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Cuba's Fight Against Capitalism's Climate Crisis

by James Haywood

"Cuba has an energy policy whose core concept is to rely less and less on hydrocarbons and give greater space in the energy balance to renewable sources like solar, wind, tide, and water. Cuba has put in place a conservation system that starts at house level and continues to the public sector and cooperative farms, by substituting incandescent lamps by fluorescent bulbs, distributing energy-saving household appliances, and revamping the national power grid." (Elsy Fors, Prensa Latina, June 8, 2007)

Much has been written about healthcare and education in revolutionary Cuba, but the country's fight against capitalism's destruction of the environment is equally remarkable.

Mass mobilizations

The cleanup of Havana Bay, which involves over 40 local People's Councils, is just one example of the high priority given to the environment by the Cuban government. It is much more than a simple cleanup: Cuba's holistic approach to the environment can be seen in the way it dealt with

the river Luyanó, which was accumulating organic waste from four large slaughterhouses that were contaminating the water. To ensure that the pollution didn't recur, the Cubans implemented a simple yet dramatic fix: they relocated the slaughterhouses. Imagine that even being considered in a capitalist country!

Another example is a Wind Park recently opened in the municipality of the Isle of Youth to provide 10% of the municipality's electrical needs. That's impressive enough, but so too is the approach to construction: work began on it in August last year and by January one machine had already begun delivering power. What's more, because ferocious storms affect the area, the entire wind farm is designed to be dismantled within 3 hours.

The list of initiatives is endless; from investing in better piping to stop leaks and save water, to the South Coast Project, which is cleaning up the environment along a 142 km strip of coastline south of Havana Province and improving the lives of the people in the area at the same time.

This is really the key point — Cuba is not imposing Green policies on the masses, it is mobilizing the Cuban people to confront climate change and environmental degradation.

Cuba's response to the U.N. Climate Change Conference's call for 140 billion trees to be planted in 10 years is a case in point. The Ministry of Agriculture mobilized people through mass organizations such as the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) and the Federation of Cuban Women: 24.3% of Cuban land now is planted with trees.

In *Cuba: Beyond the Crossroads*, Ron Ridenour described a similar mobilization to distribute energy saving light bulbs:

“Many of the nation's youths were being organized to conduct social tasks and save on energy. In 2005, these social workers — mostly university students on study leaves — began going door-to-door replacing filaments and light bulbs with new ones which save enormous amounts of energy and reduce dangerous carbon pollution. The first bulbs are provided courtesy of the government. By the end of the year, five million people had been served. By summer 2006, as predicted, the policy was implemented nationwide, and energy savings alone from the new lights had tripled.... [Cuba] is the only country in the world to implement a universal low-energy, low-polluting lighting policy. By summer 2006, the low-energy, low-polluting bulbs are the only ones sold in Cuban stores.”

Today, Cuban social workers are helping other Caribbean nations to convert to energy saving light bulbs. Crofton St Louis, a member of the UK Cuba Solidarity Campaign, was in Grenada during this effort.

“I only knew of the scheme when two young Cubans visited me ... and offered to make the no strings attached switch. I agreed and the two young men set about the task. As I looked out I saw teams including young women in their distinctive red T-shirts going from door to door in the neighborhood.” (CubaSi, Spring 2007)

Urban farming

In the early 1990s, Cuba lost almost three-quarters of its trade due to the collapse of the USSR. During this time, which they refer to as the “Special Period,” Cuban workers were forced to improvise and work with whatever was available. Oil, for example, was scarce and agricultural labourers had to abandon tractors for oxen.

An important result of this Special Period was the growth of urban agriculture. Workers in cities were encouraged to grow their own fruit and vegetables on allotments, balconies and virtually every other open space. The organopónicos, as they are called, today account for 90% of fruit and vegetables consumed in Havana.

This move away from massive industrial farming based on toxic pesticides and monocultural export crops has led to more sustainable farming in Cuba, and an improved diet for the population.

At the same time, Cuban agriculture has been shifting from dependence on sugar to a wider variety of food crops in an effort to become more self-sufficient. Such changes could have been very disruptive, but when they began in April 2002, the Cuban government offered sugar workers the choice of moving to new workplaces or going back to school to learn new skills, and in either case guaranteed that they would earn at minimum the same wages they had been receiving.

Fidel Castro on biofuels and energy

Other Third World countries are also going through big changes in agriculture — but the change is in the other direction, away from food towards monoculture crops for the biofuel industry. Fidel Castro’s first political statements since his recent illness, published in the *Socialist Voice* pamphlet *Fidel Castro on Global Warming, Biofuels and World Hunger*, attack this disgraceful development.

He describes how the bourgeoisie would “...lend funding to poor countries to produce corn ethanol, based on corn or any other food, and not a single tree will be left to defend humanity from climate change.” In effect, some semicolonial countries could be coerced into converting their agriculture entirely to ethanol production, leaving their populations to starve.

He developed this point in an article published on May Day of this year:

“The struggle against hunger — and there are some two billion people who suffer from hunger in the world — will be seriously impaired by the expansion of land taken over by agrifuel crops. Countries where hunger is a universal scourge will bear witness to the rapid transformation of agriculture that would feed the insatiable demand for fuels needed by a civilization based on their irrational use. The only result possible is an increase in the cost of food and thus, the worsening of the social situation in the South countries.

“Moreover, the world population grows 76 million people every year who will obviously demand food that will be steadily more expensive and farther out of their reach.”

In another article he writes:

“The dangers for the environment and for the human species were a topic that I had been meditating on for years. What I had never imagined was the imminence of the danger. We as yet were not aware of the new scientific information about the celerity of climatic changes and their immediate consequences.”

Fidel has called for “an immediate energy revolution.” He points out that far from fighting climate change, the move to biofuels such as ethanol will actually make things worse.

“The engines of tractors, harvesters and the heavy machinery required to mechanize the harvest [of ethanol] would use growing amounts of hydrocarbons. The increase of mechanization would not help in the prevention of global warming, something that has been proven by experts who have measured annual temperatures for the last 150 years.”

No capitalist head of state, anywhere, has spoken so insightfully on the ecological crisis.

Sustainable development

As a result of its efforts to defend the island’s environment, Cuba is the only country in the world that meets internationally recognized standards for sustainable living and development, including the WWF’s ecological footprint measure and the United Nations Development Program’s Human Development Index.

In the recent Pathfinder Press book, *Our History Is Still Being Written*, Armando Choy, who heads the Working Group for the Cleanup, Preservation and Development of Havana Bay, explains why Cuba has been so successful in protecting its environment:

“This is possible because our system is socialist in character and commitment, and because the revolution’s top leadership acts in the interests of the majority of humanity inhabiting planet earth — not on behalf of narrow individual interests, or even simply Cuba’s national interests.”

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Stop the Deportation of John Graham!

Indigenous Rights Activist Faces Imminent Transfer to U.S.

By Ian Beeching

The British Columbia Supreme Court has dismissed an appeal by Tuchone-Canadian John Graham against his extradition to the U.S. Sitting in prison, Graham now waits to see if the Supreme Court of Canada will hear an appeal of the BC court decision. If it refuses, within 30 days he will be sent to South Dakota to face the same kind of kangaroo court system that imprisoned his former colleague and American Indian Movement (AIM) leader Leonard Peltier in 1977 and has held him ever since.

U.S. authorities accuse Graham of murdering Anna Mae Aquash, an AIM activist who was killed shortly after an armed standoff between U.S. government authorities and AIM at the Lakota Sioux Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota in 1975.

Under Canadian law, U.S. government authorities can request extradition of a Canadian citizen using flimsy or hearsay evidence before Canadian courts. A Canadian judge need simply believe that arguments presented by U.S. authorities provide a “reasonable expectation” of conviction of the accused. The same criteria were used to extradite Leonard Peltier from Canada in 1976. He was convicted of killing two FBI agents at Pine Ridge. Years after his conviction, evidence emerged that key prosecution witnesses were coerced into lying at his trial.

“In Canada,” said Graham’s lawyer, Terry LaLiberte, following the BC Supreme Court decision, “I’d drive a truck through the holes in this case.”

The Evidence

The case against John Graham is a COINTELPRO style frame-up. That was the secret FBI program during the 1960’s and 1970’s to disrupt or violently assault social protest movements. A 2005 *Vancouver Sun* article by Rex Weyler reported, “‘Alleged witness Al Gates had been dead for nine months,’ said LaLiberte, when the U.S. ‘claimed he was available for trial.’ Witness Frank Dillon, to whom Graham is alleged to have confessed, claims he did not make the statement attributed to him.”

Only one piece of evidence could possibly have pointed the finger at Graham. This was video-recorded testimony of Arlo Looking Cloud. Later, Looking Cloud claimed he had been given drugs and alcohol by detectives in order to manipulate the statement against Graham out of him.

Looking Cloud’s current attorney, Terry Gilbert from the Centre for Constitutional Rights in New York, “claims that Looking Cloud’s court-appointed lawyer incriminated his own client. ‘Looking Cloud was a homeless alcoholic for more than 20 years,’ said Gilbert, ‘vulnerable to manipulation by the detective in Denver.’”

“David Seals, with a Lakota human rights group, interviewed Looking Cloud at Pennington County jail in South Dakota, and writes that Looking Cloud told him, “‘It was a set-up ... I was

drunk. They were giving me drugs and alcohol.’ Seals claims the video confession is ‘almost incoherent, and the police were asking a lot of leading questions.’”

Can Justice be Found in Graham’s Extradition?

The extradition of John Graham is not about finding justice for the tragic death of Anna Mae Aquash but rather punishing Graham for his involvement in AIM and covering up the FBI’s likely role in the death of Aquash. John Graham’s defenders claim that evidence points to involvement by FBI agent David Price in the killing of Aquash.

According to Aquash herself, when FBI agents arrested her after the Pine Ridge standoff and shootings, Price threatened that if she did not cooperate “you won’t live out the year.”

A year after the death of Aquash, Price used her death to threaten and extract false testimony from Myrtle Poor Bear that led to the extradition and imprisonment of Leonard Peltier. According to Poor Bear, “He [Price] showed me pictures of the body and said that if I don’t cooperate this is what may happen to me.”

The FBI’s violent undercover operations against AIM during the 1970’s resulted in the deaths of dozens of members of AIM and other Indigenous rights activists.

History Repeats Itself

Warren Allmand was Minister of Indian Affairs in the Canadian government at the time of the 1976 extradition demand against Leonard Peltier. He refused to intervene, despite considerable pressure on him from Peltier’s defenders and others concerned with civil liberties. According to Weyler, “He now feels ‘betrayed and insulted ... [by the] FBI’s deliberate use of fraud.’ In 1992, fifty-five Canadian MPs filed a brief to a U.S. court affirming that Canada had been duped.”

In a letter in support of Graham, Peltier writes, “When we talk of sovereignty, we must be willing to solve our own problems and not go running to the oppressor for relief... We have been and still are at odds with the most dangerous, well-funded, strongest military and political organization in the history of the world [the US government].”

