. Such arguments demonstrate the anachronistic nature of the blockade as well as its indefensible character.

During the periods in which the White House called for a policy of interchange between peoples with the declared purpose of influencing Cubans in favor of a US model of "democracy", the Cuban government openly accepted the challenge. It was demonstrated that it was the Cubans who offered a sincere and friendly treatment to all foreign visitors because it is backed up by its morality and reason. That was why the administration of George W. Bush felt itself in need to suspend people-to-people exchanges.

\*Manuel E. Yepe is a journalist and professor at the Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana.

<http://www.walterlippmann.com/docs/1784.html>

A CubaNews translation by Ana Portela.

Edited by Walter Lippmann.

## GUTIÉRREZ DESCUBRE EL DILEMA CUBANO

Por Manuel Yepe\*

Vietnam y China son países liderados por comunistas, pero no son anti-norteamericanos como Cuba. Esa es la razón por la que la isla caribeña debe ser tenida en el panteón de las naciones sobre las que se precisan controles comerciales más rígidos.

Tal fue la explicación ofrecida por el Secretario de Comercio de los Estados Unidos, Carlos Gutiérrez, al Consejo de Dirección de la Asociación Estadounidense del Trigo (USW, por sus siglas en inglés), reunido en la capital del país el 12 de febrero de 2008.

Gutiérrez, cubano de nacimiento y llevado a Estados Unidos a la edad de 7 años pocos días después del triunfo revolucionario de 1959, integra el grupo de dirigentes de ese origen nacional que se conoce por los batistianos debido a su identificación ideológica y en muchos casos sus nexos familiares con políticos y militares afines a la tiranía de Fulgencio Batista que con fuerte apoyo estadounidense ensangrentó a Cuba durante la mayor parte de la década de los años cincuenta del pasado siglo.

En 2004 fue nombrado Secretario (Ministro) de Comercio en el gabinete presidencial de George W. Bush quien, además, lo hizo en 2006 copresidente, junto a Condoleezza Rice, de la Comisión de Asistencia para una Cuba Libre que elaboró la segunda versión del llamado Plan Bush, con medidas dirigidas a derrocar al gobierno cubano y regresar a la isla a su anterior condición semicolonial.

Gutiérrez trató de argumentar la idea de que los cubanos no quieren la amistad de los Estados Unidos. "Yo sé que esto les suena dramático... pero Cuba es esencialmente un país anti-estadounidense. Ustedes no pueden apreciar esto cuando van allá y los tratan con vinos y cenas, pero desde los inicios de los años 1960 el escenario soñado por Cuba es un mundo sin los Estados Unidos. Es difícil hacer negocios con

un país que quiere ver al de uno desaparecer", aseguró a sus incrédulos escuchas.

"Ellos no quieren nuestra amistad pero nos culpan de todo lo malo que ocurre en su país", aseguró. "Los cubanos dicen que la pobreza de la isla es por culpa del embargo y no porque gastan todo su dinero en la defensa y se quejan de que la Agencia Central de Inteligencia tiene agentes por toda la isla para encarcelar por ese motivo a los disidente políticos e imponer un estado policial."

El tema del comercio con Cuba es muy delicado para la USW, cuyo presidente del Consejo de Dirección, Ron Suppes, un granjero del estado de Kansas, escribió recientemente un artículo en el que argumentaba que el "embargo" tiene muy escaso sentido político, perjudica a la mayoría de los estadounidenses y daña grandemente a los cubanos comunes.

Suppes escribió ese artículo a su regreso de un viaje a Cuba donde observó que el trigo estadounidense es altamente apreciado y que la amistad es genuina. Dijo que en su opinión la política de bloqueo estadounidense empuja a Cuba a ligar sus intereses económicos con países que no son amistosos con los Estados Unidos, en clara referencia a la Venezuela bolivariana que encabeza Hugo Chávez.

El Secretario de Comercio y cercano colaborador del presidente George W. Bush no fue muy convincente, según apreciación del comentarista político Scott Yates, quien cubrió el evento para la publicación Capital Press, de Spokane, particularmente cuando dijo que el prerrequisito para el levantamiento del bloqueo a Cuba es que haya un cambio en la jefatura de Cuba.

"Yo sé que esto no les satisface a ustedes, pero un cambio está al doblar de la esquina. El prerrequisito es que haya en la isla un cambio en la cumbre. Cuando Fidel Castro no esté al frente de Cuba, la situación cambiará".

Hace algo más de 46 años, desde el 2 de febrero de 1962, el presidente John F. Kennedy oficializó un bloqueo que, de hecho, había comenzado el mismo primero de enero de 1959, a raíz de la fuga del tirano sostenido por Washington.

Ya en julio de 1960 el presidente Eisenhower había decretado una reducción de la cuota azucarera cubana, es decir, la cantidad de azúcar que los importadores podrían adquirir del principal producto de exportación cubano, entonces base de su economía.

Luego de oficializado el "embargo", que inicialmente excluía, "por razones humanitarias", algunos alimentos, medicinas y suministros médicos", se fue ampliando para prohibir la compra a Cuba de mercancías cubanas o a terceros países de mercancías elaboradas con materias primas cubanas. También se establecieron requerimientos especiales de aprobación para cualquier exportación a Cuba de alimentos y medicinas.

Lejos de debilitarse a partir del término de la Guerra Fría en 1991, que hizo obsoletos casi todos los argumentos manejados para justificarlo, el bloqueo se ha venido fortaleciendo hasta grotescos extremos.

Durante 14 años consecutivos Estados Unidos viene sufriendo humillantes condenas de la comunidad internacional de naciones que, prácticamente por unanimidad, llama a Washington a levantar el bloqueo económico. Solo apoyan a Estados Unidos Islas Marshall y Palau, dos protectorados suyos, e Israel que, sin embargo, no practica la política de sanciones contra la isla, con la que mantiene nexos económicos.

En un artículo publicado el 3 de febrero de 2008 por uno de los periódicos más sistemáticamente hostiles a Cuba en Estados Unidos, el Miami Herald, el periodista Don Bohning reconoce que "en años recientes, el debate sobre el em-



bargo ha cruzado por sobre las líneas de los partidos, cuando miembros republicanos del Congreso y funcionarios estatales y locales, principalmente de los estados agricultores, se han unido -sin éxito- con los demócratas para tratar de ponerle fin".

Es evidente que el costo político de mantener el bloqueo a Cuba crece incesantemente en vez de disminuir. Los argumentos utilizados por el Secretario de Comercio y Copresidente de la Comisión para la anexión de Cuba, de que hay que mantenerlo porque los cubanos no son amistosos y porque los cubanos se sirven del bloqueo para reprimir a sus oponentes, son argumentos altamente contradictorios que denotan el anacronismo del bloqueo, al tiempo que su carácter indefensible.

