



The Newsletter of the Canadian Network on Cuba
Over 60 Years of Friendship
- Issue 1 - Spring 2009 -

50 Years of Revolution! 50 Years of Dignity!

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By Isaac Saney

Statement by Canadian Network On Cuba on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, January 1st, 2009

The Canadian Network On Cuba (CNC) extends to the Cuban people our deepest and warmest greetings and sentiments of solidarity and friendship as they celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. Across Canada and throughout 2009 many events are planned to mark the significance of the Cuban Revolution. On January 1, 1959, after a century long struggle for national affirmation, liberation and independence, Cuba embarked on a path that established authentic self-determination, placing the Cuban nation firmly in the hands of the people of Cuba. In the fifty years that have passed, the Cuban people have resisted all attempts to take away their independence and freedom, and re-impose foreign domination. They have repelled the unceasing all-sided assault, military, economic, financial and propagandistic by Washington, which has never accepted the verdict of the Cuban people.

The significance of the Cuban revolution extends beyond the geographical boundaries of Cuba. Since its inception, the Cuban Revolution has made an invaluable contribution to the global struggle for justice, social development and human dignity. Cuba has established an unparalleled legacy of internationalism and humanitarianism, embodying the immortal words of José Martí: "Homeland is Humanity. Humanity is Homeland." In southern Africa, for example, more than 2,000 Cubans gave their lives to defeat the racist apartheid regime in South Africa. Today this Cuban commitment to humanity is mirrored in the tens of thousands of medical personnel and educators who have served and continue to serve across the world, battling in the trenches against disease and illiteracy.

The CNC affirms that Cuba can continue to count on the solidarity and friendship of the Canadian people, as underscored by the success of the CNC's Hurricane Relief and Reconstruction Campaign, which has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in financial and material assistance from numerous individuals and organizations. This outpouring of support and empathy for Cuba is indicative of the sentiment of the vast majority of Canadians. Having traveled to Cuba in the hundreds of thousands and having witnessed Cuban reality for themselves, Canadians have come away with a profound respect and admiration for the Cuban people and their efforts to build a society centered on independence, justice and human dignity.



Irrespective of their political or ideological positions, Canadians stand for the building of genuine friendship with the island nation: relations based on mutual respect, equality and recognition of Cuba's right to self-determination and sovereignty.

On the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, the CNC commits itself to strengthening Canadian solidarity and friendship with Cuba by stepping up the work to free the five Cuban Heroes unjustly imprisoned in the U.S. for defending their country from terrorism, and ensuring that Canada-Cuba relations remain based on equality and respect for the right of Cuba to self-determination.

No words can adequately convey the transcendent and singular meaning of the Cuban Revolution. By holding aloft the banners of Justice, Peace, Internationalism and Human Dignity, Cuba demonstrates that a better world is possible! In a world fraught with intense and significant challenges, in the spirit of the 50th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution we declare:

A Better World Is Possible!

LONG LIVE THE CUBAN REVOLUTION!

www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca



What is the Canadian Network on Cuba?



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Isaac Saney
Tamara Hansen

Secretary: Sharon Skup

Projects and Campaigns:

Dave Bleakney
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Thank you to all the member groups who submitted articles, ideas, and reports to this issue of North of Havana!

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This issue of North of Havana was designed by members of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC)

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CNC DECLARATION

Since the early days of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, many Canadians and Canadian organizations have supported the far-reaching and progressive achievements of the Cuban people. A number of these individuals and groups came together in the fall of 2002 to establish the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC). The CNC believes that Cuba's efforts to eliminate illiteracy, poverty, racism and gender inequality through measures such as universal education and health care, its internationalist compassion, vision and dedication, its commitment to the individual, the community and to democracy--all these achievements deserve to be defended. And we also believe they must be actively defended because Cuban sovereignty has been continually threatened by a number of governments, particularly that of the U.S.A. These threats have been military, e.g., an invasion and countless acts of terrorism, and economic, e.g., the illegal and immoral Blockade. Just as we defend Canada's right to self-determination, so, too, we support Cuba's sovereign right to choose its own path to development, without outside pressure or interference.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CANADIAN NETWORK ON CUBA

We are committed to the strengthening of friendship and solidarity between the peoples of Canada and Cuba. To this end, we work with the Cuban Institute for Friendship Amongst the Peoples (ICAP) and other international and national partners in order to promote social, cultural, political and economic relations between Canada and Cuba on the basis of mutual respect and non-interference. We:

- * Initiate, coordinate and cooperate in cultural, educational, political and aid campaigns and projects involving Canada and Cuba.
- * Counter media and other distortions of Cuban reality by disseminating information about the achievements of the Cuban revolution in areas such as education, public health, culture, democracy and human rights.
- * Work to improve Canadian foreign policy on Cuba.

Approved at the CNC Convention of September 4, 2006

4th BIENNIAL CONVENTION OF THE CANADIAN NETWORK ON CUBA: BUILDING & DEEPENING CANADA-CUBA SOLIDARITY

Dear Friends,

From August 30 to September 1, 2008, twenty Canada-Cuba solidarity organizations, from across the country, gathered in Toronto at the 4th Biennial Convention of the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC). The Convention re-affirmed the CNC's commitment to continue to build bridges of solidarity and friendship between the Canadian and Cuban peoples. Toward this end, steps were taken to strengthen and professionalize the CNC's work. Several resolutions and initiatives were adopted and endorsed that established the priorities for the next two-years. Under this mandate a new seven member executive was elected: David Bleakney, Rolf Gerstenberger, Tamara Hansen, Isaac Saney, Sharon Skup, David Thomas and Ray Viaud. For the first time the executive has representation from organized labour in the persons of David Bleakney (National Union Representative - Education (English), Canadian Union of Postal Workers) and Rolf Gerstenberger (President, United Steel Workers Local 1005). Tamara Hansen, from Vancouver, and Isaac Saney, from Halifax, were elected as the co-chairs of the new executive. Subsequently, Isaac Saney was appointed national Spokesperson and Tamara Hansen liaison with La Table de Concertation de Solidarité Québec-Cuba.

The Convention was addressed by Basilio Gutiérrez, Vice-President of ICAP (Cuban Institute of Friendship With the Peoples), who emphasized the importance of the Canada-Cuba solidarity movement in ensuring that Canada-Cuba relations remain based on the international norms of mutual respect and equality between nations. Appreciations and support were brought to the Convention by Arnold August on behalf of La Table de Concertation de Solidarité Québec-Cuba, highlighting the joint work on the campaign to free the Five Cuban Heroes unjustly imprisoned in the United States that culminated in the letter of support signed by 56 Members of Parliament. Laureano Cardoso, the Consul General of Cuba, delivered greetings on behalf of the Cuban diplomatic staff in Canada, highlighting the long historical ties of friendship between Canada and Cuba and the role of the solidarity movement in maintaining and deepening those ties.

These ties were poignantly demonstrated by the Convention's adoption of a communiqué that affirmed the CNC's commitment to organize a campaign to aid and to contribute to Cuba's recovery in response to the devastating effects of the hurricanes that struck the island. "Today, like in the past, the Cuban people and their leaders can count on the support of the Cuba-Canada Solidarity Movement," affirmed the CNC. The CNC expressed its deep confidence that the Cuban people will overcome this new challenge, the same way it has triumphed over many others, whether natural disasters or challenges of other types. "Hurricanes may destroy properties and other material items, but they will never be able to destroy the indomitable Cuban people," concluded the communiqué.