The John Graham defence committee is asking supporters to write to the Supreme Court of Canada and demand that the extradition decision of the BC court be reviewed and overturned. You can write to: *Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin, Chief Justice of Canada Supreme Court of Canada, 301 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario Canada K1A-0J1*

To support the campaign to free John Graham contact: www.grahamdefense.org

The quotes in this article are from:

- “Who Killed Anna Mae?”, by Rex Weyler, *Vancouver Sun*, January 8, 2005.
- Native Youth Movement, Vancouver chapter, statement on the arrest of John Graham, February 2004

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The Killing Machine

by Fidel Castro Ruz

Sunday is a good day to read something that would appear to be science fiction.

It was announced that the CIA would be declassifying hundreds of pages on illegal actions that included plans to eliminate the leaders of foreign governments. Suddenly the publication is halted and it is delayed one day. No coherent explanation was given. Perhaps someone in the White House looked over the material.

The first package of declassified documents goes by the name of “The Family Jewels”; it consists of 702 pages on illegal CIA actions between 1959 and 1973. About 100 pages of this part have been deleted. It deals with actions that were not authorized by any law, plots to assassinate other leaders, experiments with drugs on human beings to control their minds, spying on civil activists and journalists, among other similar activities that were expressly prohibited.

The documents began to be gathered together 14 years after the first of the events took place, when then CIA director, James Schlesinger became alarmed about what the press was writing, especially all the articles by Robert Woodward and Carl Bernstein published in The Washington Post, already mentioned in the “Manifesto to the People of Cuba”. The agency was being accused of promoting spying in the Watergate Hotel with the participation of its former agents Howard Hunt and James McCord.

In May 1973, the Director of the CIA was demanding that “all the main operative officials of this agency must immediately inform me on any ongoing or past activity that might be outside of the constituting charter of this agency”. Schlesinger, later appointed Head of the Pentagon, had been replaced by William Colby. Colby was referring to the documents as “skeletons hiding in a closet”. New press revelations forced Colby to admit the existence of the reports to interim President Gerald Ford in 1975. The New York Times was denouncing agency penetration of antiwar groups. The law that created the CIA prevented it from spying inside the United States.

That “was just the tip of the iceberg”, said then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

Kissinger himself warned that “blood would flow” if other actions were known, and he immediately added: “For example, that Robert Kennedy personally controlled the operation for the assassination of Fidel Castro”. The President’s brother was then Attorney General of the United States. He was later murdered as he was running for President in the 1968 elections, which facilitated Nixon’s election for lack of a strong candidate. The most dramatic thing about the case is that apparently he had reached the conviction that Jack Kennedy had been victim of a conspiracy. Thorough investigators, after analyzing the wounds, the caliber of the shots and other circumstances surrounding the death of the President, reached the conclusion that there had been at least three shooters. Solitary Oswald, used as an instrument, could not have been the only shooter. I found that rather striking. Excuse me for saying this but fate turned me into a shooting instructor with a telescopic sight for all the Granma expeditionaries. I spent months practicing

and teaching, every day; even though the target is a stationary one it disappears from view with each shot and so you need to look for it all over again in fractions of a second.

Oswald wanted to come through Cuba on his trip to the USSR. He had already been there before. Someone sent him to ask for a visa in our country's embassy in Mexico but nobody knew him there so he wasn't authorized. They wanted to get us implicated in the conspiracy. Later, Jack Ruby, – a man openly linked to the Mafia – unable to deal with so much pain and sadness, as he said, assassinated him, of all places, in a precinct full police agents.

Subsequently, in international functions or on visits to Cuba, on more than one occasion I met with the aggrieved Kennedy relatives, who would greet me respectfully. The former president's son, who was a very small child when his father was killed, visited Cuba 34 years later. We met and I invited him to dinner.

The young man, in the prime of his life, and well brought up, tragically died in an airplane accident on a stormy night as he was flying to Martha's Vineyard with his wife. I never touched on the thorny issue with any of those relatives. In contrast, I pointed out that if the president-elect had then been Nixon instead of Kennedy, after the Bay of Pigs disaster we would have been attacked by the land and sea forces escorting the mercenary expedition, and both countries would have paid a high toll in human lives. Nixon would not have limited himself to saying that victory has many fathers and defeat is an orphan. For the record, Kennedy was never too enthusiastic about the Bay of Pigs adventure; he was led there by Eisenhower's military reputation and the recklessness of his ambitious vice-president.

I remember that, exactly on the day and minute he was assassinated, I was speaking in a peaceful spot outside of the capital with French journalist Jean Daniel. He told me that he was bringing a message from President Kennedy. He said to me that in essence he had told him: "You are going to see Castro. I would like to know what he thinks about the terrible danger we just experienced of a thermonuclear war. I want to see you again as soon as you get back." "Kennedy was very active; he seemed to be a political machine", he added, and we were not able to continue talking as someone rushed in with the news of what had just happened. We turned on the radio. What Kennedy thought was now pointless.

Certainly I lived with that danger. Cuba was both the weakest part and the one that would take the first strike, but we did not agree with the concessions that were made to the United States. I have already spoken of this before.

Kennedy had emerged from the crisis with greater authority. He came to recognize the enormous sacrifices of human lives and material wealth made by the Soviet people in the struggle against fascism. The worst of the relations between the United States and Cuba had not yet occurred by April 1961. When he hadn't resigned himself to the outcome of the Bay of Pigs, along came the Missile Crisis. The blockade, economic asphyxiation, pirate attacks and assassination plots multiplied. But the assassination plots and other bloody occurrences began under the administration of Eisenhower and Nixon.

After the Missile Crisis we would have not refused to talk with Kennedy, nor would we have ceased being revolutionaries and radical in our struggle for socialism. Cuba would have never

severed relations with the USSR as it had been asked to do. Perhaps if the American leaders had been aware of what a war could be using weapons of mass destruction they would have ended the Cold War earlier and differently. At least that's how we felt then, when there was still no talk of global warming, broken imbalances, the enormous consumption of hydrocarbons and the sophisticated weaponry created by technology, as I have already said to the youth of Cuba. We would have had much more time to reach, through science and conscience, what we are today forced to realize in haste.

President Ford decided to appoint a Commission to investigate the Central Intelligence Agency. "We do not want to destroy the CIA but to preserve it", he said.

As a result of the Commission's investigations that were led by Senator Frank Church, President Ford signed an executive order which expressly prohibited the participation of American officials in the assassinations of foreign leaders.

The documents published now disclose information about the CIA-Mafia links for my assassination.

Details are also revealed about Operation Chaos, carrying on from 1969 for at least seven years, for which the CIA created a special squadron with the mission to infiltrate pacifist groups and to investigate "the international activities of radicals and black militants". The Agency compiled more than 300,000 names of American citizens and organizations and extensive files on 7,200 persons.

According to The New York Times, President Johnson was convinced that the American anti-War movement was controlled and funded by Communist governments and he ordered the CIA to produce evidence.

The documents recognize, furthermore, that the CIA spied on various journalists like Jack Anderson, performers such as Jane Fonda and John Lennon, and the student movements at Columbia University. It also searched homes and carried out tests on American citizens to determine the reactions of human beings to certain drugs.

In a memorandum sent to Colby in 1973, Walter Elder who had been executive assistant to John McCone, CIA Director in the early 1970s, gives information about discussions in the CIA headquarters that were taped and transcribed: "I know that whoever worked in the offices of the director were worried about the fact that these conversations in the office and on the phone were transcribed. During the McCone years there were microphones in his regular offices, the inner office, the dining room, the office in the East building, and in the study of his home on White Haven Street. I don't know if anyone is ready to talk about this, but the information tends to be leaked, and certainly the Agency is vulnerable in this case".

The secret transcripts of the CIA directors could contain a great number of "jewels". The National Security Archive is already requesting these transcripts.

A memo clarifies that the CIA had a project called OFTEN which would collect "information about dangerous drugs in American companies", until the program was terminated in the fall of

1972. In another memo there are reports that manufacturers of commercial drugs “had passed” drugs to the CIA which had been “refused due to adverse secondary effects”.

As part of the MKULTRA program, the CIA had given LSD and other psycho-active drugs to people without their knowledge. According to another document in the archive, Sydney Gottlieb, a psychiatrist and head of chemistry of the Agency Mind Control Program, is supposedly the person responsible for having made available the poison that was going to be used in the assassination attempt on Patrice Lumumba.

CIA employees assigned to MHCHAOS – the operation that carried out surveillance on American opposition to the war in Vietnam and other political dissidents – expressed “a high level of resentment” for having been ordered to carry out such missions.

Nonetheless, there is a series of interesting matters revealed in these documents, such as the high level at which the decisions for actions against our country were taken.

The technique used today by the CIA to avoid giving any details is not the unpleasant crossed out bits but the blank spaces, coming from the use of computers.

For *The New York Times*, large censored sections reveal that the CIA still cannot expose all the skeletons in its closets, and many activities developed in operations abroad, checked over years ago by journalists, congressional investigators and a presidential commission, are not in the documents.

Howard Osborn, then CIA Director of Security, makes a summary of the “jewels” compiled by his office. He lists eight cases – including the recruiting of the gangster Johnny Roselli for the coup against Fidel Castro – but they crossed out the document that is in the number 1 place on Osborn’s initial list: two and a half pages.

“The No. 1 Jewel of the CIA Security Offices must be very good, especially since the second one is the list for the program concerning the assassination of Castro by Roselli,” said Thomas Blanton, director of the National Security Archive who requested the declassification of “The Family Jewels” 15 years ago under the Freedom of Information Act.

It is notable that the administration which has declassified the least information in the history of the United States, and which has even started a process of reclassifying information that was previously declassified, now makes the decision to make these revelations.

I believe that such an action could be an attempt to present an image of transparency when the government is at an all time low rate of acceptance and popularity, and to show that those methods belong to another era and are no longer in use. When he announced the decision, General Hayden, current CIA Director, said: “The documents offer a look at very different times and at a very different Agency.”

Needless to say that everything described here is still being done, only in a more brutal manner and all around the planet, including a growing number of illegal actions within the very United States.

The New York Times wrote that intelligence experts consulted expressed that the revelation of the documents is an attempt to distract attention from recent controversies and scandals plaguing the CIA and an Administration that is living through some of its worst moments of unpopularity.

The declassification could also be an attempt at showing, in the early stages of the electoral process that the Democratic administrations were as bad, or worse, than Mr. Bush's.

In pages 11 to 15 of the Memo for the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, we can read:

“In August 1960, Mr. Richard M. Bissell approached Colonel Sheffield Edwards with the objective of determining whether the Security Office had agents who could help in a confidential mission that required gangster-style action. The target of the mission was Fidel Castro.

“Given the extreme confidentiality of the mission, the project was known only to a small group of people. The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency was informed and he gave it his approval. Colonel J. C. King, Head of the Western Hemisphere Division, was also informed, but all the details were deliberately concealed from officials of Operation JMWAVE. Even though some officials of Communications (Commo) and the Technical Services Division (TSD) took part in initial planning phases, they were not aware of the mission's purpose.

“Robert A. Maheu was contacted, he was informed in general terms about the project, and he was asked to evaluate whether he could get access to gangster-type elements as a first step for achieving the desired goal.

“Mr. Maheu informed that he had met with a certain Johnny Roselli on several occasions while he was visiting Las Vegas. He had only met him informally through clients, but he had been told that he was a member of the upper echelons of the 'syndicate' and that he was controlling all the ice machines on the Strip. In Maheu's opinion, if Roselli was in effect a member of the Clan, he undoubtedly had connections that would lead to the gambling racket in Cuba.