Durante los períodos en que la Casa Blanca ha apelado a una política de intercambios pueblo a pueblo, con el declarado propósito de influir en los cubanos a favor del modelo estadounidense de "democracia", el gobierno cubano ha aceptado abiertamente el reto y se ha podido observar que fueron los cubanos quienes con trato sincero y amistoso hacia todos los visitantes extranjeros, y porque les asiste la moral y la razón, determinaron que la administración de George W. Bush se sintiera obligada a suspender los intercambios "people to people".

\*Manuel E. Yepe Menéndez es periodista y se desempeña como Profesor adjunto en el Instituto Superior de Relaciones Internacionales de La Habana.

# FREE THE 5 CUBAN HEROES POLITICAL PRISONERS HELD IN US JAILS!

By Noah Fine

On September 12<sup>th</sup> 2007, the day marking the ninth year of unjust imprisonment of the 5 Cuban Heroes, Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González and René González, the wives of two of the 5 were brought into a meeting at the United States Interest Section in Havana. But this meeting was not to give hope to Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez, the wives of René González and Gerardo Hernández respectively. This meeting was to inform these women that they again were going to be denied for the *eight* time, visitation rights to see their beloved husbands held in US prisons.

Although condemned by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions as an act against both US and international law, the US continues to deny the rights of their family members to visit. The US has justified this by claiming that these two women "constitute a threat to the national security of the United States".

Olga and Adriana have been very busy traveling the world, going even to the UN garnering support for their right to see their husbands. Worldwide effort has followed them, with people collecting signatures demanding the US grant these two women the right to visit their husbands.

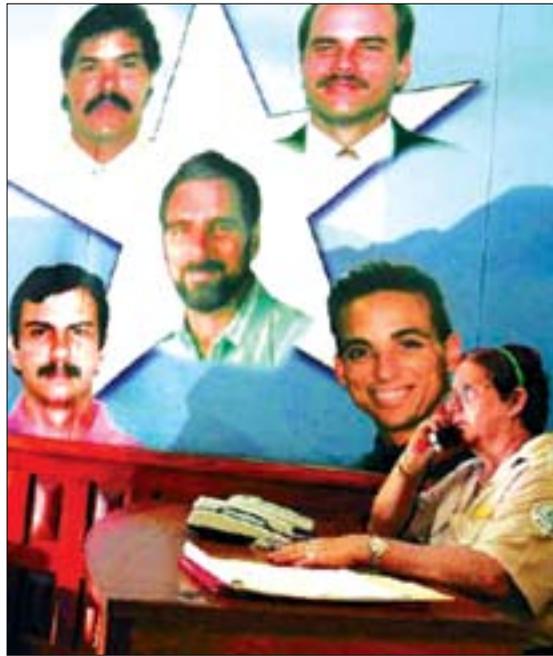
**Terrorism Okayed by the US Government: The Case of Luis Posada Carriles**

On March 18<sup>th</sup> 2008 a petition was

brought by Cuba and VeneFree the 5 Cuban zuela to the UN Security Council appealing to the US Government to extradite self-admitted terrorist Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela. Carriles, a former CIA agent, was to face charges of terrorism in Venezuela that were laid against him in the mid 80's, but with help from the US escaped from prison. The charges against him were for organizing the mid-air bombing of a Cuban airliner in 1976 that killed all 73 innocent passengers. This was by far his worst atrocity. Others which are important to note include charges he faced in 2000 in Panama after attempting to assassinate former Cuban president Fidel Castro during an event with thousands of people present.

Six years after the Panama attempt, Posada turned up in Miami after having entered the United States illegally. Posada was arrested after appearing publicly on T.V. and handed a minor immigration charge and prison sentence.

Despite statements attesting to his terrorist resumé, he was a year later released from prison, again free in Miami to continue his crimes. Cuba and Venezuela, as well as hundreds of organizations around the world, are demanding he be extradited to Venezuela to be charged for his true crimes of terrorism against Cuba. Upon hearing of the two countries petition, Caroline Willson, a US envoy for legal affairs, said despite



what her colleague in immigration had stated two years previous that there is "insufficient evidence" that Posada has committed a crime. Where in the world is self-admittance considered "insufficient evidence"?

*"The most dangerous terrorists of the Western Hemisphere walk free on the streets of Miami and receive protection while our children become teenagers or adults far from the warmth of their father."*

- From a letter written by the Cuban 5 and read to the UN Human Rights Council by Olga Salanueva on March 11<sup>th</sup> 2008.

**What's New in the Case of the 5 Cuban Heroes?**

On August 20<sup>th</sup> 2006, the charges and convictions against the Cuban 5 were

overturned and the 5 were granted a new trial outside of Miami by a three-judge panel of the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals. This was a huge victory for the 5 Cuban Heroes and justice seeking people around the world. However, exactly one year later, after immense pressure from US Attorney General Roberto Gonzalez, the full twelve judge panel of the same court reversed the decision of the three judges. This meant the case would continue in Miami where there is no possibility of a fair trial related to Cuba.

In August of 2007, the lawyers of the 5 Cuban Heroes were in court to argue against some of the most important manufactured charges created against the

5, including the charge of 'conspiracy to commit murder' laid against Gerardo Hernández. The outcome of that appeal is due to be released any day and groups across North America have committed to organize a week of actions to Free the 5 Cuban Heroes upon the release of the courts decision.

**Activities Across Canada Demand: Free the 5 Cuban Heroes Now!**

On Tuesday December 18<sup>th</sup> 2007, Thursday January 17<sup>th</sup> 2008, and February 19<sup>th</sup> 2008, three picket actions in front of the US Consulate in Vancouver to demand "Free the Cuban 5 Now" marked 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup> picket actions organized by the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver. Their monthly protest campaign began two years ago. On the February 19<sup>th</sup>, participants got to

hear from guest speaker John Waller, coordinator of the Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba, who talked about the growth of solidarity with the 5 internationally.

In the last two years Canada has seen an incredible increase in actions to free the 5 Cuban heroes. In Montreal and Quebec city there have also been monthly protest for the Cuban 5, with their latest demanding visitation rights for the families of the Cuban 5 which took place in March to mark International Women's Day. More than two dozen people took part in the protest in which the "Fabio Di Celmo Committee for the 5" entered the US Consulate and handed petitions to the Public Affairs representative.

**What Can You Do?**

September 2008 will mark the 10<sup>th</sup> year of imprisonment of the 5 Cuban Heroes. Since the 5 were arrested support for their cause has not wavered, it has only become stronger, with over 300 committee's working around the world. If you are a person or group interested in peace and justice please get involved in your local committee to Free the Cuban 5 or if there is not one yet, start your own.