September 1, 2008

Welcome to the First Edition of North of Havana!

The Newsletter of the Canadian Network on Cuba

Greetings All! ¡Saludos Para Todos!

By Isaac Saney
& Tamara Hansen

Welcome to the first issue of *North of Havana*, the newsletter of the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC). *North of Havana* is the national voice of the Canada-Cuba solidarity movement, reflecting the CNC's commitment to continue to build the ties of friendship between the Canadian and Cuban peoples. Published on a quarterly basis, *North of Havana* will highlight the latest developments in Cuba, Canada-Cuba relations and the ongoing work of the various countrywide solidarity and friendship organizations. Our first issue coincides with a seminal and transcendent event: the 50th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution (see CNC statement and other

reports). Across Canada several events are planned to mark the significance of the Cuban Revolution. Over the course of this year *North of Havana* will contribute to the celebration and commemoration of the 50th Anniversary by dedicating each issue to a particular aspect and dimension of the Cuban Revolution. In this way, we aim to elaborate the singular meaning and impact of Cuba, not only in Latin America but also on the global scale.

The publication of *North of Havana* not only reflects the continued growth of the formal solidarity movement but the deepening of the ties between the Canadian and Cuban peoples. This is poignantly illustrated by the success of the CNC's Hurricane Relief & Reconstruction Campaign, which from August to February 2009 raised more than \$400,000 from donations by individuals and organizations (see report on page

16). This outpouring of support, sympathy and empathy for Cuba is indicative of the sentiment of the vast majority of Canadians, irrespective of their political or ideological positions, for

the building of genuine friendship with the island nation: relations based on mutual respect and equality that uphold Cuba's right to self-determination and sovereignty. Having traveled to Cuba in the hundreds of thousands and having witnessed Cuban reality for themselves, Canadians have come away with a profound respect and admiration for the Cuban people and their efforts to build a society centered on independence, justice and human dignity.

For its part, the CNC will work to further advance the solidarity movement, step up the pace of the work to free the five Cuban Heroes unjustly imprisoned in the U.S. for defending their country from terrorism and ensuring that Canada-Cuba relations remain based on equality and respect for the right of Cuba to self-determination.

In the current climate of global uncertainty and insecurity, Cuba is in the process of making its state architecture more effective and efficient state: ensuring that organization is on par with the political (and economic) requirements of the national and international situation. Improving the Cuban system is what is at the heart of the matter.

In a world fraught with intense and significant challenges, in the spirit of the 50th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution we declare:

¡Otro Mundo Mejor Es Posible!
A Better World Is Possible!





*Ambassador of Cuba to Canada,
Her Excellency
Ms. Teresita de Jesús Vicente Sotolongo*

By Michelle Collins

*"America's Strategy Welcomed:
New Cuba Envoy"*

from embassymag.ca, November 26 2008

New Cuban Ambassador Teresita Vicente Sotolongo participated in this year's Terry Fox Run in Kingston, Ontario.

Once little more than a popular tourist destination for thousands of Canadians, Cuba has evolved into an important partner in many fields, says new Cuban Ambassador Teresita Vicente Sotolongo.

Since arriving in Ottawa almost three months ago, Ms. Vicente says she has been pleased to learn from many Canadians that they visit Cuba to take in more than just the sunny beaches. Many also go to visit friends and family, she says, and today Cuba welcomes about 700,000 Canadians a year.

"There is more and more human contact and they care about Cuba," Ms. Vicente says. "There are Canadians who have visited Cuba 50 or 60 times."

As an example of the integration between the two countries, Ms. Vicente describes how Cuba was the first country outside Canada to host a Terry Fox Run. The event is modelled after the annual event in Canada and named for the celebrated young man who ran across the country in 1980 to raise money for cancer research.

An important event in the diplomatic relationship, Ms. Vicente and the new third secretary at the Cuban embassy, Miguel Fraga, both participated in the Terry Fox Run in Kingston, Ontario, this past September, just weeks after arriving in Canada.

"This is something I have in my task to keep as a very important value in our relationship,"

Interview with Ambassador of Cuba to Canada Teresita Vicente Sotolongo

she says.

On the political side, Ms. Vicente says she is particularly encouraged by the Conservative government's emphasis in its foreign policy on enhancing relations with Latin America, including Cuba.

"I think this is very important," she says. "Canada is a neighbour, a close neighbour. And Canada is able and has the potential to have a more important role in our region. It has all the conditions to do that, so I think it's a very intelligent approach to the neighbourhood."

Active exchanges also occur between universities, she says, with students transferring between Havana University and Canadian schools, such as Dalhousie in Halifax. Next May, a seminar on Cuba will be held at Queen's University in Kingston, and will feature academics from both countries to talk about Cuba's politics, economics and culture.

One of the most important areas for Cuban-Canadian relations is, of course, trade, and Ms. Vicente says it is this area of the relationship to which she is most devoted.

Canada's open relations with Cuba, even after the United States placed an embargo on the Latin American country, have made Canada the country's second most important trading partner. Underscoring this, senior officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, including assistant deputy minister for Latin America and Caribbean Alexandra Bugailiskis, led a delegation of about 50 business folks to the country's annual trade fair earlier this month.

"Trade between the countries goes well. We buy here in Canada important products for Cuba, including food, for example," Ms. Vicente says, adding that the country's trade minister, Raúl de la Nuez, will be in Ottawa this week.

"This is to have a dialogue and to try to find out how to go further in bilateral trade, to know how to present here more Cuban products, and to know what to buy in Canada," she says.

Ms. Vicente's first foreign diplomatic posting in 1985, four years after entering Cuba's foreign service, was at the Cuban Embassy in Finland. Ms. Vicente spent many years in the Nordic countries, working at the embassy in Sweden and Denmark. She also served as ambassador to Switzerland from 2000 until 2003.

Even from the ministry in Cuba, Ms. Vicente's diplomatic expertise is rooted in European affairs where, from 1989 until 1993, she was in

charge of European Union affairs. She served as assistant director for all of Europe from 1998 to 2000, and then was promoted to director for Europe from 2003 until 2008.

"We have a very intensive relationship now with Europe," she says.

Her diplomatic experience in European affairs has also centred around trade and will be helpful to her here in Ottawa, she says. Ms. Vicente has been intensely engaged in advancing trade between Cuba and the EU, and in particular in encouraging the EU to maintain open relations, despite pressure to the contrary from the United States, she says.

These trading relationships are important, she says, because the immediate priority for Cuba is to focus on its development, especially in the wake of being hit with two strong hurricanes which destroyed more than half a million houses. She says the blockade by the United States has made it difficult for the island nation to rebuild its economy and address public health challenges caused by the storms.

Ms. Vicente says Cuba "has shown for many years we are ready to have a normal relationship with the United States if they decide."

"But we are not close to that really, we'll see," she says.

In spite of this, she says Cuba hopes to strengthen its public health services, its high standard in education and to become a leader in sectors such as biotechnology, noting the United Nations is already buying vaccines from the country.

Of the country's former president, Fidel Castro, who has been replaced by his brother Raul Castro, Ms. Vicente says he is in a very interesting part of his life.

"There are no doubts we have a very famous, well-known and clever leader, but I think Cuba goes further than that and for a very, very underdeveloped country, we have jumped to be a sovereign country with our own policies," she says. "Our aim will be to keep being the kind of country we choose to be and there are young people to carry on with this, they are educated and able to think and choose, and we should trust them."