“Maheu was asked to get close to Roselli, who knew that Maheu was a public relations executive looking after national and foreign accounts, and tell him that recently he had been contracted by a client who represented several international business companies, which were suffering enormous financial losses in Cuba due to Castro. They were convinced that the elimination of Castro would be a solution to their problem and they were ready to pay \$ 150,000 for a successful outcome. Roselli had to be made perfectly aware of the fact that the U.S. government knew nothing, nor could it know anything, about this operation.

“This was presented to Roselli on September 14, 1960 in the Hilton Plaza Hotel of New York City. His initial reaction was to avoid getting involved but after Maheu's persuasive efforts he agreed to present the idea to a friend, Sam Gold, who knew “some Cubans”. Roselli made it clear that he didn't want any money for his part in all this, and he

believed that Sam would do likewise. Neither of these people was ever paid with Agency money.

“During the week of September 25, Maheu was introduced to Sam who was living at the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach. It was not until several weeks after meeting Sam and Joe – who was introduced as courier operating between Havana and Miami – that he saw photos of these two individuals in the Sunday section of Parade. They were identified as Momo Salvatore Giancana and Santos Trafficante, respectively. Both were on the Attorney General’s list of the ten most wanted. The former was described as the boss of the Cosa Nostra in Chicago and Al Capone’s heir, and the latter was the boss of Cuban operations of the Cosa Nostra. Maheu immediately called this office upon learning this information.

“After analyzing the possible methods to carry out this mission, Sam suggested that they not resort to firearms but that, if they could get hold of some kind of deadly pill, something to be put into Castro’s food or drink, this would be a much more effective operation. Sam indicated that he had a possible candidate in the person of Juan Orta, a Cuban official who had been receiving bribery payments in the gambling racket, and who still had access to Castro and was in a financial bind.

“The TSD (Technical Services Division) was requested to produce 6 highly lethal pills.

“Joe delivered the pills to Orta. After several weeks of attempts, Orta appears to have chickened out and he asked to be taken off the mission. He suggested another candidate who made several unsuccessful.”

Everything that was said in the numerous paragraphs above is in quotes. Observe well, dear readers, the methods that were already being used by the United States to rule the world.

I remember that during the early years of the Revolution, in the offices of the National Institute for Agrarian Reform, there was a man working there with me whose name was Orta, who had been linked to the anti-Batista political forces. He was a respectful and serious man. But, it could only be him. The decades have gone by and I see his name once more in the CIA report. I can’t lay my hands on information to immediately prove what happened to him. Accept my apologies if I involuntarily have offended a relative or a descendent, whether the person I have mentioned is guilty or not.

The empire has created a veritable killing machine that is made up not only of the CIA and its methods. Bush has established powerful and expensive intelligence and security super-structures, and he has transformed all the air, sea and land forces into instruments of world power that take war, injustice, hunger and death to any part of the globe, in order to educate its inhabitants in the exercise of democracy and freedom. The American people are gradually waking up to this reality.

“You cannot fool all of the people all of the time”, said Lincoln.

(published in Cuba on Sunday, July 1, 2007. Translation by Prensa Latina)

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Bolivia: The Clash of Autonomies

The debate on a new constitution and indigenous self-determination spills into the streets

By Federico Fuentes

Once again, politics in Bolivia has spilled out of the official institutions and onto the streets. With the Constituent Assembly entering into its decisive phase — less than two months from its official deadline to draft a new constitution to present to the people in a referendum — Raul Prada, a delegate from the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS, the party of Bolivia's indigenous president, Evo Morales), told *La Razon* on June 18, "it has become sufficiently clear that the issues this assembly is dealing with will be resolved not only inside the assembly, but outside as well."

This renewed round of confrontation has come as the Constituent Assembly has finally agreed on rules for debate and procedure, and has begun to discuss and draft proposals for Bolivia's future constitution. The right-wing opposition, hoping to both weaken the powers and credibility of the body and enforce a minority veto on any radical measures, had been pushing hard for a two-thirds majority voting system, stalling the body's deliberations.

A compromise agreement was reached on February 14. Delegates will attempt to reach a two-thirds majority. Controversial issues may then go directly to a vote in the final referendum on the new constitution.

After the compromise, delegates spent six weeks with their electorate, discussing proposals for the new constitution with their local communities. In addition, 21 commissions were formed to draft proposals for the assembly. However, only two commissions submitted articles to the assembly before a June 11 deadline — a reflection of the race against time that the assembly is involved in to catch up and have a new draft constitution by the deadline of August 6.

Disagreement over what a future Bolivia should be like exploded in the Vision of the Country Commission when some of the MAS representatives voted for a proposal put forward by some of the smaller groupings in the assembly. Much of the public debate had centred on the two competing visions for Bolivia put forward by MAS and PODEMOS (a right wing opposition party) — respectively, a "united, plurinational and communitarian state" versus a "constitutional, democratic and social state of law." The votes from MAS delegates meant that the minority proposal coming from the commission would be that of Social Alliance and Insurgent Homeland — a "multinational state." This meant that PODEMOS's project would be left off the table.

Unable to politically win the argument, in a country where opposition to rampant neoliberalism has buried the administrations of two presidents since 2003, Bolivia's right-wing opposition turned once again to threats and violence. On June 14, delegates from PODEMOS physically attacked a number of MAS delegates inside the assembly. Two days later, PODEMOS Senator Tito Hoz de Vila was quoted by Radio Erbol calling for the use of violence "without any limits

or restrictions” to impede the progress of the assembly. Meanwhile, violent right-wing student protests have disrupted proceedings in the assembly.

On June 18, the Pro-Autonomy Junta called for a “state of citizen mobilisation to organize a civil and democratic resistance,” declaring itself in open revolt against the central government and the assembly. The junta — which comprises the pro-business civic committees and opposition prefects of the four eastern departments (states) of Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando and Tarija (known as the half moon because of their geographical configuration) — called on the military to play “its constitutional role.” The junta stated that if its demands for greater departmental autonomy with legislative power were not met, it would “comply with the mandate of the people expressed in the *cabildos* [open town meetings] of December 15, 2006.”

On that occasion, around half a million people mobilized in Santa Cruz, with smaller demonstrations in the other three department capitals. The *cabildo* proclaimed the intentions of those present to refuse to acknowledge any new constitution that did not grant the departments’ autonomy. The mobilizations were organized by the civic committees and prefects which, together with PODEMOS, act as the public face of Bolivia’s economic elites, who are predominately based in the half-moon region and whose activities centre on hydrocarbons and agriculture.

Elite outrage

As each vote is taken in the commissions of the constituent assembly, the elites escalate their cries of outrage and threats of violence. It has become abundantly clear to them that not only does MAS have a majority in the constituent assembly, it is rapidly approaching the two-thirds majority that the right wing had previously demanded as a way to veto radical measures. Moreover, MAS has continued to demonstrate its willingness to politically confront the right wing and impose the will of the indigenous majority in the assembly.

The demand for a constituent assembly to decolonize Bolivia’s state first came to the fore with the 1992 march for Land and Territory by the indigenous people of Bolivia’s east. With the turn of the century and the rise of Bolivia’s new militant social movements — centred in the west and centre of Bolivia, where the indigenous, *campesino* and *cocalero* (coca growers) movements are predominately based, but reaching into the poor and indigenous communities of the east — the demand gained more strength.

As the social movements accumulated forces, throwing out presidents, such as during the “Gas War” of 2003 which removed Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, the elites were progressively pushed out of their traditional positions of power.

This rebellion, fuelled by the historic crisis of the Bolivian state — a result of neoliberalism and internal colonialism — helped establish Bolivia’s first indigenous government, a watershed in Bolivian history that marks a ‘before and after’ in the life of this country. The new Bolivian government marks the opening of a path out of this crisis based on the recovery of natural resources in order to industrialize Bolivia and break imperialist domination, and the creation of a new state through a constituent assembly.

In the face of rising indigenous power and loss of political hegemony over the west, the elites have attempted to protect their economic interests and political hold over sections of the population of the east through calls for autonomy. Around 80% of Bolivia's gas reserves, Latin America's second largest, and most of the large agribusiness sector are in the east. According to the Industry and Commerce Chamber (CAINCO), the region generates 30% of Bolivia's GDP, produces 50% of the country's exports and receives 47.6% of foreign investment.

This is the background to the right wing's belligerent push for autonomy. Their calls have resonance among large sectors of the east, as shown by the victory of the "yes" vote in the half moon in the July 2, 2006, referendum on autonomy.

In an article by Pablo Stefanoni for the May-June *Nueva Sociedad*, Vice-President Alvaro Garcia Linera explained that while the economic power of the east grew over the last few decades, political power remained in the west, which is also the centre of the anti-neoliberal rebellion. Therefore, while in the west people associated the economic crisis with neoliberalism, "in the east — where the political and cultural hegemony of the economic elites persists — they associated these sufferings with La Paz-based centralism, not the economic model."

Using this popular sentiment, the economic elites hope to fend off encroachment by the Morales government and maintain control over profits from gas extraction. The government's push to nationalize natural resources — gas and minerals — has directly affected the elites' economic interests. At the same time, this has increased state revenue through taxes and royalties, which last year amounted to almost US\$3 billion. This revenue will increase even more with the new gas controls and rising international prices.

Currently, 57% of resource royalties go into the national budget and 18.8% to the prefectures (the departmental administrations). The proposal from Santa Cruz is that the prefectures should control 70% — most of it remaining with the gas-rich eastern departments — a reflection of their inability to regain national hegemony, at least in the short term.

This is not just a struggle over who should control this revenue, but how it is used. At stake is whether Bolivia remains dependent on transnationals and the external market — or moves forward through a process of industrialization, centred on gas and regional energy integration, undermining imperialist domination over the country's economy.

The autonomy proposal by the Santa Cruz elites includes not just legislative powers and complete financial control over its designated revenue, but also the right to establish international agreements separate from those of the national state.

Indigenous self-determination

Ironically, while the right wing continues to pursue departmental autonomy it has also conducted a sustained campaign against demands for indigenous autonomy, raising fears that Bolivia may be divided into 36 tiny indigenous nations.

The position of the MAS leadership has been that while it supports departmental autonomy, it must be within the framework of national unity, with legislative power, taxes, land, natural

resources, the armed forces and police remaining under the control of the national state. Moreover, it must be combined with the proposal for indigenous autonomy.

In the majority report adopted by the constituent assembly's Vision of the Country commission, which was presented by MAS, article 2 of the new constitution would read:

“Given the pre-colonial existence of the indigenous peoples and originario nations and their ancestral dominion over their territories, this constitution guarantees their free self-determination, which is expressed in the will to join, and be part of, a united, plurinational, communitarian state, with the right to self-government, their culture and reconstitution of their territorial entities within the framework of the constitution.”

This demand for indigenous self-determination — aimed at achieving indigenous sovereignty over all matters of concern to indigenous identity such as language, culture, community structures and natural resources — is a powerful challenge to the rule of the oligarchy and a key demand of the indigenous majority that has been the driving force of Bolivia's process of change.