For more information about the Cuban 5 and the international movement to release them, please visit the following websites:

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

Quebec: [www.solidaritequebeccuba.qc.ca](http://www.solidaritequebeccuba.qc.ca)

US: [www.freethefive.org](http://www.freethefive.org)

## Visit Revolutionary Cuba Join the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade!

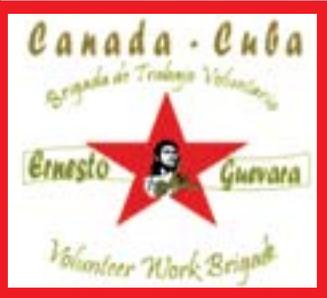


**Vancouver 2007  
Brigade Participants**

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**For more info, contact:  
Tamara Hansen, Che Brigade Western  
Regional Coordinator - 778-882-5223**

**Full Program Details:  
[www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/brigade](http://www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/brigade)**



## WHO ARE THE 5 CUBAN HEROES HELD IN US PRISONS?



**Cuban 5 Billboard on Hollywood Blvd, in Hollywood California.**

was the bombing of a Cuban airliner, which took the lives of 73 people in 1976. The 5 Cuban Heroes

By Noah Fine

Between 1994 and 1995, Cuba sent five unarmed men, Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González and René González on a mission to infiltrate and expose Miami-based terrorist groups such as Alpha 66, Omega 7, Brothers to the Rescue and the Cuban American National Foundation in the United States. These groups are responsible for hundreds of terrorist attacks which have taken the lives of close to 3,500 Cuban people.

The list of atrocities committed by these groups is long. It includes the bombing of hotels in Cuba, assassinations, the spreading of diseases, sabotage and attacks against Cuba's supporters in the United States such as the bombing of the Lincoln Center in 1978 after a Cuban ballet performance. One of the most horrendous attacks

were valiantly struggling against this terror, putting themselves and their loved ones in mortal danger throughout the process.

After gathering evidence to expose the terrorists, Cuba released all the information that the 5 had collected to the FBI. On September 12<sup>th</sup> 1998 instead of arresting the terrorists, the FBI arrested the Cuban 5 and threw them in solitary confinement for 17 months. It was not until 2001 that these innocent men were tried and convicted. After a seven-month show trial (one of the longest in US history), the Cuban 5 were sentenced to between 15 years and two life sentences. The US has also denied Visas to family members of the 5, effectively barring them from visiting their loved ones in prison.

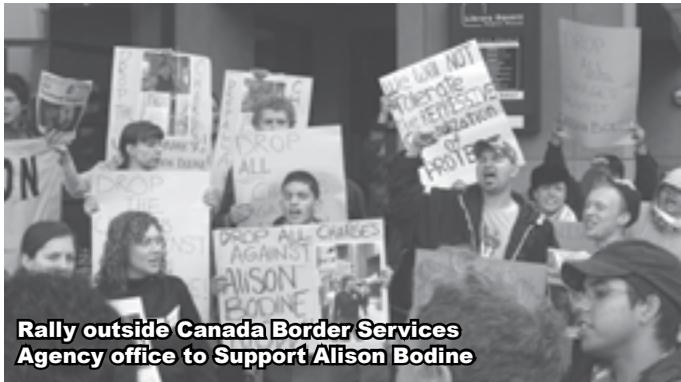
The 5 Cuban Heroes are innocent and should be awarded for their effort, not jailed.

# DEFEND ALISON BODINE: PARTIAL VICTORY FOR POLITICALLY TARGETED ANTI-WAR ACTIVIST

By Andrew Barry

On March 17<sup>th</sup> 2008, a major breakthrough in the case of politically targeted anti-war activist Alison Bodine was reached. The Federal Court of Canada has decided to grant leave in Alison's case, meaning the court will hear arguments against the government of Canada's removal of Alison from Canada! This victory in the campaign to lift the ban on Alison came exactly four months after Alison was forced out of Canada by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA).

The case of Alison Bodine began on September 13<sup>th</sup> 2007, when Alison tried returning to the United States but was arrested by the CBSA. Three days prior to this arrest, Alison, a US citizen and 2007 University of British Columbia physics graduate, was targeted and harassed by Canada border officials after they found various anti-war reading materials in her car when she was legally



Rally outside Canada Border Services Agency office to support Alison Bodine

based anti-war coalition Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO), received hundreds of letters of support from organisations, politicians, political parties, unions, and student groups calling for this political targeting of a young anti-war activist to end once and for all. A popular petition campaign began that saw over 3000 people sign to have the political targeting stop.

Despite the mounting support in defence of her rights, on October 31<sup>st</sup> the immigration hearing upheld the CBSA's accusations that Alison had misrepresented herself when she came into Canada. And the "punishment" would be that as of November 17<sup>th</sup> 2007, Alison would be banned from Canada for two years.

But the campaign did not stop there. Alison's legal defence began the process of applying for a judicial review of the case in a federal court.

trying to enter Canada. After extensive questioning by the border guards, Alison agreed to their request that she voluntarily return to the US. Later that same day, Alison tried to re-enter Canada and was allowed entry with no further questioning. To reduce further harassment Alison had asked a friend from Vancouver to come to the US and pick up the political materials from her. He legally returned to Canada, but the border guards seized the political materials and all other items in his car. He was given a receipt stating that Alison could pick up these items within 40 days.

Three days later Alison returned to the border to pick up these items. Upon showing border officials the receipt she was arrested, handcuffed, and told there was a Canada-wide warrant for her arrest. She was then transferred to detention.

The next day a protest was called in Vancouver to free Alison, which along with major local and national media coverage helped lead to her release from detention on the evening of September 14<sup>th</sup>.

Over the next two months, while Alison was in Canada and her defence campaign was fighting against the CBSA's manoeuvres to have her banned, her case broke wide open in Vancouver, across Canada, and the United States. Alison, the co-chair and official spokesperson for Vancouver-



Alison Bodine speaks to media outside CBSA office

And it was March 17<sup>th</sup> when Alison received news from the Federal Court of Canada stating they have granted a leave in her case, allowing for arguments to be heard in her defence! Legally this means Alison has a case worthy of appeal that is recognized by the courts as substantial to devote time, money, and resources to.

This hearing is scheduled for June 12<sup>th</sup> 2008, where Alison's lawyer will be presenting her case against this political targeting. Due to being banned from the country Alison is not allowed to be there in Canada to defend herself at this hearing. But the partial victory stands, and the Alison Bodine Defence Committee (ABDC) is moving forward with this victory in the defence of a young anti-war activist, targeted for her involvement in social justice organizing.

The Alison Bodine Defence Committee calls on all social justice and peace loving people to get involved in the weeks and months leading up to June 12<sup>th</sup> in defending Alison from these political attacks. For information and updates on her case and on how to get involved, visit the defence blog at <http://alisonbodine.blogspot.com>.