Ms. Vicente says she has a strong team of diplomats with her at the Cuban embassy here in Ottawa. Among them is her husband Antonio Rodriguez, who is minister-counsellor at the embassy. The couple has a 16-year-old son who is attending school in Ottawa.

Cuban Hurricane Reconstruction Fundraising: A Huge Success!

Over \$400,000 Raised Across Canada

PRESS RELEASE:

February 19, 2009

The Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC), an alliance of Cuban solidarity and friendship groups from all across Canada, is pleased to announce that its fundraising campaign for Cuban hurricane reconstruction has met its interim target of \$400,000 in cash donations. In addition, a significant amount of material aid has resulted from our campaign and has been shipped to Cuba. The CNC fundraising campaign has also been instrumental in getting the Canadian government to be more reflective of the Cuban people in its response to the natural disasters.

Some of the large cash donations generated by the campaign were sent directly to institutions in Cuba by the donors (trade unions and businesses). Another considerable amount financed the sending of eleven 40-foot containers. Funds have also gone to replacing equipment lost to the hurricanes in Isla de la Juventud and to the urgent reconstruction of a community building in that Special Municipality. We have also purchased 22 digital pianos from Yamaha at a price that represents a substantial donation from the company (we paid 20% of the original price). These pianos will replace lost instruments in various parts of Cuba and will be distributed by the Nicolás Guillén Foundation and the Cuban Ministry of Culture.

The funds on hand, which amount to some \$170,000, as well as all further donations to this continuing campaign, will go to what remains Cuba's first priority, the replacement of housing lost to the three powerful hurricanes which together wreaked damage of more than ten billion dollars to the island. In consultation with the Cuban Embassy in Ottawa, the CNC has de-



September 17, 2008 - Cuba's President, Raúl Castro, visits hurricane affected areas.

done so far and what they will be doing to help the people of the Isla de la Juventud.

Professor Keith Ellis, the Chair of the fundraising committee of the CNC, has expressed his gratitude for the generous contributions made by Canadians from all parts of the country and for the spirit of friendship, solidarity and reciprocity shown to Cuba which is so extraordinarily kind to people throughout the world. He also thanks the musicians, poets and other artists, including Cubans resident in Canada, who have been lending their talents to the campaign.

The CNC Co-Chair and Spokesperson, Professor Isaac Saney, thanks all the affiliates of the CNC in different parts of Canada for their hard work that has resulted not only in the raising of funds, but also in the strengthening of ties between the Canadian and Cuban people. He also thanks Sharon Skup for her outstanding work in support of the campaign.

Contact:

Keith Ellis, Chair of CNC Hurricane Relief Campaign: 905-822-1972

Isaac Saney, Co-Chair of CNC: 902-449-4967

cided to help the devastated Isla de la Juventud. We have been in contact with authorities in that Special Municipality, and they have indicated that the district known as the Veintiséis de Julio (26th of July) would be an appropriate focus of the help in housing reconstruction that we could provide. The people there have extended an invitation to Canadians to come to see and be thanked for what they have



AMBASSADOR GREET'S CANADA-CUBA SOLIDARITY & FRIENDSHIP MOVEMENT

Dear Friends:

2009 is a very significant year for Cuba. We are celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Triumph of the Revolution with many activities, in Cuba and around the world, organized by the broad and militant solidarity movement, which over these 50 years has supported the Revolution and the Cuban people in their struggles.

The CNC and the movement of solidarity with Cuba have been an important organizer and participant in each of the solidarity activities with Cuba in Canada. Now, the Cuban Embassy in Canada, on behalf of the Cuban people and its government, wishes to convey to all you our deepest gratitude.

Today there are new goals and challenges we face to continue our struggle to preserve the Revolution. We will continue working for crucial tasks such as: the battle for the Liberation of the Five Cuban Heroes who suffer unjust sentences in prisons in United States; denouncing in every forum the cruel U.S. blockade, still in force; we should also find the ways to disclose to the Canadian society the real Cuba, in spite of the powerful imperialist machinery of disinformation. We know that we can count on you.

Revolutionary Greetings,

Teresita Vicente Sotolongo
Cuban Ambassador to Canada

50 Years on...

By Lázaro Barredo Medina

*Originally appeared in
Granma International,
December 2008*

"The dictatorship has been defeated. The joy is immense. And yet, there still remains much to do. We won't deceive ourselves by believing that everything will be much easier from now on; perhaps it will be much more difficult."

This is what Commander in Chief Fidel Castro told the people on January 8, 1959, the day of his entry into Havana. Many people could never imagine the immense challenge that they would live to experience.

Suffice it to say that just a few days later, Fidel proclaimed the right to self-determination in terms of relations with the United States and immediately, the aggressions, attempts on his life and anger on the part of U.S. politicians began, evidence of which can be seen in speeches and articles of the time, as in an editorial of Time magazine, the mouthpiece of the most conservative sectors, entitled: "Fidel Castro's neutralism is a challenge for the United States."

But the Cuban people could not be neutral in the face of the United States. The triumph of the Revolution that January 1959 signified for the Cuban nation, for the first time in its history, the real possibility of exercising the right to self-determination. From that moment on, neither the U.S. president, Congress nor its ambassadors could continue making decisions on what could or could not be done in Cuba. The bitter dependence had been brought to an end; a dependence that saw U.S. governors and ambassadors enjoying a degree of power in Cuba that was far greater than the actual power that they had – with

historic self-defense speech, "History Will Absolve Me".

Cuba established the economic and social regime that it believed was most just and established a socialist state with participatory democracy, equality and social justice.

The country's economy was characterized by limited industrial development, essentially depending on sugar production and a latifundia agricultural economy, where landowners controlled 75% of the total arable land.

Most of the country's economic activity and its mineral resources were managed by U.S. capital, which controlled 1.2 million hectares of land (a quarter of the productive territory) and most of the sugar industry, nickel production, oil refineries, the electricity and telephone services and the majority of bank credits. Likewise,

the U.S. market controlled approximately 70% of Cuban imports and exports, within a system of highly dependent volumes of exchange: in 1958, Cuba exported products worth 733 million pesos and imported 777 million pesos worth of goods.

The prevailing social picture was characterized by a high unemployment and illiteracy, a precarious healthcare, social assistance and housing system for the vast majority of the population,



respect to decision-making – within the U.S. federal government or in relation to any of the 50 states that make up the U.S.A.

When full national independence was achieved, the Revolution began to exercise that right by immediately applying the program that Fidel had announced during the Moncada trial of 1953 and which is contained in his

as well as abysmal differences in living conditions between urban and rural populations. There was a high degree of polarization and unequal distribution of income; in 1958, 50% of the population earned just 11% of total income, while a 5% minority controlled 26%. Racial and gender discrimination, begging, prostitution and social and administrative corruption were widespread.

Addressing the social and economic problems in Cuban society could no longer be put off and could only be resolved if the Cuban people had control of their own wealth and natural resources. Thus, using the 1940 Constitution and in line with international law, Cuba exercised its right to take control of these resources and assumed total responsibility for this action. The island paid compensation to all nationals from third countries (Canada, Spain, Britain, etc.) with the exception of U.S. nationals, given that the government rejected the provisions outright and transformed the Cuban government's decision into a pretext for unleashing a war unprecedented in the history of bilateral relations between the two nations.

Not only did the Revolution hand over land to campesinos who, up until then, had been subjected to semi-feudal conditions of production and forced to live in extreme poverty, but it also determined that all the country's resources should be allocated to national economic development and improving the material and living conditions of the population. To give just one example, in the 1980s alone, approximately 60 billion pesos were allocated to the construction of productive and social facilities.