Another part of MAS and the social movements' proposals for the new constitution is the creation of a fourth power — social power — alongside, or above, legislative, executive and judicial power. This proposal, which is yet to be clearly formulated, aims to create spaces of participatory democracy for the direct involvement of Bolivia's indigenous majority and social movements in exercising power.

The demand for Indigenous self-determination is central to a reawakening of indigenous pride. Today more people identify as indigenous than a few decades ago, even though the number of people who speak an indigenous language has dropped. While more marginal indigenous sectors may talk of the reconstruction of the Qullasuyu (an independent Aymara state), today the overwhelming sentiment is a type of indigenous nationalism: asserting indigenous self-determination within the framework of the refounding of Bolivia by decolonizing the state, regaining control over land and natural resources and creating a new vision of what it means to be Bolivian, based on respect for different cultures and ethnic pride.

The election of the indigenous government in Bolivia is the high-water mark in this struggle for indigenous self-determination in the Americas, a major leap towards consolidating the right of the indigenous people to assert majority rule within a plurinational state. Today, this same indigenous majority is putting its hopes for this new Bolivia in the constituent assembly.

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World Tyranny – The Basis of the Killing Machine

by **Fidel Castro Ruz,**

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The founding fathers of the American nation could not imagine that what they were proclaiming at that time, as any other historical society, was carrying within it the seeds of its own transformation.

The attractive Declaration of Independence of 1776, which celebrated its 231st birthday last Wednesday, stated something which in one way or another captivated many of us:

“We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter it or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

It was the result of the influence of the best minds and philosophers of a Europe overwhelmed by feudalism, the privileges of the aristocracy and absolute monarchies.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau stated in his famous Social Contract:

“The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right, and obedience into duty.” (...) “Force is a physical power, and I fail to see what moral effect it can have. To yield to force is an act of necessity, not of will...” (...) “To renounce liberty is to renounce being a man, to surrender the rights of Humanity and even its duties. For him who renounces everything no indemnity is possible.”

In the Thirteen Colonies that obtained their independence, there were also forms of slavery as atrocious as those in ancient times. Men and women were sold at public auction. The new nation emerged with its own religion and culture. The Tea Tax was the spark that set off the rebellion.

In those vast lands slavery continued for at least 100 years, and after two centuries, slave descendants are still feeling the consequences. There were native communities which were the legitimate natural inhabitants, as well as forests, water, lakes, herds of millions of bison, natural species of animals and plants, abundant and various foods. Hydrocarbons were unknown then, as was the enormous wasting of energy carried out by today’s society.

Had the same declaration of principles been proclaimed in the countries crossed by the Sahara Desert, it would not have created a paradise for European immigrants. Today we must speak about immigrants coming from the poor countries that cross, or try to cross, the U.S. borders by

the millions each year in the quest for jobs, and are not entitled even to parental custody over their children if they are born on U.S. soil.

The Philadelphia Declaration was written at a time when there were only small printing presses and letters took years to get from one country to another. There were only a few people who could read and write. Today, images, words and ideas travel in a fraction of a second from one corner to another in a globalized planet. Conditioned reflexes are created in the minds of people. We cannot speak about the right to use, but rather about the overuse of free expression and mass alienation. Likewise, with modest electronic equipment, anybody, during peacetime, can send their ideas out into the world without any authorization from any Constitution. It would be a battle of ideas; in any case, a mass of truths versus a mass of lies.

Truths do not need commercial advertisements. Nobody could disagree with the Philadelphia Declaration or with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Social Contract. Both documents support the right to struggle against the established world tyranny.

Could we ignore the pillaging wars and the slaughters which are forced upon the poor peoples who make up three-quarters of the planet? No! Those are typical of today's world and of a system that could not sustain itself otherwise. At an enormous political, economic and scientific cost, the human species is being pushed to the edge of an abyss.

My aim is not to repeat concepts that I have mentioned in other reflections. Based on simple events, my purpose is to carry on demonstrating the immense hypocrisy and the total lack of ethics which characterize the actions, chaotic by nature, of the government of the United States.

In "The Killing Machine," published last Sunday, I said that it was through one of the declassified CIA documents that we found out about the attempt to poison me using an official of the Cuban government with access to my office. It dealt with a person about whom I should have sought out some information, since I didn't have the elements on hand to make the necessary judgement. In fact, I offered my apologies if I was hurting the feelings of any descendants, whether or not the concerned person were guilty. I later continued to analyze other important subjects in the CIA revelations.

During the early days of the Revolution, I used to visit, almost on a daily basis, the recently created National Institute of Agrarian Reform, located where today we have the headquarters of the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. We were not able to use the Palace of the Revolution yet, since that was the venue of the Palace of Justice at that time. Its construction resulted from juicy business deals made by the overthrown regime. The main profit came from the increased value of real estate lands, from which thousands of people had been evicted. As a recently graduated lawyer, I worked pro bono as the attorney for the defense of those people, months before Batista's coup d'état.

From the offices of INRA, on March 4, 1960, I heard an ear-splitting explosion of *La Coubre* and I watched a dark column of smoke rising above the port of Havana. What came to my mind immediately was the thought of a ship loaded with anti-tank and anti-personal grenades that could be used in the FAL rifles we had acquired from Belgium, a country far from being suspected of being Communist. Right away I went down to go to that location. On my way there,

because of the noise and the vehicle's vibrations, I could not hear the second explosion. More than 100 people died and dozens were maimed. At the funeral for the victims, the cry of "Homeland or Death" (Patria o Muerte) was spontaneously born.

We know that everything was carefully planned by the Central Intelligence Agency right from the port where the ship was loaded. The ship had passed through the ports of Le Havre, Hamburg and Antwerp. The grenades were loaded at the last of these, in Belgium. The explosions on the ship also killed several of the French crew.

Why, in the name of freedom of information, do they not declassify a single document that will tell us how the CIA, almost half a century ago, exploded the steamship *La Coubre* and cut off the supply of Belgian weapons which, as the CIA itself admitted on June 14, 1960, was a very important concern for the United States?

What was I devoting my time to during the feverish days previous to the attack through Bay of Pigs?

The first large-scale clean-up in the Escambray Mountains took place during the last months of 1960 up until early in 1961. More than 50 thousand men took part, almost all of them coming from the former provinces of Havana and Las Villas.

A flood of weapons was arriving in ships from the USSR. These were not exploding in ports. It was useless to try to buy them elsewhere, and thus we avoided the pretext that the United States used to attack Guatemala, which eventually cost more than one hundred thousand Guatemalan people dead or missing.

In Czechoslovakia we bought light weapons and a number of 20 mm and double-barrelled anti-aircraft guns. The tanks with 85 mm cannons, 100 mm armored artillery, 75 mm antitank cannon, mortars, howitzers and large caliber cannon up to 122 mm, and light and heavy anti-aircraft, all came directly from the USSR.

It would have taken at least a year to train by traditional methods the personnel needed to use all that weaponry. We did it in a matter of weeks. We dedicated practically one hundred percent of our time to that task almost two years after the triumph of the Revolution.

We were aware of an imminent attack, but didn't know when or how it would come. All possible access points were being defended or guarded. The leaders all had their headquarters: Raúl in Oriente, Almeida in the center, and Che in Pinar del Río. I was headquartered in the capital: a former bourgeois residence had been adapted for that purpose on the highest right bank of the Almendares River, close to the point where the river flows into the sea.

It was already daylight on April 15, 1961, and there I was, since the first early morning hours, receiving news from Oriente, when a ship had come from the southern United States, skippered by Nino Díaz, with a group of counterrevolutionaries on board dressed in olive green fatigues similar to the ones worn by our troops, ready to land in the Baracoa area. This was to create a diversion far from the exact site of the main attack, in order to create maximum confusion. The ship was already at the crosshairs of the antitank cannons, but in the end the landing did not take place.

On the night of the 14th, we also got news that one of our three jet fighters, which were training craft ready for engagement, had blown up during a reconnaissance flight over the area of presumptive landing. This was undoubtedly a Yankee action perpetrated from the Guantánamo Naval Base or somewhere else in the sea or the air. There was no radar to exactly pinpoint the event. The outstanding revolutionary pilot, Orestes Acosta, died in that action.

From the headquarters I mentioned, I could see the B-26s flying low over the spot and, a few seconds later, I heard the first missiles launched without warning against our young artillery, who for the most part were being trained at the Ciudad Libertad Air Base. The response of those brave men was practically instantaneous.

Besides, I have no doubt whatsoever that Juan Orta was a traitor. The pertinent details about his life and conduct are where they ought to be: in the archives of the Department of State Security, born in those years under enemy fire. The most politically conscious men were the ones assigned that mission.

Orta had received the poisoned pills which had been proposed to Maheu by Giancana. Maheu's conversation with Roselli, who would play the part of mob contact, took place on September 14, 1960, months before Kennedy's election and inauguration.

The traitor, Orta, had no special merits. We kept writing each other when we were looking for the support of Cuban emigrants and exiles in the United States. He was appreciated for his apparent training and helpful attitude. That was where his special talent laid. After the triumph of the Revolution, he had frequent access to me during an important period. Based on his possibilities then, it was believed that he would be able to put the poison into a soft drink or a glass of orange juice.

He had received money from the mob supposedly for helping to reopen the gambling casinos. He had nothing to do with this. We were the ones who had made that decision. Urrutia's unilateral order, issued without previous consultation, was creating chaos and promoting protests by thousands of workers in the tourist and business sectors, at a time when unemployment was running high.

Some time later, the gambling casinos were shut down for good by the Revolution.

When he was given the poison, contrary to what used to happen in the early days, Orta had very little possibilities to coincide with me. I was fully involved in the activities I previously described.

Without saying a word to anybody about the enemy plans, on April 13th, 1961, two days before the attack on our air bases, Orta sought asylum at the Venezuelan Embassy which Rómulo Betancourt had placed at the unconditional service of Washington. The numerous counterrevolutionaries seeking asylum there were not granted exit permits until the brutal armed aggression by the United States against Cuba let up.

We already had to put up with the betrayal of Rafael del Pino Siero in Mexico. After deserting a few days before our departure for Cuba, a date he wasn't aware of, he sold to Batista for 30 thousand dollars some important secrets dealing with part of the weapons and the boat which

would take us to Cuba. With elegant cunning he divided up the information in order to gain confidence and to guarantee compliance with each part. First, he would receive some thousands of dollars for delivering two weapons deposits that he knew about. A week later, he would deliver the most important information: the boat that was bringing us to Cuba and the landing site. They would be able to capture us all along with the other weapons, but before that, they had to give him all of the money. Some Yankee expert surely had advised him.

Despite this betrayal, we left Mexico in the “Granma” on the set date. Some of our supporters thought that Pino would never betray us, that his desertion was due to his dislike of discipline and the training I demanded of him. I won’t say how I learned of the operation that had been hatched between him and Batista, but I learned about it with full precision, so we were able to take appropriate measures in order to protect personnel and weapons that were en route to Tuxpan, the launch site. That valuable information didn’t cost a penny.

When the final offensive by the tyranny in the Sierra Maestra had finished, we had to also fight against the bold tricks of Evaristo Venereo, an agent of the regime who, disguised as a revolutionary, tried to infiltrate the Movement in Mexico. He was the liaison with the secret police in that country, a very repressive body which he advised for the interrogation of Cándido González; this heroic militant was blindfolded during his interrogation and was assassinated after the landing. He was one of the few comrades who drove the car I moved around in.