Lift the ban on Alison now!



Report from:  
Fidel, Democracy & Cuba: Are They Inseparable?

February 28th 2008 Forum

By Max Tennant

On Thursday February 28th, Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) organized a forum to discuss the role of Fidel in the central leadership of the Cuban Revolution; Cuba's electoral system the social gains of the Cuban Revolution; and Cuba's record internationally.

The evening began with Colleen Glynn, VCSC organizer and President of the Richmond NDP opening the night as MC. She first introduced the film Workers' Democracy in Cuba, to the room of over 45 people. The film showed the 17th Congress of the Cuban Workers' Federation and how Cuban workers in 1996 educated, organized and mobilized themselves to lead their country during the difficult times of the special period. It enabled people to see first hand how popular democracy works in Cuba and how regular Cubans have the ability to decide their own future.

After the film, Colleen Glynn introduced John Waller, coordinator of Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba. John Waller discussed the necessity of ending the US blockade on Cuba. He briefly explained Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), unions and other mass organizations in Cuba. He emphasized that, unlike what the Western media says, the majority of Cubans are not worried about

what will happen when Fidel dies. Instead they are concerned with the economic problems that are a direct result of the US blockade on Cuba.

Then Colleen Glynn introduced Jose Angel, a member of the Solidarity Coalition for a United Latin America. Jose spoke from the perspective of an El Salvadoran and Latin American activist. He discussed about how Cuba represents an example of hope and necessity for a better future for humankind. That looking at Latin America we can see how through Cuba's example there are now many progressive governments in Latin America. He also explained Fidel's role in Cuba's solidarity with many other struggles in Africa and the Middle East.

Then Tamara Hansen, coordinator of VCSC discussed how popular democracy and the social gains of the Cuban Revolution are interconnected. That people cannot control their own government if they are living in poverty and lacking the very basic human rights like food, health care, education and housing. Even if there is poverty in Cuba, it is fighting for essential and basic human rights. This, Tamara explained, is the vision of Fidel carrying the gains of the Cuban revolution forward.

During the discussion many members of the audience got enthusiastically involved in sharing their experiences in Cuba, with others asking further questions about the future of the Cuban revolution.

## Who is VCSC?

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

We also support 3 petition campaigns:

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

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

Además apoyamos 3 campañas de peticiones:

- 1- Contra el Bloqueo de los EE.UU. contra Cuba
- 2- Por Libertad de los Cinco Cubanos Encarcelados en los EE.UU.
- 3- Por la Extradición del Terrorista Anticubano Luis Posada Carriles

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

Posada Carriles to Venezuela

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

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

For more information contact:

[cubacommunities@yahoo.ca](mailto:cubacommunities@yahoo.ca)

778-882-5223

[vancubasolidarity.com](http://vancubasolidarity.com)

## ¿Quiénes son VCSC?

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

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

Para conseguir mas información contacta:

[cubacommunities@yahoo.ca](mailto:cubacommunities@yahoo.ca)

778-882-5223

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

# THE US ATTACK ON IRAN: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

## A Talk by Rostam Pourzal in Vancouver

Transcribed, edited and  
arranged by Sarah Alwell



Rostam Pourzal speaks in  
Vancouver.

Introduction by Sarah Alwell

With the looming threat of a US invasion continuing to menace Iran, on Saturday January 19th 2008, over 170 people participated in a public forum against war and to say that they will join in the call for no war on Iran. The forum, held in a packed room

of Vancouver's SFU Harbour Centre, was organized by Canadians Against War with the support and endorsement of Mobilizations Against War and Occupation (MAWO) and the Iranian Community Against War (ICAW).

The reality of this threat towards Iran and the devastation an invasion would cause became very apparent and comprehensible as participants watched a slideshow entitled "Don't Iraq Iran", showing Afghanistan and Iraq before and after the US and Canadian-led occupations. With the US currently stepping up their propaganda against Iran, their military buildup in the Persian Gulf, and their search for allies in preparation for an attack on Iran, this forum in opposing any attack on Iran was very important. Organizing a continued campaign against war on Iran is also very necessary.

The event featured special guest speaker Rostam Pourzal (below), who was introduced by Fred Muzin, the president of the Hospital Employees' Union. The introduction by Fred and the speech by Rostam Pourzal are both below.

ity from the West, mainly from the United States for almost two decades now and so therefore these are defensive measures in my view. Then there is the other question of Iran meddling in Iraq and destabilizing Iraq, sending arms there and so on. There is some truth to that in that I believe Iran does fund various organizations in Iraq. But then if we are focused on foreign powers meddling in Iraq, the first question should be what the hell are the United States and Britain doing there?! At least Iran shares historic and religious ties to Iraq, and by the way, Iran's intervention in Iraq is very much welcomed by a government in Baghdad that's hand-picked by the United States. So what's the problem? Not to mention that according to many sources Saudi Arabia is also funding groups in Iraq that are at least as extremist as are the Shiite groups and militias in Iraq. So my point is that this is an excuse to Iraq Iran and to beat-up on Iran.

Talk by Rostam Pourzal

I will address myself to three questions tonight mainly. One is whether Iran is dangerous, a threat to peace. My conviction is that it's not. But then, because as I said I hope there are people among you who will dispute that, I will address the question of, if Iran is dangerous and a threat to world peace, what are the best ways to reduce the danger of Iran? Lastly I will ask the question that, if there are ways other than war and the present course that the American administration is taking to make Iran less of a threat to the world, why isn't the US administration taking advantage of those means, of those ways to "stabilize" the Middle East?

None of the people who attacked the United States in 2001 were from Iran or have been linked personally or in terms of a money trail to Iran. So why not? Why aren't the American administration and media, why aren't they focusing on making Pakistan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia pay more attention to the - really they are breeding grounds for terror for extremists - why aren't they focusing there? Yes, Iran supports Hezbollah in Lebanon and supports Hamas in Palestine and those are organizations that, depending on your point of view, are either resistance movements or terrorist organizations but in either case Iran does not have to support those organizations, but it is forced to because the Iranian government has felt hostility