The process of industrialization underway paved the way for economic and productive diversification. Under the Revolution and up until the economic crisis which began with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the East European socialist bloc between 1989 and 1991 – what we



in Cuba call the Special Period – the country's capacity for producing steel grew 14-fold, fertilizer increased six-fold, the oil refining industry quadrupled (not counting the new refinery in Cienfuegos), the textile industry grew seven-fold, tourism three-fold, to mention but a few. The state also created complete ranges and new industries such as machinery, mechanics, electronics, the production of medical equipment, a pharmaceutical industry, construction materials, a glass industry and ceramics, as well as making investments to increase and upgrade the sugar, food and light industries. In addition to these endeavors, we have the development of biotechnology, genetic engineering and other branches of science.

The country has also made great efforts in terms of improving its infrastructure. Electricity generation has risen eight-fold and water storage capacity has increased 310 times, from 29 million cubic meters in 1958 to nine billion-plus cubic meters today. There has been diversification with respect to roads and freeways and modernization of ports and other areas. Social needs have been covered fairly well, except for housing, which has been Cuba's biggest problem.

The progressive growth and diversification of productive potential and the application of a widespread social program has allowed the nation to confront the problem of unemployment. In 1958, with a population of six million inhabitants, approximately one third of the economically active population was unemployed. Of this figure, 45%

of the unemployed lived in rural areas while, out of 200,000 women in work, 70% were employed as domestic servants. Today, with 11 million inhabitants, the number of people in work is in excess of 4.5 million. Over 40% of workers are women and today they represent more than 60% of the nation's technical and professional sectors.

In 1958, the number of illiterate and semi-illiterate people in Cuba stood at two million. The average academic level of 15-plus year-olds was third grade, more than 600,000 children did not attend school and 58% of teachers were unemployed. Just 45.9% of school-age children were enrolled and half of them did not attend classes. Only 6% of those enrolled finished elementary education. Universities were available to just 20,000 students.

The education sector received immediate attention from the revolutionary government. Its first task was to develop a mass literacy campaign with the participation of the population. An extensive network of schools was constructed throughout the country and more than 300,000 teachers and professors were in fulltime employment in this sector. The average academic level for those aged 15-plus year-olds rose to ninth grade. One hundred per cent of school age children are enrolled in schools, some 98% complete elementary education and 91% complete junior high. One in every 11 citizens is a university graduate and one in eight has technical-professional qualifications. There are 650,000 students in the country's universities today and all education is free of charge. Education and vocational skills are also guaranteed for 100% of children with physical or mental disabilities, who attend special schools.

The precarious situation in 1958 with respect to public health was characterized by an infant mortality rate of 60 per 1,000 live births and

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

a maternal mortality rate of 118 per 10,000. The mortality rate for those suffering from gastroenteritis was 41.2 per 100,000, and from tuberculosis, 15.9 per 100,000. In rural areas, 36% of the population suffered from intestinal parasites, 31% from malaria, 14% from tuberculosis and 13% from typhoid. Life expectancy at birth was estimated at 58.8 years.

Around 61% of hospital beds and 65% of the nation's 6,500 doctors were concentrated in the capital. In the other provinces, medical coverage was one doctor for every 2,378 inhabitants and there was just one hospital for all the country's rural areas.

Today, healthcare is free of charge and Cuba has more than 70,000

doctors, providing coverage of one for every 194 inhabitants. Almost 30,000 of them are providing services in over 60 different countries. A national network of more than 700 hospitals and polyclinics has been created. Thanks to a widespread vaccination campaign (every child currently receives vaccines against 13 different illnesses) diseases such as polio, diphtheria, measles, whooping cough, tetanus, rubella, mumps and hepatitis B have been almost entirely eradicated. The infant mortality rate is 5.3 for every 1,000 live births and life expectancy exceeds 77 years.

There is also a series of advanced

medical services that are not considered as "basic" in the international arena, and are provided completely free of charge, such as intensive care units in pediatric and general hospitals, cardiovascular surgery, transplant services, special perinatal care, treatment for chronic renal failure, and special services for occupational and physical rehabilitation.

Likewise, the self-determination of the Cuban people is expressed through the right to defend the nation against foreign aggression. Today, more than four million Cubans – workers, campesinos, and university students – are organized in militia groups have access to weapons in their campuses, factories and in rural areas.

However, since 1959, Cuba has had to confront the hostility of 10 U.S. administrations that have attempted to limit its right to self-determination through the use of aggression and the unilateral imposition of a criminal economic, commercial and financial blockade.

One of the universally accepted principles of international law is that state cannot be allowed to coerce another in order to deny it the right to exercise its sovereign rights.

Article 24 of the UN Charter states that, in the context of international relations, nations must refrain from using threats or force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

Over the past 45 years, the United States has prohibited any trade with Cuba, including foodstuffs and medicines; it cancelled the Cuban sugar quota; prohibited its citizens from traveling to Cuba via the imposition of heavy sanctions; prohibited the re-export of U.S. products or items containing U.S. components or technology to Cuba from third countries; prescribed that banks in third countries should maintain Cuban bank accounts in dollars or use that



January 8, 1959: Fidel Castro, with fellow revolutionary Camilo Cienfuegos behind him.

The revolutionary state did not focus its attention solely on economic and social measures. It also embarked on efforts to establish an internal legal system to facilitate the right to self-determination via the population's direct participation in discussions, analyses and the passing of the country's principal laws. The most notable of these was the 1976 Constitution, supported by 97% of Cubans aged 16 and over through a referendum, as well as other momentous laws like the Penal Code, the Civil Code, the Family Code, the Children and Young People's Code, the Labor and Social Security Code and many others.

currency in their transactions with the Cuban nation; has systematically intervened to prevent or hinder trade with or financial assistance to Cuba on the part of governments, institutions and citizens from other countries and international organizations.

In the 1960s these reprisals forced Cuba to structurally reconstitute its economic relations when and establish its essential markets in countries in the former East European bloc – specifically in the Soviet Union – which meant that the country had to embark on an almost total re-conversion of its industrial technology, means of transport, and provisions, etc.

When Cuba lost its natural markets in Eastern Europe, the U.S. government intensified its blockade via the 1992 Torricelli Act, which used the pretext of “democracy and human rights” to prohibit U.S. subsidiaries located in third countries and subject to the laws of those nations from engaging in commercial or financial operations with Cuba (particularly in respect to food and medicines), and punishing these by prohibiting the entry into U.S. ports for 180 days of vessels transporting goods to or from Cuba or on behalf of Cuba, measures that – given their extraterritorial nature – do not just prejudice Cuba but also harm the sovereignty of other nations and the international freedom of transportation.

On March 12, 1996, the U.S. government passed the Helms-Burton Act, further aggravating relations between the two countries and assuming the right to sanction citizens of third countries in U.S. courts, as well as determining their expulsion or denying them and their families entry visas into the United States, with the aim of hindering Cuba’s efforts to recover its economy and hampering its possibilities of securing a greater insertion in the international market. That was also a way of attempting to pressure the Cuban people into relinquishing their

efforts of self-determination.

More recently, it has adopted the Bush Plan, an attempt to transform Cuba into a colony through an annexationist program and the sibylline intention to intervene via a pretext of “transition,” a scenario in which the State Department would entrust one of its leaders as “governor,” when the Cuban revolutionary state disappears. This plan, with which George W. Bush decided “to precipitate the day when Cuba becomes a free country,” has intensified the blockade and pressure on the Cuban people by repressing family relations between Cubans resident in the United States and their families on the island; grants million-dollar resources to terrorist groups in Miami, as well as to mercenary subordinates in the U.S. Interests Sections in Havana; and promotes formulas to destabilize the country and redouble international pressure on the island.