Evaristo returned to Cuba later. He was assigned the mission of assassinating me when our forces were advancing towards Santiago de Cuba, Holguín, Las Villas and the western part of Cuba. We learned of the details when we took over the archives of the Military Intelligence Service. These events are documented.

I have survived numerous assassination plots. Only luck and the habit of carefully observing every detail allowed all of us, Camilo, Che, Raúl, Almeida, Guillermo, who were later known as the leaders of a triumphant Revolution, to survive the trickery of Eutimio Guerra during the early and most dramatic days in the Sierra Maestra. We might have possibly died when we were at the verge of being eliminated with a ridiculous siege laid on our camp by surprise under the traitor’s guidance. During the brief clash that ensued, we suffered a sad loss: a wonderful, black sugar worker and active combatant, Julio Zenón Acosta, who moved ahead of me and fell at my side. Others survived the deadly danger, and fell in combat afterwards, as was the case of Ciro Frías, an excellent comrade and promising leader, who died in Imías, in the Second Front; Ciro Redondo, who fiercely fought the enemy with the troops of Che’s column, and was killed in Marverde; and Julito Díaz, who was relentlessly shooting his caliber 30 machine gun and died a few steps from our Command Post at El Uvero battle.

We set up the ambush at a very well chosen spot, waiting for the enemy, because we were aware of the moves they intended to make that day. Our attention slackened for a few minutes when two men from the group, who had been sent out as scouts before deciding to move, returned without news.

Eutimio was guiding the enemy dressed in a white ‘guayabera’ shirt, the only thing visible in the Alto de Espinosa woods, where we were waiting for him. Batista had the headlines ready about

the elimination of the whole group, which was for him a sure thing, and had notified the press. Out of excessive confidence, we had in fact underestimated the enemy which was taking advantage of human weaknesses. At that time, we were a group of about 22 well-seasoned and selected men. Ramiro, wounded in one leg, was recovering at some distance from us.

The column of more than 300 soldiers, who were advancing one abreast through the sheer and wooded landscape, was spared a storming blow, thanks to a last-minute move that we made.

How did that machine work in the face of the Cuban Revolution?

As early as April of 1959, I visited the United States as a guest of the Washington Press Club. Nixon deigned to have me visit him in his private office. Later he said that I was inexperienced in the subject of economics.

I was so aware of this inexperience, that I enrolled in three university degree courses in order to qualify for a scholarship that would allow me to study Economics at Harvard. I had already finished and had written the exams for all the Law, Diplomatic Law and Social Science courses. I only had two subjects to be examined on: History of Social Doctrines and History of Political Doctrines. I had been studying them carefully. That year, no other student was making the effort. The path had been cleared, but events were on the fast track in Cuba and I understood that this was not the time to take a scholarship to go study Economics.

I went to Harvard on a visit at the end of 1948. As I returned to New York, I bought a copy of *Capital* in English in order to study Marx's most notable work and at the same time improve my command of that language. I was not "an underground Communist Party member" as Nixon, with his crafty and penetrating gaze, happened to think. If there is something I can be sure of, and I discovered it at the University, is that I was first a Utopian Communist and then a radical Socialist by virtue of my own analysis and studies, and was ready to fight with the proper strategies and tactics.

My only qualm about speaking with Nixon was the distaste I had in frankly explaining my philosophy to a Vice-president and a likely future President of the United States, an expert in imperialist economic concepts and governing methods, which I had ceased to believe in long ago.

What was the gist of that meeting which took hours, according to the author of the declassified memo that refers to it? I only have my own memories of what happened. I have selected the paragraphs from this memo which, in my opinion, best explain Nixon's ideas.

"He (Castro) was particularly concerned about whether he might have irritated Senator Smathers for the comments he made with regard to him. I reassured him at the beginning of the conversation that 'Meet the Press' was one of the most difficult programs a public official could go to and that he had done extremely well – particularly having in mind the fact that he had the courage to go on in English rather than to speak through a translator."

"It was also apparent that as far as his visit to the United States was concerned that his primary interest was 'not to get a change in the sugar quota or to get a government loan but to win support for his policies from American public opinion.'"

“It was this almost slavish subservience to prevailing majority opinion –the voice of the mob – rather than his naïve attitude towards Communism and his obvious lack of understanding of even the most elementary economic principles which concerned me most in evaluating what kind of a leader he might eventually turn out to be. That is the reason why I spent as much time as I could trying to emphasize that he had the great gift of leadership, but that it was the responsibility of a leader not always to follow public opinion (but to help to direct it in the proper channels,) not to give the people what they think they want at a time of emotional stress but to make them want what they ought to have.”

“I in my turn, tried to impress upon him the fact that while we believe in majority rule that even a majority can be tyrannous and that there are certain individual rights which a majority should never have the power to destroy.”

“I frankly doubt that I made too much of an impression upon him but he did listen and appeared to be somewhat receptive. I tried to cast my appeal to him primarily in terms of how his place in history would be affected by the courage and statesmanship he displayed at this time. I emphasized that the easy thing to do was to follow the mob, but that the right thing in the long run would be better for the people and, of course, better for him as well. As I have already indicated he was incredibly naïve with regard to the Communist threat and appeared to have no fear whatever that the Communists might eventually come to power in Cuba.”

“In our discussions of Communism I again tried to cast the arguments in terms of his own self-interest and to point out that the revolution which he had led might be turned against him and the Cuban people unless he kept control of the situation and made sure that the Communists did not get into positions of power and influence. On this score I feel I made very little impression, if any.”

“I put as much emphasis as possible on the need for him to delegate responsibility, but again whether I got across was doubtful.”

“It was apparent that while he paid lip service to such institutions as freedom of speech, press and religion that his primary concern was with developing programs for economic progress. He said over and over that a man who worked in the sugar cane fields for three months a year and starved the rest of the year wanted a job, something to eat, a house and some clothing.”

“He indicated that it was very foolish for the United States to furnish arms to Cuba or any other Caribbean country. He said ‘anybody knows that our countries are not going to be able to play any part in the defense of this hemisphere in the event a world war breaks out. The arms governments get in this hemisphere are only used to suppress people as Batista used his arms to fight the revolution. It would be far better if the money that you give to Latin American countries for arms be provided for capital investment.’ I will have to admit that as far as his basic argument was concerned here I found little that I could disagree with!”

“We had a rather extended discussion of how Cuba could get this investment capital it needed for economic progress. He insisted that what Cuba primarily needed and what he wanted was not private capital but government capital.”

I was referring to the capital owned by the Cuban government.

Nixon himself acknowledged that I never asked for any resources from the U.S. government. He got a little mixed up and said:

“... that government capital was limited because of the many demands upon it and the budget problems we presently confronted.”

It was evident I clarified him on that because right afterwards he pointed out in his memo:

“... that there was competition for capital throughout the Americas and the world and that it would not go to a country where there was any considerable fear that policies might be adopted which would discriminate against private enterprise.”

“Here again on this point I doubt if I made too much of an impression.”

“I tried tactfully to suggest to Castro that Muñoz Marín had done a remarkable job in Puerto Rico in attracting private capital and in generally raising the standard of living of his people and that Castro might well send one of his top economic advisors to Puerto Rico to have a conference with Muñoz Marín. He took a very dim view of this suggestion, pointing out that the Cuban people were ‘very nationalistic’ and would look with suspicion on any programs initiated in what they would consider to be a ‘colony’ of the United States.”

“I am inclined to think that the real reason for his attitude is simply that he disagreed with Muñoz firm position as an advocate of private enterprise and does not want to get any advice which might divert him from his course of leading Cuba toward more socialism of its economy.”

“You in America should not be talking so much about your fear of what the Communists may do in Cuba or in some other country in Latin America, Asia or Africa...”

“I also tried to put our attitude toward communism in context by pointing out that Communism was something more than just an idea but that its agents were dangerously effective in their ability to grasp power and to set up dictatorships.”

“Significantly enough he did not raise any questions about the sugar quota nor did he engage in any specific discussions with regard to economic assistance.”

“My own appraisal of him as a man is somewhat mixed. The one fact we can be sure of is that he has those indefinable qualities which make him a leader of men. Whatever we may think of him he is going to be a great factor in the development of Cuba and very possibly in Latin American affairs generally. He seems to be sincere, he is either incredibly naïve about Communism or under Communist discipline...”

“But because he has the power to lead to which I have referred we have no choice but at least to try to orient him in the right direction.”

That was the end of his confidential memo to the White House.

When Nixon started to talk, nothing could stop him. He was used to preaching Latin American presidents. He did not prepare any drafts of what he intended to say or took notes of what he actually said. He responded to questions that were never asked. He dealt with subjects based only on the opinions he had about his interlocutor. Not even an elementary school student would hope to receive so many lessons altogether on democracy, anti-Communism and other matters related to the art of governing. He was fond of developed capitalism and its domain of the world out of its own natural right. He idealized the system. He didn't conceive otherwise, nor was there the slightest possibility of getting through to him.

The killings began under the Eisenhower and Nixon governments. There is no other way to explain why Kissinger exclaimed, and I quote, that “blood would flow if we knew, for example, that Robert Kennedy, the Attorney General, had personally directed the assassination of Fidel Castro”. Some blood had flown before. What the former administrations did, with few exceptions, was to follow the same policy.

In a memorandum dated on December 11, 1959, the head of the CIA's Western Hemisphere Division, J.C. King, said, and I quote: “We must give thorough consideration to the elimination of Fidel Castro. [...] Many informed people believe that the disappearance of Fidel would greatly accelerate the fall of the government...”

As it was recognized by the CIA and the Church Senate Committee in 1975, the assassination plans sprang up in 1960, when the purpose of destroying the Cuban Revolution was included in the president's agenda dated March that year. The J.C. King memo was sent to Allen Dulles, the CIA Director, with a note that expressly requested approval for those and other measures. They were all accepted and gladly welcomed, specially the proposal of assassination, as reflected by the following annotation in the document signed by Allen Dulles and dated one day after, on December 12: “The recommendation contained in Paragraph 3 is approved.”

In a draft of a book that would contain a detailed analysis of declassified documents, written by Pedro Álvarez-Tabío, Director of the Historical Affairs Office of the Council of State, it is stated that: “Up to 1993, the Cuban State Security had discovered and neutralized a total of 627 conspiracies against the life of the Commander in Chief Fidel Castro. This figure includes both the plans that reached some phase of concrete execution and those which were neutralized at an early stage, as well as other attempts that by various ways and for different reasons have been publicly revealed in the United States itself. It does not include a number of cases that could not be verified, since the only available information was the testimony of some of the participants. This of course did not include any of the plans plotted after 1993.”

Previously, we were able to learn from the report by Colonel Jack Hawkins, CIA paramilitary chief during the preparations for the Bay of Pigs invasion, that “the paramilitary General Staff studied the possibility of organizing an assault force of greater magnitude than the small contingency force planned earlier.”

“It was thought that this force would be landed in Cuba after effective resistance activity, including active guerrilla forces had been developed. It should be noted that guerrilla forces were operating successfully in the Escambray mountains during this period. It was visualized that the landing of the assault force, after widespread resistance activity had been created, would precipitate general uprisings and widespread defection among Castro’s armed forces which could contribute materially to his overthrow.”