With the issue of this nuclear dispute with Iran, I'll spend a little bit more time on that because the American administration does. That is their main argument for saying that Iran is dangerous. Well, Iran's nuclear program started during the Shah's administration in the 1970's, which was an administration that was backed by the United States very tightly. But you know what? Washington wasn't worried about it. Back then there were some arguments

from Iran saying that Iran had so much oil and gas, Iran said what do we need nuclear power for? And the Americans wanted these billions of dollars for their reactors. They said, well save your oil and gas for future generations. It's too precious to burn, here's nuclear power. Now that Iran's population has more than tripled and because of vast industrialization and rural development, Iran's need for energy has more than, much more than tripled. The same folks in Washington, the same folks who we know now are neo-conservatives are saying you have so much gas and oil, what do you need nuclear energy for? Now I want to make clear I am not an expert of nuclear weapons or nuclear power generation but my position and my group's position is that it's up to the Iranians to decide that, the way other nations decided to have nuclear power or nuclear bombs. They didn't ask anybody for permission, they didn't consult us. World security is a shared security, we need common security. And if every nation was to decide for itself, then Iran has the same right. Another reason

why this issue of the nuclear dispute is such a suspicious one - to me it's a lot of fuss about nothing - is because the American administrations have for almost three decades have made clear that they really find it difficult to live with the Iranian government. They miss the good old days when they had their puppet government in Iran in power, and they want to get that back. Why? Because we have a lot of oil and gas, and they want Iran to become as defenseless as Iraq is, so that they can dictate to it. If in fact this nuclear issue were a major proliferation issue, then the United States, what the United States would be doing would be to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Commission which conducts inspections in Iran. The United States would be strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Iran was one of the earliest signatories to the NPT and has so far, I argue, Iran has not violated the NPT, in fact the United States and its allies have. As I said before, I'm not getting into the question of whether

continued on page 21



The large crowd shows their appreciation.

INTRODUCTION BY  
*Fred Muzin*

PRESIDENT OF THE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES'  
UNION (HEU) & MC OF THE EVENT



Fred Muzin welcomes everyone and  
introduces Rostam Pourzal.

Welcome everybody, it's great to see such a turnout, this is a very important event. I'd like to start off by thanking the Coast Salish people, just acknowledging that we are on their territory. Also there is a number of endorsers of this event and they're listed on the back of your program. There's MAWO - Mobilization Against War and Occupation, Stopwar.ca, CASMI Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran, the Iranian Community Against War, and SharvandBC.

Usually we gather here to hear about all of the labour problems and the lack of human rights in Iran ... and that's what we usually do because there's lots of problems in that country and those are problems that really have to be dealt with in Iran. What we are being faced with now is an American agenda that is threatening to expand their intervention in the Middle East beyond Afghanistan and Iraq. George Bush's tour this past week they were looking for incidences, so for instance the media has misportrayed the Iranian speedboats, as though that's some sort of threat, and they're trying to say that Iran has nuclear armaments capability despite the fact that sixteen investigations, sixteen times the Americans and other organizations said that they have not had nuclear arms for four years but that doesn't stop the Americans.

And Americans quite frankly don't have the solutions to other peoples problems, it's been very clear that war is not the answer to the problems. We look at the situation in Guantanamo. We look at how they treat migrant workers. The renditions of people to Syria. The whole excuse for moving into Iraq, the weapons of mass destruction that they're still busy looking for. It's more of a political power agenda and it has nothing to do with the people's agenda and that's why this forum is extremely timely tonight. Because as a world community we have to stand up and say war is simply not acceptable, not in Iran, not in Iraq, not in Afghanistan and when we speak as one we can be effective; the people of the world have done that before. Now, we're very privileged tonight to have a speaker from Washington, the US chair of the Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran, Rostam Pourzal. Pourzal is a writer, researcher, social scientist, long time social justice campaigner and he's worked full time in Washington as an independent researcher and organizer for human rights. He holds a graduate degree in cultural anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania where he focused on modernization and social upheaval. He advocates for dialogue without preconditions between Iran and the United States.

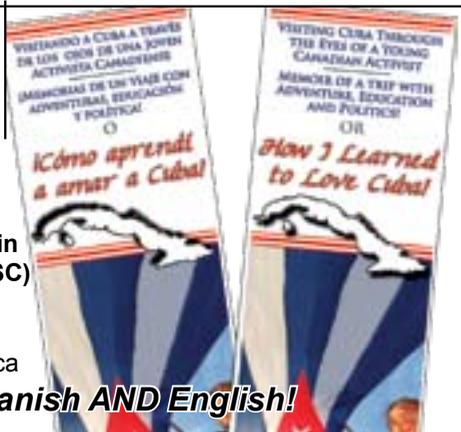
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Back-to-Back in Spanish AND English!



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Iran needs nuclear reactors or not, that's not the question I'm posing. Let's say that just like the NPT stipulates, that Iran has a right, just as any other country, to make its own decision about having nuclear reactors.

So Iran shopped for this, and remember the NPT obligates the countries that have the technology to help Iran. But under pressure, mainly from the United States, none of those countries, though some came close to cooperating with Iran regarding nuclear technology, others under pressure from the United States, they stopped. Only Russia agreed, as you probably know, to build one single nuclear reactor in Iran which is now nearing completion after years of delay, again because of US pressure.

Ok, well let's look at the record of Iran's foreign policy over the past decades, since the revolution. Has Iran attacked another country? In fact, if you go back 200 years, you would have to go back 250 years before you would find an attack by Iran on another country. Do your own research, don't take my word for it. The only two instances in my lifetime that Iran has intervened, meddled,

in its neighbours' affairs came during the time of the Shah, when Iran was basically a US client. One was in Northern Iraq where, at the suggestion of the CIA, Iran armed Iraqi Kurds to make trouble for Saddam Hussein. That was it. So, contrast Iran's record of war and peace with that of the United States and its allies. They are what I call serial bombers and invaders. So who is a greater danger to world peace?

In fact, a new book is out recently, actually a very excellent book called 'The Treacherous Alliance'. It's about the relations of power games that are played between Israel, the United States and Iran. It is very well researched. And the author, who is in Washington and a friend of mine, argues very convincingly that Iran's foreign policy is actually not driven by ideology, it is driven by the same rational principles which drive the foreign policy of most other nations. Now I don't want to cost too many sales of his book so I won't go into very much detail of his book, but I'll give you one example of how Iran's foreign policy is not driven by Islamism or ideology. There are two countries, two small nations, bordering Iran in the northwest. One is Azerbaijan which is formerly part of the Soviet Union. Next to it is Armenia which, as you can tell by its name, is a country that, like Israel, Iran and Pakistan, is defined by its religion. They are Armenian Christians. You would think that if Iran's foreign policy was driven by Islamic ideology that they would be allies with Azerbaijan and they would have very at least poor relations, if not hostility, with Armenia, because Armenia

and Azerbaijan have had wars and their relations remain very hostile. But it's quite actually the opposite. Iran has tense relations with Azerbaijan and very very friendly relations, in fact militarily and economically near alliance with Ar-

menia. Why? Because Azerbaijan has close military ties with Israel and the United States. So this is about colonialism, not about ideology and about Islam with Iran's foreign policy. If in fact the United States wanted to make Iran less dangerous - let's assume that Iran is dangerous - then it would have dialogue, direct dialogue with Iran without conditions, something that they refuse to do now.