That hostility on the part of the U.S. has included other notorious manifestations of aggression, ranging from the military aggression through the Bay of Pigs in 1961, the dirty war carried out by counterrevolutionary gangs heavily supplied by the U.S. CIA, bacteriological warfare on agricultural crops (sugar, tobacco, and citric fruits), animals (swine fever), and humans (hemorrhagic dengue), to sabotage plans, bombings using pirate planes, and assassination attempts on the country’s principal leaders.

The actions of terrorist organizations executing military attacks on Cuba from U.S. territory are notorious, and are publicized and fomented by the Miami media. Groups are constantly recruiting adventurers who are willing to head off to Cuba as agents and saboteurs, who openly declare that they have no fear whatsoever of being brought to justice in U.S.



Above: May 17, 1959 - the Agrarian Reform Law was signed.

Below: July 26, 1959: Mass rally in commemoration of the July 26, 1953 attack on the Moncada Barracks.



Continued on page 12



The Case of the 5 Cuban Heroes Held in U.S. Jails!

By Tamara Hansen

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. These groups and others are responsible for hundreds of terrorist attacks which, according to Radio Habana, have taken the lives of more than 3,400 people in Cuba since 1959.

The well-documented list of atrocities committed by these groups and others is long. It includes the bombing of hotels in Cuba, assassinations, spreading of diseases, sabotage, and attacks against Cuba's supporters in the US. An important example of these attacks was the bombing of the Lincoln Center in 1978 after a Cuban ballet performance. Another, and one of the most horrendous attacks, was the bombing of a Cuban airliner in 1976, which took the lives of 73 people. The 5 Cuban Heroes were gathering evidence to expose the terrorists responsible for these crimes against Cuba and humanity.

Cuba released all the information that the 5 collected to the FBI. However, on September 12th 1998, the FBI arrested the Cuban 5 and threw them in solitary confinement for 17 months. It was not until 2001 that these men were given a trial.

Their Trial

The trial was basically over before it began, as it took place in Miami- a city with a heavy prejudice against anything relating to Cuba. During their trial the US government claimed the 5 were engaged in espionage or spying against US military bases and threatening "national security". Since the US could not prove this directly they charged the 5 with "conspiracy to commit espionage". The most sinister case

is that of Gerardo who they charged with "conspiracy to commit murder".

Throughout their trial the US government's lack of evidence was clear, as was their political motivation for arresting and charging these five Cubans. 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. When the Cuban 5 were first sentenced, few outside of Miami knew about the proceedings. However, these grossly unjust sentences did not go unnoticed and immediately following the trial, organizations within Cuba, the US, and around the world responded to the call to fight for the freedom of these 5 men.

2006-Today: the More Recent Struggle for the Freedom of the 5

On August 20th 2005, a three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the charges and convictions against the Cuban 5 and they were granted a new trial outside of Miami. The three Appeals Court judges ruled that they were originally sentenced excessively, and that there was no evidence proving that the three men had ever obtained or transmitted any top-secret information. This was a huge victory for the 5 Cuban Heroes and justice seeking people around the world. However, exactly one year later in August 2007, after immense pressure from US Attorney General Roberto González, the full twelve judge panel of the same court reversed the favourable decision of the three judges. This meant the case would continue in Miami where there is no possibility of a fair trial.

So the lawyers of the 5 Cuban Heroes went back to court to argue against some of the most important manufactured charges against the 5. This includes the charge of "conspiracy to commit murder" laid against Gerardo Hernández. On June 4th 2008, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta released another decision to uphold the unjust convictions against the 5 anti-

terrorist Cuban Heroes. The verdict of "guilty" was upheld on all counts, from the minor charges to the outrageous charge of "conspiracy to commit murder".

Cuba made an request to the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta to reconsider the decision of June 4th 2008. On September 2nd 2008, the unfavourable June 4th decision was upheld by the appeals court. This means, Gerardo Hernández is still faced with 2 life sentences plus 15 years and René González for 15 years. However, they did order that three of the Cuban 5 be re-sentenced. Antonio (life plus 10 years), Ramón (life plus 18 years), and Fernando (19 years), though they are being re-sentenced by the same judge in Miami that condemned them originally.

September 12th 2008 marked the 10th year of unjust imprisonment for the 5 Cuban Heroes. The US government is using these 5 men as part of their longstanding and brutal campaign to undermine the human rights of the Cuban people. This campaign includes the US criminal and immoral blockade on Cuba as well as the US-sponsored terrorism against Cuba.

The US government is paving the way for continued Miami-based terrorism and attacks against the Cuban people. As long as the Cuban 5 are in prison, the truth they uncovered will remain behind bars and the anti-Cuba Miami Mafia is free to operate and continue to attack Cuba with impunity. The US government must end this aggression, jail the anti-Cuba terrorists operating within US borders and free these 5 men.

In this extreme travesty of justice, the time to act is now. Justice and freedom for the Cuban 5 will only come through work on the streets. The US government needs to know that people all over the world and in the United States know about the case of the 5 and demand justice. As human and peace-loving people it is our job to join the call and demand freedom for the 5 Heroes.



CNC Rally for the 5 Cuban Heroes Toronto ~ August 2008



For Five Heroes

See you in Cuba
5 heroes returned

10 years, 1 decade
Denied embrace, or kiss
Weddings and funerals
Celebration, triumph

Still given to so many
Hope for Justice
Undeniable strength and determination
A promise of return

By circumstance I counted tens of thousands of signatures
Demanding your freedom
From 78 Countries
Mothers, sisters, fathers, brothers, humans
Different colors of paper, different sizes
Decorated with personal notes
Or filled with governmental identification numbers

The White House may never accept
Their true legitimacy
But we will
Because you said that even if there was one person
Fighting for your freedom from the outside
You would fight from within

Pounding pavement
In front of US Federal Courts
Or other symbols of US Imperialism
Demanding in so many languages
Justice
Freedom
For our 5 brothers
We wage this battle together

See you in Cuba
5 heroes returned

By Alison Bodine



Circa 1960: a Cuban worker corrects the signage for a recently nationalized telephone company.

Continued from page 9

courts.

That is why Cuban patriots have had to leave aside their personal interests to serve those of the nation, even sacrificing their family relationships, in order to infiltrate the ranks of those terrorist groups in order to discover their activities and, with this information, prevent the bloodshed of Cuban and U.S. people. They are willing to pay the price of the political irrationality of the U.S. government, as is the case of the five Cuban heroes unjustly incarcerated in U.S. jails for combating terrorism.

The above is compounded by the heavy military mechanism created by the United States around Cuba and its constant tension-generating activities, as well as the illegal occupation of the Guantánamo Naval Base on Cuban territory (today converted into a horrific prison camp), a part of Cuba rented out by force to the United States in the early 20th century and which the U.S. government refuses to return.

In the early 90's, with the disappearance of the Soviet Union, isolated and reviled by the international reaction, Cuba

absorbed the terrible blow of losing the bulk of its markets in a matter of months and an abrupt descent in its gross domestic product. But the island confirmed that it shone with its own light and that it had never been a satellite of anyone, given that it was able to face that juncture on account of the extraordinary resistance of the majority of Cubans, who have acted on the basis of authentic motivations, values and ethical principles.