“The concept for employment of the force in the amphibious/airlift assault was discussed at meetings of the Special Group during November and December 1960. The group took no definite position on ultimate employment of such a force but did not oppose its continued development for possible employment. President Eisenhower was briefed on the concept in late November of that year by CIA representatives. He indicated that he desired vigorous continuation of all activities then in progress by all Departments concerned.”

What did Hawkins report about the results of the covert operations program against Cuba from September 1960 to April 1961?

Nothing less than the following:

“a. **Introduction of Paramilitary Agents.** Seventy trained paramilitary agents, including nineteen radio operators, were introduced into the target country. Seventeen radio operators succeeded in establishing communication circuits with CIA headquarters, although a number were later captured or lost their equipment.”

“b. **Air Supply Operations.** These operations were not successful. Of 27 missions attempted, only four achieved desired results. The Cuban pilots demonstrated early that they didn’t have the required capabilities for this kind of operation. A request for authority to use American contract pilots for these missions was denied by the Special Group, although authority to hire pilots for possible eventual use was granted.”

“c. **Sea Supply Operations.** These operations achieved considerable success. Boats plying between Miami and Cuba delivered over 40 tons of military arms, explosives and equipment, and infiltrated/exfiltrated a large number of personnel. Some of the arms delivered were used for partially equipping a 400 man guerrilla force which operated for a considerable time in the Escambray, Las Villas Province. Most of the acts of sabotage carried out in Havana and other sites used materials provided in this fashion.”

“d. **Development of Guerrilla Activity.** Agents introduced into Cuba succeeded in developing a widespread underground organization extending from Havana into all of the provinces. However, there was no truly effective guerrilla activity anywhere in Cuba except in the Escambray Mountains, where an estimated 600 to one thousand ill-equipped guerrilla troops, organized in bands of 50 to 200 men, operated successfully for over six months [...]. A CIA trained coordinator for action in the Escambray entered Cuba clandestinely and succeeded in reaching the guerrilla area, but he was promptly captured and executed. Other small guerrilla units operated at times in the provinces of Pinar del Río and Oriente, but they achieved no significant results. Agents reported large numbers

of unarmed men in all provinces who were willing to participate in guerrilla activity if armed.”

e. **Sabotage.** 1) From October 1960 through April 15 1961 sabotage activity included the following:

“(a) Approximately 300 thousand tons of sugar cane destroyed in 800 separate fires.”

“(b) Approximately other 150 fires were set in 42 tobacco warehouses, two paper plants, a sugar refinery, two dairies, four stores, 21 Communist homes.”

“(c) Approximately 110 bombings, including Communist Party offices, Havana power station, two stores, railroad terminal, bus terminal, militia barracks, railroad train.”

“(d) Approximately 200 nuisance bombs in Havana Province.”

“(e) Derailment of 6 trains, destruction of a microwave cable and station, and destruction of numerous power transformers.”

“(f) A commando-type raid launched from the sea against Santiago, which put the refinery out of work for about one week.”

So much for what we have known thanks to the Hawkins’ report. Anyone could understand that 200 bombs planted in the main province of an underdeveloped country which lived on the single crop farming of sugar cane, which is a semi-slave form of production, and on the sugar quota that had been earned for almost two centuries for being a guaranteed supplier, and whose major productive lands and sugar refineries belonged to large United States companies, constituted a brutal act of tyranny against the Cuban people. Add to this all the other actions that were carried out.

I will say no more. It is enough for today.

Socialist Voice #186, July 11, 2007

Cuba's Self-Criticism

by **Fidel Castro Ruz**

July 10, 2007

The National Directorate of the UJC (Communist Youth League) agreed to communicate the following measure as it was concluding its strategy:

“Last Saturday, July 7, the National Bureau of the Communist Youth decided to tighten up the plan for the mobilization of forces of the Student Work Brigades (BET), guided by the principle of using students for tasks of a social and recreational nature, in numbers adjusted to a necessary minimum and within municipalities where they reside, in order to avoid relying on transportation.

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

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

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

“This year the call will be made for only 7 days of work related to the tasks included in the Energy Revolution, together with the social workers, such as training the community to improve their energy saving habits, delivering the domestic appliances that have not been distributed, and visiting a number of families who, having received and taken on the pertinent obligations, have yet to complete their payments.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Not all workers receive the incentive of convertible pesos, a practice that became generalized in a large number of companies during the Special Period, without always fulfilling the minimum committed requirements. Not everybody receives convertible currency from abroad, something which is not illegal but which at times creates irritating inequalities and privileges in a country

that does its utmost to supply vital services free of charge to the entire population. I do not mention the juicy profits being made by those who transport people clandestinely, nor the way they would fool us by changing the US bills into other currencies in order to avoid our response measures against the dollar.

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

In Cuba, without a doubt, those who some way or another receive convertible pesos –even though in these cases the sums are limited –or those receiving currency from abroad, also acquire free essential social services, food, medicines and other goods at extremely low subsidized prices. However we are strictly fulfilling our financial obligations precisely because we are not a consumer society. We need serious, brave and conscientious managers.

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

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

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

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

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

Of course, no one can remedy, in a short time, the need for oil in personal and public transportation and for agricultural or construction equipment. In developed countries everything is mechanized. Travelers describe how they see building after building, of all kinds, rising up, and that the pace does not stop, day or night. Cities are becoming gigantic. There are constantly more millions of people who need drinking water, vegetables, fruits and protein foods that have had to be produced and supplied by others often after traversing great distances. Furthermore, they need highways with three or four lanes in both directions, bridges, expensive works of engineering. The least of accidents, a simple sideways brush between two vehicles, will paralyze everything. Public expenditures are greater every day and development assistance has decreased.

Worst of all, for every thousand people there are more than 500 private automobiles. In the United States that number reaches almost a thousand. People live or work at great distances. Everybody has their own garage. Every workplace has its own parking lot. There are not enough oil refineries. Many of them need to be expanded and also new plants must be constructed. The raw material for a refinery is oil; the heavier it is the more we need and for a long time now there have been no great oilfields of light oil coming to light. A strike in Nigeria, the war in Iraq, the threats to Iran, the old political conflicts in Europe, a tidal wave, a hurricane, all of these send prices sky high. The old and the new big consumers are always demanding more millions of barrels per day. Of course, new nuclear plants are growing at the same time. I am not discussing now the environmental or climate effects or dangers, but the uncertainties that they unleash upon the real economy.

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

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

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

Socialist Voice #187, July 16, 2007

Bush, Health and Education

In Cuba, where healthcare is not a commodity, we can do things that Bush cannot even dream of.

**by Fidel Castro Ruz,
July 14, 2007**

I will not refer to Bush's health and education, but to that of his neighbors. It was not an improvised declaration. The AP agency tells us what his opening words were: "Tenemos corazones grandes en este país" (We have big hearts in this country); he said this in Spanish in front of 250 representatives of private and religious groups, foundations and NGOs who had come to Washington with all expenses paid by his government. Of these, some 100 came from the United States.

"The meeting, called the White House Conference on the Americas, is part of the ideas outlined by Bush as he began a tour of five Latin American countries at the beginning of March about what his government was hoping to do for the region in the short time still remaining of his term in office."

"Bush called the conference in order to discuss several subjects, especially education and health. 'It's ... in the interests of the United States that our neighborhood be healthy and educated', he said in improvised declarations during a chat with six of the attendees, from Guatemala, the United States, Brazil, Haiti and Mexico, who sat at the table with him in a colloquium", the press agency added.

He said some incredible things, like "the hard work we're doing in the neighborhood".

Bush spoke, as did the Secretary of the Treasury, the Under Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs and the Under Secretary of State for Public Affairs. Together with them, several members of the Cabinet chaired the working groups in which the meeting was arranged. They all talked until they were blue in the face.

They mentioned that Bush had created a training center in Panama that graduated more than 100 doctors from six Central American countries. They very emphatically referred to the Comfort, "one of the best medical ships in the world that had just called on port in Panama after visiting Guatemala".

"Bush dedicated 55 minutes of his time to this activity which took place in a hotel in the city of Arlington, Virginia, on the outskirts of Washington D.C."

Then, as bold as you like, Secretary of State Condolezza Rice, joined the voices to speak about Cuba.

According to another news agency, when our Council of State, complying with constitutional norms, had just called the elections, she declared that "the United States hopes that the Cubans

themselves will decide their future”, and she added: “Washington will not tolerate the transition from one dictator to another”.

In his opening speech, Bush addressed really unusual concepts for the head of a planetary global empire, very conscious of his power and of his personal role, reported in detail by the Spanish press agency EFE: “The President of the United States, George W. Bush, today urged the governments of Latin America to be honest, transparent and open.” (...) “The leader affirmed that societies which are open and transparent are those which will lead to hopeful tomorrows.”

“We expect governments to be honest and transparent (...) We reject the notion that it’s okay for there to be corruption in government...”

“It is also in our interest to help a neighbor in need. It renews our soul. It lifts our collective spirit. I believe to whom much is given, much is required. We’ve been given a lot as a nation, and therefore, I believe we’re required to help,” he insisted.

Bush knows that he is lying and that his tall tales are hard to swallow, but he doesn’t care. He is confident that if he repeats it a thousand times, many will finally believe him. Why so much trickery? What essentially torments him? When did all this rushing come up?

Bush is discovering that the economic and political system of his empire cannot compete with Cuba in vital services, such as healthcare and education, although this country has been attacked and blockaded for almost 50 years. Everyone knows that the United States’ specialty concerning education is the brain drain. The International Labor Organization has indicated that “47 percent of people born abroad that complete their Doctorate in the United States stay in that country.”

Yet another example of the plunder: “There are more Ethiopian physicians in Chicago than in all of Ethiopia.”

In Cuba, where healthcare is not a commodity, we can do things that Bush cannot even dream of.

Third World countries do not have the resources to set up scientific research centers, while Cuba has created these even if her own professionals have often been enticed and encouraged to defect.

Our Yes I Can method of teaching people to read and write is today available to all Latin American countries, free of charge, and the countries that choose to use the program receive support to adapt it to their own characteristics and to produce the printed materials and the corresponding videos.

Countries such as Bolivia are implementing the program in Spanish, Quechua and Aymara. The numbers of those who have learned to read and write there in just one year exceed the number of those who have been taught to read and write by the empire in all of Latin America, if indeed there is anyone. And I am not speaking about other countries like Venezuela which has accomplished veritable heroic deeds in education in a very short time.

Yes I Can is of benefit to other societies outside the Western Hemisphere. Suffice it to say that New Zealand is using the program to eradicate illiteracy in their Maori population.

Instead of having one training center for medical professionals in Central America, which has trained about 100 –and we're glad for this– our country today has tens of thousands of students from Latin America and the Caribbean on full scholarships who spend six years training as doctors in Cuba, free of charge. Of course, we do not exclude any American youth who take their education very seriously.

We cooperate with Venezuela in the education of more than 20,000 youths, who study medicine and train in clinics in the poor neighborhoods, tutored by Cuban specialists, so that they can get acquainted with their future and difficult job.