The issue is that the United States wants a uniformed world. They've made it clear, I'm not making this up, since 2001, since the attacks of 2001 on the United States there have been two national security documents that have come out of the White House and they clearly say that we are not going to tol-

erate a rival power to rise in the world. Iran is one of the countries that will not tolerate this, that will not have it like that, and I admire it for that. Venezuela is another country that will not go along with that, China is another one, Russia is another one. I think a multi-polar world is a more peaceful world, a more democratic world. But the US is determined to exclude Iran from having a role, a say, in how the emerging world order will take shape. What do I mean by that? We have an existing world order, an awful one, but nevertheless a world order, the rules of which were relatively clear during the Cold War. After WWII it didn't take that many years for the United States and its Western allies and the Soviet Union and its allies to work out a kind of gentleman's agreement, a bloody one, but nevertheless a kind of settlement where they agreed to the rules of the game where they would fight out their wars through proxies and not have direct confrontation and so on and so forth and most of the time it worked fairly decently. Since the fall of the Soviet Union there is no new world order yet. That's partly what the first and second Iraq wars were about. Yes, they were and are about oil, but so is the new world order that's still waiting to be born. So the new world order can be one where the US is the sole power, sole super power, or it may become one in which the United States has rivals and I argue that that is what all this fuss is about, that Iran is dangerous because with the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the fall of the Saddam Hussein government in Iraq, Iran's influence is growing in the region. And it's not about Shiite versus Sunni and so on, if you ask

me about that I will explain why I said that. It is really about influence, about limiting American influence in the region. Iran, yes, is reaching for more power.

But few people pay attention to the fact that Iran has no air force at all.

In 30 years, no Western nation, or Russia, or China has sold Iran fighter jets. So basically to say that Iran should forego defense missile technology is to say that we want Iran to be defenseless in terms of air power and I wouldn't go for that. They would be crazy to do that. So, to get back to the question of why doesn't the United States take advantage of making peace with Iran? Well, there is a superpower rising in the world, on the horizon. Its name is China, and China has, if you have been reading press reports lately, has an incredible appetite for raw material, especially energy, coal and gas and oil. Now, American neoconservatives know that they cannot control the rise of China, and you can see it. In fact, the US is the biggest borrower from China. Most of what we buy is from there but they have figured that if the US can control the world energy market it can have a choke hold on China and prevent it from being a full scale

superpower. Ok, what does that have to do with Iran? Well, Iran is not only itself sitting on so much oil and gas underground, but it's also situated very nicely between the world's two biggest known reserves of oil and gas. One in the Persian Gulf, the other in Central Asia. So it is the last standing domino, so to speak. This is Cold War terminology, dominoes. Iran is the last standing domino in the Middle East. Yes, there is Syria and Hezbollah, but if Iran goes they go. In addition to the fact that Iran is itself becoming a regional power. Now I can't tell what the future will hold. The United States can decide that, just like it made peace with China, it lived with the Soviet Union, it may just settle for a "containment policy" with Iran and just try to hit Iran on the margins and surround it with military bases and Navy, pretty much like what it is doing now. Right now, it's hard to know which way it's going to go. I think the chances are just like a toss of a coin.

So lastly, I want to talk about, well, what can the peace movement do then? What can you do? The first thing I suggest is that we remain skeptical, we arm ourselves with information, we debate, we go to alternative websites, we have speakers like me come and we will debate them and try to learn something new. Fortunately there are a lot of alternative sources of information and I'm proud to say that I think in my own opinion I know quite a bit more now than I did, let's say, when 9/11 happened about how the world operates, what these guys in Washington are up to - because I have invested literally thousands of hours researching, trying to learn with

an open mind. I have debated all kinds of people, now I have narrowed it down because I'm fairly confident I know the answers to quite a few of the questions I had. But I urge you that when you see media reports about, for example, I'll give you an example because I do a lot of interviews, every time there is a flare up in the news about Iran I get a lot of calls from radio stations and what not in the US and overseas. And you know what? Always they want to focus on the news of the day. It's irritating after a while because they say, well these British sailors, were they in international waters or were they in Iranian territorial waters? And I say, that's not the most relevant question, that's not the most illuminating thing for your listeners to know.

The question is, what the hell are the US and Britain doing in the Persian Gulf. They don't belong there, that's not their neighborhood. You would have a right to say Iran is dangerous if Iran had two aircraft carrier groups with thousands of soldiers and hundreds of missiles and airplanes aimed at the United States anchored off the East Coast or the West Coast of the United States. Then Iran would be a danger. Or if it had 200,000 troops in Canada or Mexico right next to US borders. Then, yes it would be a threat to the United States. But that's not going to happen. So what I ask of you, my message to you is be skeptical. Don't be drawn into these petty debates about the news of the day, about little issues, and let's ask the big questions. What are these guys even doing over there? What are their intentions? Secondly, I ask of you to support dialogue between the United States and Iran because the alternative to dialogue is war.

American intelligence agencies, 16 of them no less, recently just in December, they said that Iran does not have a nuclear weapons program. So why is Bush still going around calling Iran a threat? It's like these people are resistant to facts, it doesn't matter. It's sort of like, you know when during the first Bush administration, when the Gulf war was still raging between Iran and Iraq - and I love this quote from Bush's father, he was the vice president at the time under Ronald Reagan - when an Iranian civilian airliner was shot down over the Gulf

mistake and almost 300 people perished in that, they dispatched Bush Senior to the UN to try to patch it up and to say that it wasn't our fault, it was the Iranians fault. But the main thing that irritated me was that when he said well yeah you know there was some Iranian Airliner that was making funny moves and it wasn't responding to our Navy's warnings and so on. Anyway, when the reporters raised some questions about what he was saying, they were raising doubts and they were saying well it didn't have to happen. You know what his answer was? George Bush Senior said "I don't care about the facts". So these guys, the gang, they don't care about the facts. We need to lean on the US government and in Canada on the Conservative government in Ottawa to enter a dialogue with Iran. I mean, it would be one thing if Afghanistan, for example, had improved, but opium cultivation has skyrocketed, they're supplying 90% of the world's opium, and women are no freer - in fact they're less secure - and I don't have to tell you about Iraq.

So why not try something different with Iran? So, I would urge you to support US dialogue with Iran. It's a myth that diplomacy has been tried with Iran. They have not tried diplomacy with Iran for one single day. Threats and imposing sanctions are different from diplomacy. Outsourcing negotiations with Iran to the trio, to the European Union Bureau, Britain, Germany and France, that's not diplomacy. For two years, Iran suspended its nuclear uranium enrichment, which is supposed to be the issue now that is precluding preventing the US from negotiating with Iran supposedly. But for two years Iran did suspend uranium enrich-

ment while it negotiated with the EU trio and you know what, after those negotiations failed, the European official said that without American involvement, without direct US participation in those negotiations they could not have offered Iran anything that would be a worthy incentive that would influence Iran, persuade Iran. So it really takes the United States sitting at the table and negotiating and we need to fight for that.