The Cuban people have made a conscious decision to support the country's leadership, not only because they identify the system with their own interests, but also because of the responsible manner in which the state took on the crisis, reorganized its forces and designed a recovery strategy, despite the U.S. blockade and conditions imposed by its European allies.

The sacrifices provoked by that situation have been hard, but it has been possible to endure them because of the undisputed social advances attained, because of the confidence deposited in the country's leading institutions and because of people's appreciation that their government is not a decadent one or one that is in management crisis or lacking in strategies, but has confirmed that the population has remained at the center of all its work, even in the most difficult circumstances.

Fifty years have gone by and the liberation process has reached this point following the same direction

indicated that night, 50 years ago, when Fidel, speaking to the huge crowd awaiting him in what was the dictatorship's headquarters, affirmed that everything could be more difficult in the future, because we would have to fight to make the Revolution.

That is the challenge of the struggle currently underway to eradicate vices and exalt virtues, with Fidel as a soldier of ideas serving as a compass in the fight for freedom and independence.

Cuba's enemies are backing their all on the opposite of that. In this world, where politics is a caricature, they cannot comprehend that, in its thinking and action, this Revolution is a process of continuity, and that Fidel will continue to be the leader of the Revolution of today and tomorrow, because, beyond responsibilities and titles, he will continue to be the counselor of ideas to which we will always have recourse, because he has transcended political life to insert himself in an intimate way in the family life of the vast majority of Cubans.



Graduates from the Latin American School of Medicine in Havana, Cuba.

REPORTS FROM OUR MEMBERS!



► CANADIAN CUBAN FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION KINGSTON

A brief update on CCFA Kingston's Hurricane Relief fundraising activities.

CCFA Kingston is continuing its fundraising campaign to help Cubans recover from the estimated \$5-\$8 billion in damages caused by the hurricanes that struck the island in late summer and fall. Through our direct appeal to our members, and to other Kingston area friends of Cuba as well as through a successful fundraising dinner at one of Kingston's finest restaurants, the Rivermill, we have surpassed our initial goal of \$10,000 with a total amount raised of \$11,357.

The restaurant's owner showed his generosity and his solidarity with the beleaguered Cuban people by donating to our campaign \$20 of each of the eighty \$40 tickets sold. As part of the evening's activities, we held a very successful auction to which our Cuban Embassy guests donated fine rum and cigars and other generous individuals donated highly desirable items. The evening netted \$5,612 for hurricane relief. Merilu de la Luz B'Hamel, Minister-Counsellor at the Cuban Embassy, gave a moving account of the ongoing difficulties facing Cubans at this time and thanked Canadians for their friendship and solidarity.

On October 21, Kingston City Council passed a motion urging Kingstonians to help Cuba recover by donating to the CCFA Kingston campaign. We hope that the fact that Kingston has a sister city in Cuba, the city of Cienfuegos, as well as the publicity being given to city council's motion will result in more donations being made to our campaign. To date, contributions made in response to CCFA Kingston's appeal to members and the general public has been \$5,765.

We continue to receive offers to help and will carry on our campaign in some form for the foreseeable future. For example, John Kirk of Dalhousie University has asked CCFA Kingston to assist him in the selling of a text book he has co-edited on Cuba, "A Contemporary Cuban Reader" at the conference on Cuba being held at Queen's University in May 2009. The publisher has

agreed to let John purchase copies of the book with the author's discount and sell them at a price of his choosing. John is offering to use all profits from sale of the book for hurricane relief in Cuba.

► CANADIAN CUBAN FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION NIAGARA

The Canada Cuba Friendship Association (Niagara Chapter) invariably has a busy summer and this year was no exception. Through the dedicated service of our executive under the leadership of Chair Dave Thomas, we participated in many activities, hopefully fostering understanding and cooperation between our two countries.

We welcomed the annual Pastors for Peace Caravan as they crossed the border into the US, carrying humanitarian supplies destined for Cuba. The Western New York Latin American Solidarity group with Wayne Alt always play a big part in the reception at a local park on the American side.

A few weeks later the Vencermos Brigade, 70 people strong and fresh from a work session in Cuba, re-entered the US at the same point. Peter Kormos, Member of Provincial Parliament for Welland, joined us as part of the welcoming committee. He gave a stirring address to the returning group, stressing how important their challenge to the US blockade of Cuba is and congratulated them for their bravery. Peter has a long history of support for the Cuban cause.

Again this year we had a booth at the Art of Peace Festival

held annually in St. Catharines. This is a local display by the Niagara artistic community and gives us a chance to engage visitors with information and advice on travelling to Cuba. We had a very popular exhibit with much interaction. Gail Nagely, our secretary, along with Treasurer Vince Baldo with support from Canadian Auto Workers Local 199 are always front and centre at these events. Shortly afterwards we were participating at the annual "Bigga Tomatafest" in Niagara Falls, and once again our Cuban coffee and music were a big hit with much interest expressed. Co-Chair Pat Willick and hard-working Bert

Continued on page 14



CCFA Niagara at the Greater Niagara United Way's Tomatafest brewing and serving Cuban coffee. Servers, behind table: Pat Willick, Bert Bural, Sofia Vuorinen and Saleh Waziruddin.



Delegates from Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), La Table de Concertation de Solidarité Québec-Cuba, and Cuban Consul General Laureano Cardoso at the CNC Convention, August 2008.

MORE REPORTS FROM OUR MEMBERS!



Continued from page 13

Burel, along with his wife Delhys coordinated the activities.

Pat and Bert teamed up again at the annual Cuba Day celebration at Phillips Square in Toronto, manning a table with pictures and information. We also joined in the annual entertaining Boat Cruise around Toronto Island. This is always a delightful day organized by the CCFA-Toronto, and I would suggest contacting any member for information on this most entertaining day.

At CCFA Niagara's AGM on September 29th, Arnold August presented his exceptional PowerPoint, "Elections in Cuba." This happened during the federal election campaign in Canada. Candidates from the New Democratic Party and Green Party attended, displaying their campaign material, contrasting Canada and Cuba's electoral systems. Saleh Waziruddin replaced retiring Pat Willick as Co-Chair and Vince Baldo replaced Anne Blair (also retiring) as treasurer.

CCFA Niagara has been responsible for over \$8000 donated to hurricane relief. We continue to publicize and distribute information sheets and addressed envelopes for tax receipted personal donations. On Sunday December 7th we will show the DVD, "Besieged by Hurricanes". We also received and delivered to the Orion Foundation dental equipment for Cuba donated by Tom Potts, a retired dentist and member of the Latin American Solidarity Committee, a task force of the Western New York Peace Center of Buffalo.

As you can see we have a full range of events throughout the year with interests for all - young and not so young. When in the Niagara area, don't hesitate to contact any of our executive for information on what's up with us. I would add that one of our members Byron Harding (a good down east boy) is the owner of Clancy's, a restaurant on Stanley Avenue in Niagara Falls. He would be glad to welcome you to this area and provide any info.

Ron Boyer - Communications / Peace and Disarmament Committee Liaison

► CANADIAN CUBAN FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION TORONTO

We are organizing a New Year's Eve Celebration of the 50th Anniversary.

It will be a dinner, dance and celebration, with a live band, Pablo Terry and Sol de Cuba. At midnight, as with Cuban tradition, we will have the singing of the Cuban National Anthem, by professional singer Honey Novick, and a complimentary wine toast to the triumph of the Cuban Revolution.