The Comfort, with over 800 people on board, that is, medical staff and crew, will not be able to look after great numbers of people. It is impossible to carry out medical programs episodically. Physical therapy, for example, in many cases requires months of work. Cuba provides permanent services to people in polyclinics and well-equipped hospitals, and the patients can be cared for any time of day or night. We have also trained the necessary physical therapy specialists.

The eye surgery also requires special skills. In our country ophthalmologic centers perform more than 50,000 eye surgeries on Cubans each year and look after 27 kinds of diseases. There are no waiting lists for cornea transplants which need special arrangements. Let an active investigation be done in the United States and you will see how many people really need to be operated on there; since they have never been examined by an ophthalmologist they will attribute their eye problems to other causes and run the risk of becoming blind or of having their vision seriously impaired. You would find out that there are millions.

In the abovementioned figure I did not include the hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans and Caribbean people some of whom are operated on in Cuba, but most in their respective countries, by Cuban ophthalmologists. In Bolivia alone, they are more than 100,000 each year. In this instance, Bolivian doctors educated in the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) take part in the surgeries alongside our Cuban specialists.

Let's just see how the Comfort will make out in Haiti, providing health services for a week. There, in 123 of the country's 134 communes there are Cuban doctors working alongside ELAM graduates, or Haitian students in the last year of medical school, fighting AIDS and various tropical diseases.

The problem is that the United States cannot do what Cuba is doing. On the contrary, it brutally pressures the manufacturing companies of the excellent medical equipment that is supplied to our country to prevent them from replacing certain computer programs or some spare parts that are under United States patents. I could cite concrete cases and the names of the companies. It is disgusting, even though we have solutions that make us more invulnerable in this field.

Less than six months ago Bush had not yet invented the idea of making fuel production universal, from foodstuff inside and outside the United States. Those of us who are aware of the value of fats and protein foods for human nutrition know what the consequences are for pregnant women, children, teenagers, adults and the elderly if they lack these. The brunt of the scarcity will fall on the shoulders of the least developed countries, in other words, on the largest part of humanity. It will surprise no one that this will be accompanied by increased prices for basic

foodstuffs and social instability. Yesterday, Friday 13, the price of oil was 79.18 US dollars a barrel; another consequence of the money rush and the war in Iraq.

Barely 48 hours ago, the United States Secretary of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, said that “he had the gut feeling that a terrorist attack could happen in the country during the summer”. The Secretary of State, and subsequently the President of the United States himself, said something similar. But while they were giving information about a potential risk, they were also taking great pains to calm public opinion.

The government of the United States sees and hears all, with or without legal authority. Furthermore, it possesses numerous intelligence and counterintelligence services that are provided with copious economic resources for espionage. It can obtain all the security information it needs without kidnapping, torturing or murdering persons in secret prisons. Everybody knows the real economic purposes pursued through world violence and force. They can prevent any attack on their people, unless there is some imperial need to deliver a bang so that they can carry on with and justify the brutal war which has been declared against the culture, religion, economy and independence of other peoples.

I must conclude.

Tomorrow, Sunday, is Children’s Day. I think of them as I write this reflection. I dedicate it to them.

Socialist Voice #188, July 16, 2007

Iranian People Stand Up to U.S. War Threats

By Nasim Sedaghat

(This talk was presented to a public forum in Vancouver organized by Stopwar.ca on May 24, 2007.)

Imagine yourself in the war zone, Baghdad. It is midnight on a cold winter night. While trying to sleep, you hear a sound, a huge explosion nearby. You are used to loud sounds but still you get up. Your whole family gets up. Kids are crying, they are afraid; you try to calm them down.

It is cold, there is no heater. It is dark, there is no light to turn on. Your five-year old daughter asks for water, but there is no clean water to offer her.

You look from the window—the U.S. soldiers are going door to door. Suddenly they break down your front door and come inside. You don't understand what they are saying, they are just shouting. They hit your back hard with the butt of their rifle.

Their faces are covered under a heavy helmet, it seems they are from other world. Their guns are pointed at you all. The children are crying hard. Soldiers search everywhere with their dirty, heavy boots on. They don't find anything and finally they leave. You cannot ask, why?

Your three-year old gets a stomach ache from the stress. The toilet doesn't flush and the smell of sewage is unbearable.

Now it is morning, the whole family is hungry. You go out in search of food but there is no grocery store open and there is little money to buy things. There is no one in the streets and you are alone to take care of your own business.

You look around and see destroyed houses, schools, roads, hospitals, markets. You see tanks with American soldiers in the streets manning checkpoints. You feel you are hostage, your civil society is destroyed, your people are dead, and you see nothing but despair.

What to do? Anger overcomes you and you can no longer watch as your loved ones suffer. You ask one of the local fighters for a gun, now you are one of them. It doesn't matter anymore what they call you, you are going to defend your family, your civilization, your people, and you are there for the justices that you could not find. Now your name is "insurgent". You have nothing to lose and you feel proud to stand up against inhumanity, injustice, brutality and the plundering of your land by occupation forces. Isn't it a logical transformation?

War and occupation

This is what day to day life looks like today in occupied Iraq. When we are talking about the potential US intervention in Iran, we should have this in mind.

The list of American interventions throughout the world is long; too long to fit on these pages. The world has heard millions of screams from the victims of "democracy promotion", U.S. style. Falling rates of profit and a deepening crisis of the global economy are pushing the major powers

into a fierce competition for markets, cheap labor and resources. To solve its problems, capitalism is increasingly turning to war and occupation.

In 1997, the Project for a New American Century think-tank was created in Washington DC. Two of the organization's "fundamental propositions" are the belief that, "American leadership is both good for America and good for the world," and support for, "a policy of military strength." Signatories to the foundation's statement of principles were soon to assume leading positions in the post-2000 Bush regime, including future US vice-president Richard Cheney, future Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, future deputy secretary of defense and head of the World Bank Paul Wolfowitz, and future national security advisor Elliot Abrams.

In order to carry out the project, these ideologues needed pretexts for interventions to sell to the American public. September 11, 2001 was the gift horse, and they are now at war against "terrorism". With Osama Bin Laden as their bogeyman, they launched a war against the people of Afghanistan, claiming, among other falsehoods, that their goal was to "liberate women."

The next stop in this imperial tour of death was Iraq in 2003. They started a war there based on lies, never finding the weapons of mass destruction that they claimed the country was full of. Nor did they ever prove a link between the government of Iraq and nor any links to an "Al-Qaeda" network. Four years later, more than 700,000 Iraqis are dead and the country is destroyed.

In 2004, the ideologues orchestrated an invasion of Haiti. Together with their allies in Canada and France, they ousted the democratically-elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Thousands were killed or jailed in the wave of repression that followed.

There is now another target in the latest plan for American empire: "regime change" in Iran.

The Iranian Revolution of 1979: a Blow to Imperialism

Before 1979, the Iranian government under Shah Muhammad-Reza Pahlavi was the policeman for imperialism in the region. He commanded 200,000 troops, trained and equipped by the western powers. He intervened to prop up neighboring reactionary regimes. The real power in the country was the U.S. embassy and some 35,000 U.S. "advisors." As a loyal servant of Washington and its allies, the shah turned over much of the country's wealth to foreign investors while operating a vast police network that brutally crushed internal dissent.

By mobilizing millions in the street, waging strikes in schools and factories, and weakening the loyalty of the soldiers in the shah's army of repression, we eventually kicked out the monarch in 1979. As a result, we regained our sovereignty over our country.

The rate of illiteracy in Iran has declined from 52.5 per cent in 1976 to 24 percent in 2002. We have more women studying in universities now. There are many more women in the workforce. Iran broke all ties with Israel and called on all Islamic countries to unite in struggle against U.S. imperialism and Zionism, at least in words. Farmers in the countryside have benefited from land reform. Today, Iran is a more modern society, more socially and technologically advanced than many Third World countries. It is forging economic and political alliances with progressive governments such as Venezuela and Cuba.

The US never healed from the wound of our people's revolution against its puppet regime. Washington reacted to the revolution with an economic embargo that continues to this day. It encouraged its ally, Iraq, to invade Iran in 1980, and this sparked a grueling, eight-year war that cost the lives of about one million people.

U.S. claims that Iran is embarked on a program to arm itself with nuclear weapons are false. The Iranian government vigorously denies the charge. It points to the countries in the region such as the U.S., Israel and Pakistan that are the real threats to use nuclear weapons. U.S. claims, repeated by Canada and other NATO governments, serve as a new pretext for a military assault and possible occupation of Iraq. And, now that the U.S. is headed for defeat in Iraq, it has even greater need for Iran's oil resources.

How could an attack happen?

It is understood that any attack — if ordered — would target Iranian air bases, naval bases, missile facilities, and command and control centers. Long-range B2 stealth bombers would drop so-called “bunker-busting” bombs in an effort to penetrate the Natanz nuclear power site, which is buried some 25m underground.

Meanwhile, other forms of attack are already taking place:

- \$75m has been allocated by the U.S. for “democracy promotion” in Iran.
- On January 26, 2007, the Washington Post revealed that last fall President George Bush authorized U.S. forces in Iraq to hunt down and kill Iranian government personnel operating in Iraq. The “kill or capture” program also includes other measures aimed at destabilizing the government in Tehran.
- On January 11 of this year, U.S. armed forces raided the Iranian consulate in Irbil, a city in Iraq, seizing five employees. The attack violated Iraqi and Iranian sovereignty and even the Iraqi government, which depends on U.S. support, protested the action.
- In mid-February, the aircraft carrier battle group USS Stennis entered the waters off the coast of Iran, en route to the Persian Gulf, where it joined the USS Eisenhower battle group. Both groups are armed with nuclear weapons. The last time two such carrier battle groups were stationed in the gulf was in early 2003, just before the invasion of Iraq. Twenty percent of the world's oil supply is shipped through this narrow waterway.
- Patriot missile batteries have been supplied to several Persian Gulf states allied to the U.S. to strengthen their air defenses against possible Iranian retaliation.
- Seymour Hersh reported in the *New Yorker* magazine in 2005 that U.S. special forces were already active inside Iran, collecting information on possible targets. Iranian authorities have recently charged that an attack on a bus carrying military recruits was carried out by a terrorist group backed by the U.S. and operating from Pakistan.

The British magazine *New Statesman* reported on February 19, 2007 that: “American preparations for invading Iran are complete... American military operations for a major conventional war with Iran could be implemented any day. They extend far beyond targeting

suspect WMD [Weapons of Mass Destruction] facilities and will enable President Bush to destroy Iran's military, political and economic infrastructure overnight using conventional weapons.

"The whole of Iran is now less than an hour's flying time from some American base or carrier. Sources in the region as well as trade journals confirm that the U.S. has built three bases in Azerbaijan that could be transit points for troops and with facilities equal to its best in Europe."

The US has targeted Iran's oil and gas reserves, and this underscores one of the main reasons behind the escalating confrontation. The Bush administration has a lengthy list of unproven accusations—that Tehran is building nuclear weapons, supplying arms to anti-US insurgents in Iraq, supporting "terrorists" throughout the Middle East, and so on. These are convenient pretexts to hide Washington's ambitions to secure a dominant position in Iran and control its energy resources at the expense of its European and Asian rivals.