January 24th 2008, Iranian women protest Israel's blockade against Gaza.

## Canada vs. Afghanistan continued from page 7

Crisis Group. These local grievances include the massive corruption of the occupation-backed and warlord-run government and the killings of friends and family by occupation forces. With their brutal war and occupation, Canada and NATO failed to win the hearts and minds of Afghan people to their side. Now they are losing against them militarily as well.

### Why Extend a Failing Occupation?

The government of Canada is failing in its war drive in Afghanistan, at the expense of the lives and dignity of Afghan people. So why are they continuing with this war drive?

As recent crashes in the stock market show (the most severe seen in decades), the world economy is in crisis. All major economic think-tanks are predicting that this is not a minor recession, but the beginning of one of the biggest economic collapses ever seen. To try and prevent total crisis, imperialist countries must find new resources, new trade markets, and new countries to occupy in order to gain access to them. The US is currently leading imperialist plunder in the Middle East, but Canada is not far behind. Afghanistan, sitting between the major trade

markets of Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, is a useful country for imperialists to control. Afghanistan could also be used as a stepping stone to attack neighbouring Iran, the biggest contender to US imperialism in the

Middle East.

### Unite to Demand: Troops Out Now!

For poor and working people in Canada, this imperialist drive for resources and trade markets will not bring any benefits. It will only mean more cuts to health care, education, and social services as the imperialist government of Canada pours more and more funds into their war drive. \$7 Billion has been spent on the war in Afghanistan already, with the war running \$1 Billion over budget in 2007 alone. This brutal war and occupation, this massacre of Afghan people, has already dragged on for seven years too long. Now the government is extending it for another two years. More than likely, the death toll of Canadian soldiers will pass 100 this year, and no one knows how many tens or hundreds of thousands of Afghans have died. As working and poor people in Canada, we have a responsibility to demand and end to this war drive. We must also call for an independent public inquiry into Canada's war drive in Afghanistan, to ask why this criminal war drive continues to be extended and carried out without public consultation or debate. We must unite, across all ages and backgrounds, to demand:

Canada/NATO Out of Afghanistan NOW!

Independent Public Inquiry NOW!



Canadian soldiers harrass Afghan civilians Panjwai, Afghanistan, March 2003

## "From Vietnam to Iraq.." continued from page 5



in Vietnam and Iraq who have not received funds for extensive medical studies or treatment.

After hard fought battles, the Veterans Administration in the US now automatically awards service-connected disability to Vietnam veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange for thirteen different health conditions from certain cancers plus chronic health problems and Type II diabetes. In 1984, corporate defenders of the companies that manufactured Agent Orange lost a lawsuit brought by US victims of exposure to the chemical weapon. They were ordered to pay \$180 million to 52,000 sick veterans and families.

Despite the recognition by the government of the US that exposure to Agent Orange causes not only death and disease, but birth defects in children of people exposed, the Vietnamese people have received no recognition of their suffering at the hands of the

US during the war. Beyond the initial effects of massive defoliation, destruction of farmland and chemical exposure, Agent Orange is still contaminating soil and fish in Vietnam at an alarming rate. According to the Canadian firm Hatfield Consultants, the level of contamination in Vietnam was 300 to 400 times higher than acceptable levels. This means that Agent Orange continues to bring death and disability to the people of Vietnam almost 40 years after it was last sprayed.

Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange have received no compensation. In fact, they have faced defeat in US courts. In February 2008, a US federal appeals court upheld an earlier decision regarding the case of Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange against manufacturers of the chemical, saying it was not used as weapon of war against the population. Essentially the ruling class said that the people of Vietnam are just collateral damage who do not deserve compensation for suffering brought on by the US. The US has never agreed it has the legal duty to provide funds or assistance to Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange.

Iraqi victims of depleted uranium used in the Gulf War have also received no compensation. In fact, in-

stead they received instead twelve years of sanctions that severely limited their access to healthcare and medicines to treat the diseases caused by DU. According to studies supported by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about the effects of DU in Iraq, DU causes higher incidences of diseases which are not commonly found in the region including various forms of cancer, an increased rate of miscarriage, deformed babies, and possible damage to hereditary genes that could be passed on for generations. According to studies done by doctors presented by the Muslim Peacemaker Teams in Najaf, Iraq, the rate of leukemia in areas as far as 180 miles from bombing sites has grown 600 per cent since 2001.

Depleted Uranium is radioactive, with a half-life of over four billion years. This means that its effects will contaminate Iraq for an unimaginable amount of time, contaminating the food and water supplies and bringing disease and death for generations to come. If the example of the Vietnamese fighting for justice in the case of Agent Orange remains, it can be certain that the people of Iraq will never receive support or compensation for DU contamination.

### Canada and Agent Orange

Canada has also had a direct role in the use of chemical weapons as a lasting tool of war. One of seven manufacturers that provided the chemical to the US military, Uniroyal Chemicals, was located in Ontario. In 1966-67, Canada invited the US to test Agent Orange at Canadian Forces Base Gag-

etown, which they did, exposing both soldiers and the community to this deadly toxin. Also, between 1956 and 1984, Agent Orange was used as a defoliant for various New Brunswick public services and its use continued at the CFB Gagetown. Canadian victims of exposure to Agent Orange have engaged in lawsuits against the government of Canada and manufacturers of Agent Orange, but to this day have only received minimum compensation for those affected during US testing in 1966-67, and nothing for those who were exposed in other years.

**Death and Destruction at the Hands of Imperialism Does Not Discriminate**

The use of Agent Orange in Vietnam and depleted uranium in Iraq are not isolated incidents. There has been a systematic use of DU and chemical weapons in the history of imperialist war and occupation: Vietnam 1961-71, Iraq 1991, Bosnia 1995, Yugoslavia/Serbia 1999, Afghanistan from October 2001, and Iraq from March 2003. The testing and manufacture of these weapons has not only affected people in oppressed countries, but work-

We are Iranians in Vancouver, Canada, who oppose war, oc-

cupation and sanctions by imperialist countries in this new era of war and occupation. Our goal is to educate, organize and mobilize the public, particularly the Iranian community outside of Iran, on the issues of war, occupation and sanctions. As well, we are currently campaigning on the ever increasing United States sanctions and military aggression against the people of Iran.