We participated in fundraising events at the Jamaican Canadian Association with Toronto Forum on Cuba. Regarding hurricane relief, together with several local groups, the CCFA Toronto has been working on many fundraising events. One of the earliest was at the end of September with singers from the Cuban group Buena Fe at Cervejaria bar and restaurant, where \$5000 was raised and doubled by local Lawyer Juan Carranza. We participated in fundraising events such as the Jamaican Canadian Association with Toronto Forum on Cuba, Lula Lounge and in local restaurants, as well as supporting Harold Hosein and Recycle your Bicycle in sending containers of donated goods to Cuba. The CCFA Toronto held an event to show the Cuban television documentary on Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. We sent copies of the DVD to groups across Canada on request. The Toronto Branch of the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians held a fundraiser on November 30th, showing the Cuban television documentary and raised \$815 which will be matched from the Toronto Branch of the

AUUC, making it \$1630 raised in one afternoon. Our members have also been actively soliciting hurricane relief donations from unions.

► NOVA SCOTIA-CUBA ASSOCIATION

Greetings from the Nova Scotia Cuba Association! NSCUBA was established in 1989 and has been active since that time - some years more so than others. Our mandate is to promote education and advocacy on issues related to Cuba, to facilitate cultural exchanges and to assist in development projects. These objectives are approached through a variety of activities,



A meeting of the Nova Scotia-Cuba Association



*Treasurer Sharon Skup delivers financial report at the CNC Convention, August 2008. At left: Marvin Glass
At right: Diane Zack*

including promoting educational seminars and cultural events, co-sponsorship of events with other groups and organizations, and facilitating public speaking opportunities for Cuban visitors. As well, we provide financial assistance to a variety of

programs related to Cuba, including medical supplies and hurricane reconstruction funds.

In July, we held a very successful Moncada Day event in downtown Halifax, with live music provided by Los Primos. There was a large participation during the whole afternoon, and we are already looking forward to our 2009 activity.

Since September we have been quite focused on fundraising for hurricane reconstruction. We anticipate that we will raise over \$7,000 from a variety of events, including the sale of our NSCUBA calendars that were designed and produced by Ruth and Laird Wilton. Fifty percent of the calendar proceeds will go directly to our hurricane relief fund. In November, we participated in the Havana Nights Gala, which was a celebration of ten years of the Los Primos Project. As a result of the silent auction at the Gala, we raised over \$2,000 for hurricane reconstruction. Our letter appeal to members and friends generated several thousand dollars as well.

NSCUBA members hosted various Cuban groups, individuals and delegates with some good old Nova Scotian hospitality at many events through out the year.

At the November AGM, there were elections held for the executive for the upcoming year. Our new executive is Nelson Larson, Chairperson; Tim Bood, Vice Chairperson; Marilyn MacMullin, Treasurer; and Anna Migas, Secretary.

► TORONTO FORUM ON CUBA

October-December 2008 Report of work organized and supported by Toronto Forum on Cuba.

October 10th – Toronto Forum on Cuba organized “From Hatuey to the Cuban Five: on the occasion of Cuba’s Independence Day” at the Steelworkers’ Hall in Toronto. Speakers included Marcos Hernández Sosa, Consul of Cuba in Toronto and Keith Ellis, Professor Emeritus University of Toronto.

October 10th – Toronto Forum on Cuba published the first of its weekly newsletters.

October 18th - Toronto Forum on Cuba took part in the protest called by the Toronto Coalition to Stop the War to demand that Canada get out of Afghanistan, marching with a Cuban Five banner and distributing materials that demanded “Canada/NATO out of Afghanistan”, “US out of Guantánamo”, “The Cuban Five Out of US

Jails” and “No more of the ‘war on terror’ double-standard”. Members also distributed various materials on the Cuban Five, on the demand for visitation rights on the Miami Mafia in Canada and on Cuba Hurricane Relief.

October 27th – The Muslim community answered a call for donations initiated by Morteza Gorgzadeh, from Toronto Forum on Cuba, by presenting Laureano Cardoso, the Consul General of Cuba, with \$30,000 that was donated by the Islamic Society of York Region.

November 5th – Toronto Forum on Cuba issued a report written by two participants of the International Brigade for the 50th Anniversary of the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution, who had decided to participate in the brigade as a result of various information received from Toronto Forum on Cuba.

November 7th-8th – Morteza Gorgzadeh of Toronto Forum on Cuba participated in the IV International Colloquium for the Freedom of the Five Heroes Prisoners of the Empire and against Terrorism in Holguín, Cuba.

November 28th – Toronto Forum on Cuba and Black Action Defense Committee organized the fundraiser “Caribbean Communities for Cuba Hurricane Reconstruction” at the Jamaican Canadian Centre in Toronto. Total donations collected were approximately \$1,900.

December 4th – Toronto Forum on Cuba was acknowledged for its work done in solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution towards building Socialism of the 21st Century, by the Consulate of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Toronto.

December 23rd – Morteza Gorgzadeh of Toronto Forum on Cuba, wrote a letter entitled “CBC can lie about Cuba BUT cannot hide the truth!” in response to a CBC broadcast.

► VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES IN SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA

To celebrate and reflect on the huge accomplishments of the past 50 years of the Cuban Revolution, Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, in coordination with several other groups, organized eight events over seven days to highlight and discuss many important aspects of the Cuban Revolution. The entire week was titled, “Cuba in Perspective: Celebrating 50

Years of the Cuban Revolution”. Over 400 people attended throughout the week.

The events officially began on December 31st, with the huge New Year’s Eve celebration of the anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. The fourth annual event, which was once again sold out, began with speakers, film, and live music, and party-



Participants Arnold August and Tamara Hansen at the CNC Convention, August 2008.

goers danced the night away to a ‘world tour’ of music by legendary DJ Su Comandante.

The New Year’s celebration was followed by forums such as “Dynamism of the Cuban Revolution”, “Women and the Cuban Revolution”, “Cuba in Defence of Self-Determination: from Guantánamo to Palestine” and “Fidel in the Battle of Ideas”. Participants were able to dig deeper into the history, successes, and challenges Cuba has faced for the past 50 years. Between 30 and 50 people attended each of the forum events, and heard from a variety of guest presenters. A number of local musicians and poets also shared their talents throughout the week. The week also included picket action and film showing demanding “Free the 5 Cuban Heroes Held in US Jails!”

The entire week culminated in over 130 people attending “Cuba: A Revolution in Motion” – a special forum featuring the Cuban Ambassador to Canada, Ms. Terecita de Jesús Vicente Sotolongo and the Cuban Embassy’s Political Counselor, Mr. Antonio Rodríguez Varcárcel. Ms. Vicente answered an array of questions on Cuba’s political, economic, social and cultural realities. The evening concluded a successful and educational week of events on the Cuban Revolution, and was only the beginning of many more events to come in celebration of Cuba’s 50 years of achievements for humanity.



Cuba Wins Broad Support in Human Rights Council

By Fausto Triana

*Originally appeared in Prensa Latina.
Translated by Granma International.*

GENEVA, February 5 — Recognition of Cuba's achievements in education, health, international solidarity and the defense of its sovereignty were highlighted today in speeches by representatives of various countries regarding Cuba's report to the Human Rights Council (HRC).

This is part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), administered by a UN working group, which has already processed 54 other countries.

Cuba's report was presented by Cuban Justice Minister María Esther Reus, who explained that the report was drafted via a broad process of consultation with civil society and more than 200 non-governmental organizations (NGOs).



Cuban doctor helping patient in the Gambia.

She emphasized that her country places great importance on the UPR and that the principal quality of the Cuban political system is its ability to constantly improve in response to needs that arise.