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US planes spray Agent Orange over Vietnam. 1966

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## EVENTS AND ACTIONS



### VANCOUVER

**Thursday April 17**  
Canada/NATO Out of Afghanistan!  
Picket Action  
4PM  
Canadian Forces Recruitment Centre  
1070 West Georgia St.  
Org'd by: Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO)

**Friday April 18**  
Forum & Discussion  
"What Does the Extension of Canada's Occupation Mean for Afghanistan?"  
6:30PM  
Britannia Community Centre  
1661 Napier St. (at Commercial Dr.)  
Org'd by: Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO)

**Tuesday April 22**  
Free the Cuban 5!  
Picket Action  
4-5pm, US Consulate  
1075 W. Pender St.  
Org'd by: Free the Cuban Five Committee - Vancouver

**Friday April 25**  
Forum & Discussion  
"The US Invasion of the Bay of Pigs, Cuba

The First Major Defeat of US Imperialism in Latin America"  
7PM  
Collingwood Neighbourhood House  
5288 Joyce St.  
Org'd by: Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC)

**Saturday April 26**  
Canada/NATO Out of Afghanistan! US/UK Out of Iraq! No War on Iran!  
Anti-war Rally  
2PM  
Vancouver Art Gallery  
Robson & Hornby  
Org'd by: Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO)

**Saturday April 26**  
Musical Fundraiser  
"Rhymes 'n Resistance"  
Doors at 7PM & Show at 8PM  
Org'd by: Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO)

**VICTORIA**  
**Tuesday April 8**  
BOYCOTT: Is this a reasonable response to Israeli state policies

& practices?  
Speaker: Mordecai Briemberg  
7:30PM  
Camosun College-Landsdowne  
Young building room 310  
Presented by: CAIA-Victoria

**TORONTO**  
**Thursday April 10**  
Tell Harper and Dion We Want Housing, Not War  
Public Forum  
6:30PM  
Danforth/Coxwell Public Library  
1675 Danforth Ave  
Org'd by: Toronto East for Peace  
Info: [te4peace@yahoo.ca](mailto:te4peace@yahoo.ca)

**Friday April 11**  
Rally in Solidarity with Venezuela  
Consulate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela  
365 Bloor Street East (near Sherbourne subway station)  
9:30 am - 12 pm.  
Org'd by: Louis Riel Bolivarian Circle of Toronto  
Info: [cvec-tor@yahoo.com](mailto:cvec-tor@yahoo.com)

**Saturday April 12**  
Turtle Island To Palestine - Free All Political Prisoners!  
Fundraiser in Support of the Ardoch Algonquin First Nation  
7 pm - Door opens at 6:30  
Cervejaria - 842 College St.  
Org'd by: Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid  
Info: [www.caiaweb.org](http://www.caiaweb.org)

**Saturday April 19**  
United-Front Protest  
Mumia Abu-Jamal Is Innocent!  
Abolish the Racist Death Penalty!  
1pm  
Across the street from the U.S. Consulate  
360 University Avenue

between Dundas and Queen  
Initiated by the April 19th United Front for Mumia.  
Endorsed by the Partisan Defense Committee, Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste and Spartacus Youth Club.

**Saturday April 19**  
The First Military Defeat Of U.S. Imperialism In This Hemisphere  
Bay Of Pigs (Playa Giron), Cuba - 1961  
2:30pm  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE)  
252 Bloor St. W.  
Room #OI 5185  
Org'd by: Ontario Public Interest Research Group  
Sponsored by: Toronto Forum on Cuba  
Info: [torontoforumoncuba@rogers.com](mailto:torontoforumoncuba@rogers.com)

**OTTAWA**  
**Saturday March 29 -Thursday April 10**  
Series of Events to Oppose CANSEC Weapons Fair  
Org'd by: NOWAR-PAIX and People's Global Action Bloc of Ottawa  
Info: [pqa.roadnetwork.org](http://pqa.roadnetwork.org) or [www.nowar-paix.ca](http://www.nowar-paix.ca)

**HAMILTON**  
**Thursday April 24<sup>th</sup>**  
Opening night of "Lights! Camera! Activism!"  
Hamilton's First Social Justice Film Festival  
Film Screening:  
Sir! No Sir!  
7PM  
The Downtown Arts Centre  
28 Rebecca St.  
Additional Film Screenings May 1, 8, and 15  
Org'd by: Hamilton-Wentworth

Elementary Teachers' Local and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation District 21  
Info: 905.522.2005

**CALGARY**  
**Saturday April 5**  
Free the Cuban 5 Imprisoned in the US!  
Demonstration and Rally  
2PM-3PM  
US Consulate  
615 MacLeod Trail SE  
Org'd by: Free the Cuban 5 Committee of the Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association (Calgary)  
Info: <http://members.shaw.ca/CCFACalgary>

**Saturday April 5**  
Fiesta and Fundraiser  
All money raised will be donated to funds to free the Cuban 5!  
7:30PM  
Nifty Fifties Club in Parkdale Community Association  
3512 5th Ave NW  
Org'd by: Free the Cuban 5 Committee of the Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association (Calgary)  
Info: <http://members.shaw.ca/CCFACalgary>

**HALIFAX**  
**Thursday April 3**  
Film Screening:  
To Play and To Fight  
7PM  
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (Bedford Row Entrance)  
Org'd by: Alabasal Tours and NS Cuba Association  
Info: [www.nscuba.org](http://www.nscuba.org)

¡Celebramos el Día Internacional de los Trabajadores!



Celebrate International Worker's Day!

**MAY 3 6PM**

video.speakers.music.food  
video.presentadores.musica.comida

CHILEAN HOUSING CO-OP - 3390 SCHOOL AVE  
(BEHIND SAFEWAY ON KINGSWAY & TYNE)



ORGANIZADO POR: COALICIÓN DE SOLIDARIDAD POR LATINOAMÉRICA UNIDA  
ORGANIZED BY: SOLIDARITY COALITION FOR A UNITED LATIN AMERICA  
SCULA\_VAN@YAHOO.CA

US Invasion of the Bay of Pigs, Cuba

The First Major defeat of  
US Imperialism in Latin America

**FRIDAY**  
Friday | April 25 | 7pm  
5288 Joyce St. (one block South of Joyce Skytrain)

A Cuba educational night organized by:  
**Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC)**  
www.vancubasolidarity.com | cubacommunities@yahoo.ca | 778.862.5223

**CANADA/NATO  
OUT OF AFGHANISTAN!**

**US/UK  
OUT OF IRAQ!**

**—US HANDS OFF IRAN!**

**Self-Determination for  
Indigenous Nations in Canada!**

**Self-Determination for  
All Oppressed Nations!**

**ANTI-WAR RALLY  
2PM**

vancouver art gallery (robson & howe)

**APRIL 26**

Organized by: Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO)  
www.mawovancouver.org

**Free the Dive!**

VOLVERAN

They will Return



Picket Action - Tuesday April 22th  
U.S. Consulate(1075, West Pender)  
4PM to 5PM

FREE THE CUBAN 5 COMMITTEE - VANCOUVER  
www.vancubasolidarity.com/freethefivevan.html  
cuban5\_van@yahoo.com | 604-719-6947