It is a genuinely autochthonous project,

founded upon a rich history of struggle for equality and solidarity among men and women, independence, sovereignty, nondiscrimination and social justice, she affirmed.

Reus concluded her presentation by noting Cuba's adherence to the principles of objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity that should characterize international cooperation on human rights, always open to dialogue.

Various delegates spoke after Reus. More than 100 countries registered to speak, but because of time limitations, only 60 did, 51 of which spoke constructively and the majority with remarks of admiration. The other nine, as always, repeated the same discourse dictated by the empire, serving as its allies.

One note that broke with the stiff tone of the UPR was the speech by the ambassador of Sri Lanka, who was unstinting in his comments of recognition for Cuba, affirming that it is a country in the vanguard of cooperation with the Third World. He referred to the progress of women, Cuba's support for the

anti-apartheid struggle, its medical and literacy missions, its aid in response to the consequences of the tsunami in Sri Lanka and the earthquake in Pakistan, and other issues, ending with a "Hasta la Victoria siempre!" that led to an enthusiastic ovation in Geneva's Palais de

Nations.

Other observations included "impress-



Cuban Justice Minister María Esther Reus speaking at the UN Human Rights Council.

sive results," "best demonstration of a popular expression of democracy," "profound commitment to international solidarity despite the U.S. blockade," and "a Revolution that dignifies its people."

That led Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Cuba's first deputy foreign minister, to comment on the encouraging and respectful environment, in contrast to practices of manipulation and double standards in the former Human Rights Commission.

The three hours of the UPR's deliberations concluded after speakers from South Africa, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Ecuador, Mexico, Jordan, Pakistan, Algeria, China, Russia, Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica took the stand.

To round out other aspects of the report, other members of the Cuban delegation commented on the judicial, parliamentary, labor and social security, and informatics and communications. (PL).

Che Guevara

Thinker and Fighter!

**Second Annual
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**Vancouver, BC
June 2009**

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CARAVAN TO CUBA!



This summer, for the 20th time, the Pastors for Peace Friendship Caravan to Cuba will challenge the US government's economic and travel blockade on Cuba. The Caravan kicks off July 3 and will travel through up to 140 cities in the US and Canada, raising awareness about the US blockade and gathering humanitarian aid to take to Cuba. Participants will then spend nine days in Cuba, participating in a variety of educational and cultural events.

For more information contact IFCO/Pastors for Peace:

212-926-5757

cucaravan@igc.org

www.pastorsforpeace.org



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE

THE MEASURE OF A REVOLUTION: CUBA 1959-2009



May 7-9, 2009 Queen's University Kingston, Ontario

Presented by: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill,
Havana University, Boston University and Queen's University.

Information:

cuba09@queensu.ca

<http://www.queensu.ca/sociology>

► REPORT FROM CANADIAN-CUBAN FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION-KINGSTON

CCFA Kingston carried out a successful fundraising campaign to help Cubans recover from the estimated \$5-\$8 billion in damages caused by the hurricanes that struck the island last year. Through our direct appeal to members, and Kingston area friends of Cuba, as well as through a successful fundraising dinner at one of Kingston's finest restaurants, the Rivermill, we raised a total amount of \$11,357. Our efforts were aided by a Kingston City Council motion urging Kingstonians to help Cuba recover by donating to the CCFA Kingston campaign. The fact that Kingston has a sister city in Cuba-Cienfuegos - helped open people's hearts and wallets at this time of great loss and suffering across the island. The past months have been busy with ongoing projects supported by CCFA Kingston. For the third consecutive year we will be sending a Kingstonian on the Che Guevara Brigade. The scholarship we offer covers the full cost of the Brigade and is unique in Canada. Each of our first two recipients were excellent candidates whose experience on the Brigade

helped inform our citizens about Cuba and whose energy has helped publicize and fundraise for the following year's scholarship. This year's successful candidate is Dave Griffiths, Political Science student at Queen's, whose keen interest in Central America took him to El Salvador in March as an international observer during their elections.

This summer, CCFA Kingston will once again receive the Pastors for Peace Caravan, hoping that support for this important event will continue to grow in our city. Several Kingston institutions and many citizens are now aware of the efforts we make to collect humanitarian aid to send to Cuba both via the Pastors for Peace Caravan and Not Just Tourists and make regular donations. Our fundraising dinner on the evening of the Caravan's arrival here is always well attended as the participants strongly support the campaign to end the US blockade of Cuba.

One way CCFA Kingston maintains its ongoing connection with Cienfuegos, our sister city, is through mutual participation in each other's Terry Fox events, their Marathon of Hope day

in March and our Terry Fox Run in September.

We have also made a great effort to involve artists and musicians from Cienfuegos in Cubafest coming up in May. Partly as a fundraiser for Cubafest but also to raise general awareness of Cuban culture, CCFA Kingston has initiated a Cuban film series and we are delighted to see that audience size is growing every month.

Needless to say, since September much of our energy has been going into the organizing for Cubafest and support for the Conference at Queen's. We hope many of you will be able to attend and enjoy the fruits of our labour!



Contact CNC member groups!

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association-Vancouver
viaudray@vcn.bc.ca
www.ccfavancouver.ca

Cuba Education Tours
1-877-687-3817 Toll Free
778-859-1048 or 604-677-2944
info@cubafriends.ca
www.hellocuba.ca or www.cubafriends.ca

Free the Cuban Five Committee-Vancouver
604-657-1531
cuban5_van@yahoo.com
www.vancubasolidarity.com/freethefivevan.html

Victoria Goods for Cuba
250-743-2994 or
250-384-1608
vicc@telus.net

Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba
778-882-5223
cubacommunities@yahoo.ca
www.vancubasolidarity.com

ALBERTA

Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association-Calgary
ccfacalgary@shaw.ca
www.ccfacalgary.ca

Cuba Edmonton Solidarity Committee
780-488-0942
cesc@lagauche.ca
Web: www.lagauche.ca/CESC

MANITOBA

Manitoba-Cuba Solidarity Committee
204-783-9380
manitobacuba@yahoo.ca
dlzack@shaw.ca

AcheCuba Holidays
1-877-947-5661
info@achecubaholidays.com
www.achecubaholidays.com

ONTARIO

Ottawa-Cuba Connections
613-225-6232
webmaster@ottawacuba.org
www.ottawacuba.org

Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association-Toronto
416- 410-8254
info@ccfatoronto.ca
www.ccfatoronto.ca

Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association-Niagara
905-382-3468
ccfaniagara@yahoo.ca

Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association-Kingston
info@kingstonccfa.com
www.kingstonccfa.com

Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association-Windsor
ccfawindsor@yahoo.ca

Hamilton Friendship Association with Cuba
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www.cubacanada.org

Communist Party of Canada
www.communist-party.ca

Destination Cuba
mpacheco@gbrownc.on.ca

Free the Cuban Five Committee-Toronto
executivecubanfive@yahoo.com

Young Communist League
416-964-3894
johan@ycl-ljc.ca
www.ycl-ljc.ca

Toronto Forum on Cuba
torontoforumoncuba@rogers.com
www.torontoforumoncuba.tyo.ca

The Free the Five Cultural Committee
416-603-9858
free5cc@gmail.com
www.freethefivecc.org

MONTREAL

Communist League
514-272-5840
cllc_can@bellnet.ca

Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist)
www.cpcml.ca

NOVA SCOTIA

The Nova Scotia-Cuba Association
info@nscuba.org
www.nscuba.org

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