Another tactic is the politics of divide and conquer. The U.S. claims there is a very deep animosity between Sunni and Shia in the region, but this is not true. Many of these forces work with each other, fighting a common enemy—U.S. occupation, and injustice and genocide by Israel in Palestinian land.

Religious-inspired resistance movements, including Mokhtada Al Sadr's Mahdi Army in Iraq, Hizbolah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine, and the Iranian government—are growing stronger because of the absence or ineffectiveness of secular anti-imperialist leadership in the region. Many of the poor, working people in the Middle East support the religious-based movements. The only allies of the U.S. are the corrupted governments in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf states.

The Iranian government is an example of a religion-based capitalism that has brought us tyranny and injustice. It does not represent the majority of our people. Many of our basic civil and democratic rights are constantly under attack by this government. But the Iranian people are aware that the job of changing this government is their responsibility alone. Their struggle for democracy and justice will be in a far worse position if there is a foreign intervention.

Ordinary Iranians see the deaths and total destruction of civil society by occupation forces in Iraq. They know that despite deep class differences with their government, they should unite with their class enemy, the Iranian government, in order to stop the imperialist robbers from occupying their country.

U.S. and other imperialist plans for intervention in underdeveloped countries continue, from Africa and South America to the Middle East. They have been intervening indirectly in Somalia, and are targeting Venezuela, Cuba, and others. The only way to stop this madness is world solidarity with the resistance inside of occupied countries and building a strong antiwar movement to oppose this barbarism. Today, it is essential for this movement to mobilize and demand: "Hands off Iran!"

I described in my introduction to this talk how daily life looks under imperialist occupation. Now I ask you, which side are you on?

Socialist Voice #189, July 24, 2007

Review: *Holding the Bully's Coat*

Linda McQuaig. *Holding the Bully's Coat*. Doubleday Canada, Toronto. 2007. 304 pages

Reviewed by Yves Engler

Linda McQuaig's new book *Holding the Bully's Coat: Canada and the US Empire* is far better than most on the subject of Canadian foreign policy. Unfortunately, that is damning with faint praise indeed.

For much of the past year I have been doing research for a new book about the history of Canadian foreign policy from an internationalist, working class perspective. What I have learned, quite frankly, has shocked me. That a writer as good as [Linda] McQuaig can avoid so much that has been wrong with Canadian foreign policy was almost as surprising.

The problem is nationalism.

Like much of the nationalist left, McQuaig fails to discuss the destructive nature of Canadian capital around the world. Instead it's [as] if all the bad things Canadian companies do are the fault of the USA. But, it is clear, with the aid of Canadian diplomacy, Canadian corporate interests, past and present, have preyed on communities around the world, acting in exactly the same fashion as better known U.S. companies.

In the environmentally devastating mining sector alone, there are currently more than a thousand Canadian companies working abroad.

In Guatemala, Canadian-owned nickel company Skye Resources has spurred the forcible eviction of Mayan Q'eqchi' communities. All the while the Canadian ambassador to Guatemala tries to discredit opposition to the mine. In Ecuador, Canadian-owned Ascendant Copper Corporation hired paramilitary forces to attack community opposition to its mine (see the June 2007 issue of Z Magazine for an in depth article on the topic). Similarly, Barrick Gold continues the development of the Pasuca Lama mine project in Chile despite thousands of protestors.

Historically, Caribbean nationalists have long opposed the considerable presence of Canadian banks in the region. With financial operations across the Americas, Canadian banks are demanding the inclusion of NAFTA's Chapter 11-style accords in the trade agreements Canada continues to push in Central America and the Caribbean.

McQuaig, an anti-American Canadian nationalist, lauds former Canadian prime minister Lester B. Pearson in *Holding the Bully's Coat*. Ironically, Pearson did as much as any politician to move Canada in the direction of the US empire (and away from the British empire). Pearson's strong support for Israel's founding can be partially explained by his pro-US sentiment. It is important to remember that Pearson won the 1963 election at least in part by denouncing Conservative prime minister John Diefenbaker's refusal to station US nuclear missiles on Canadian soil. After he won the election, the missiles came to Canada.

McQuaig's reverence for Pearson emanates from his role as "founder" of UN peacekeeping during his time as Canada's foreign minister. After Britain, France and Israel invaded Egypt in 1956, Canada helped establish a UN peacekeeping force to smooth over hostilities. Supporters of Canadian "peacekeeping" usually overlook the fact that Canada supported the UN mission to Egypt at the behest of the US government, which opposed the British, French and Israeli invasion (even threatening to cut off Britain's much needed IMF funding in opposition to the offensive). Although he had sided with the Americans, Pearson sought to help Britain and France "save face." Canadian peacekeepers were initially rejected and ultimately expelled from Egypt under accusations of imperialism from President Gamal Nasser.

McQuaig (and much of the Canadian left) fail to discuss why Canada initiated peacekeeping missions. Most often, peacekeeping was Canada's contribution to the Cold War. As right-wing historian, Sean Maloney, in *Canada and UN Peacekeeping: Cold War by Other Means – 1945-1970* asserts, "during the Cold War, the United States, the United Kingdom and France, all permanent members of the Security Council, remained aloof in several difficult circumstances as a sort of plausible deniability. Canada was the West's champion in the Cold War UN arena."

Contrary to popular understanding, Canadian internationalism has rarely been at odds with American belligerence. As far as I can tell, Canadian peacekeeping missions have always received support from the US. During the Cold War, the US did not dispatch soldiers for UN peacekeeping, which made Canada's contribution especially important.

Ignoring the power politics that have historically driven UN peacekeeping has resulted in unwitting support by much of the Canadian left for the imperial agenda.

Western mining companies, for instance, benefited from the UN's peacekeeping mission in the Congo during the early 1960s as Belgium's colonial rule came to an end. Threatened by Patrice Lumumba's desire for increased national control over Congo's resources, Belgium and the US worked to eliminate the Congolese prime minister. Canada provided important military logistics and political support to the UN force largely responsible for Lumumba's assassination.

After combing through hundreds of books on Canadian foreign policy, I have come to the surprising realization that pro-US Canadian commentators are often clearer about the motives behind our foreign interventions than those on the Canadian nationalist left. Having constructed a Canadian identity in opposition to US imperialism, many Canadian nationalists are forced to mythologize the history of Canadian foreign policy.

Responding to the myth that Canada has primarily been the defender of peaceful independent internationalism, pro-US commentators argue that Canada's foreign interventions were not merely benevolent. According to the pro-US writers, they have been designed to further this country's interests, in particular maintaining close relations to Canada's largest trading partner.

Contrary to the mythology of Canada as a force for good in the world, this country has a legion of skeletons in its foreign policy closet. From the troops that joined the British in Sudan in 1885 to the thousands of soldiers who pillaged and murdered the Boers during the war of 1898-1902 in South Africa, Canada has long sided with empire.

Precipitating the Cold War, Canada sent troops to halt the Russian revolution and then sided with the fascists in 1936, blocking weapons and volunteers from Spain's elected government, all the while arming the Japanese as they occupied Korea and massacred the Chinese. In the first major UN military operation, Canada sent 27,000 troops between 1950-53 to fight in Korea — largely as part of the US campaign against nationalism and communism in East Asia.

A former historian of the Canadian army in NATO and employee of the department of national defense, Maloney writes: “On twelve occasions between 1915 and 1993 Canadian naval forces were used for ‘Gunboat Diplomacy’ in the region [Caribbean and Latin America], to ‘exert a delicate and discreet threat [short of declared war] to secure national objectives.’ Notable operations included Mexico (1915), Costa Rica (1921), El Salvador (1932), St. Lucia (1958), and Haiti on multiple occasions since 1963.” In the case of El Salvador, a Canadian naval ship provided important support to the dictatorship putting down an indigenous rebellion that ultimately led to the execution of famous El Salvadoran revolutionary, Farabundo Marti. Like all of McQuaig's books, *Holding the Bully's Coat* is well crafted and clear. It can even be seen in some measure as politically useful. There is no doubt that the Canadian identification with both the UN and peacekeeping was a factor in Canada's unwillingness to participate in the invasion of Iraq. (Although we should not forget that Canada trained Iraqi police, sent a naval vessel to the region and deployed troops to Afghanistan to relieve US troops for Iraq, etc.)

But while McQuaig's promotion of UN peacekeeping is preferable to US unilateralism, there is a danger in her failure to discuss the predatory nature of Canadian capital, the skeletons in the Canadian foreign policy closet and the politics that often drive UN missions.

In the case of Canada's UN sanctioned intervention into Haiti, the nationalist left was all but silent in the face of this brutal crime. After constructing a framework that idolized the UN, and Canada's history within the organization, it became difficult to criticize the UN occupation of Haiti and Canada's role in overthrowing Haiti's elected government. Ignoring the truth is always dangerous.

Yves Engler is the author of *Canada in Haiti: Waging War on the Poor Majority* (with Anthony Fenton) and *Playing Left Wing: From Rink Rat to Student Radical* . Both books are published by RED/Fernwood.

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‘The only thing that any Cuban revolutionary should never question is our unwavering decision to build socialism’

Heroic deeds take place everyday, in every corner of the country

Speech by General Raúl Castro Ruz, in the city of Camagüey, Cuba on July 26 2007, “Year 49 of the Revolution”

Friends accompanying us here today;

People of Camagüey, good morning;

Compatriots:

Exactly one year ago, as we were listening to the speeches given by the Commander in Chief in Bayamo and Holguín, we could hardly even suspect what a hard blow was awaiting us.

Next July 31 will be the first anniversary of Fidel’s Proclamation, and to the delight of our people he is already taking on more and more intense and highly valuable activities, as evidenced by his reflections which are published in the press, even though, not even during the most serious moments of his illness, did he fail to bring his wisdom and experience to each problem and essential decision.

Those who are amazed at our people’s capacity to rise to the level of every challenge, no matter how great, do not know them very well

These have truly been very difficult months, although with a diametrically different impact to that expected by our enemies, who were wishing for chaos to entrench and for Cuban socialism to collapse. Senior U.S. officials even made statements about taking advantage of this scenario to destroy the Revolution.

Those who are amazed at our people’s capacity to rise to the level of every challenge, no matter how great, do not know them very well, since this is really the only behavior consistent with our history.

The battle waged by many generations of Cubans is well-known, from La Demajagua and Moncada, right up to the present, always facing enormous obstacles and powerful enemies. So much sacrifice and difficulties! How many times did we have to recommence the struggle after each setback!

Suffice it to recall that in the years following that July 26, 1953, we spent years in prison, the exile, the Granma, the guerrilla and the clandestine struggles, until five years, five months and five days after the attack on Moncada, victory was attained on the first day of January, 1959.

In those days, much like what is happening today even within the very United States, lies could not hide reality, although our people then were much less educated and less politically aware than they are now.

The vast majority of Cubans joined the cause headed by a leader who brandished the truth like his main weapon against the enemies of his people, who instead of making demagogic promises warned them, from his very first speech in Havana, that perhaps everything would be much more difficult in the years ahead.

The conclusion of the U.S. government hierarchy at that time was also consistent with its history: they had to destroy this people who dared to dream of justice, dignity and sovereignty, and if not, make them suffer to the utmost. The example set by Cuba was far too dangerous in a poor, subdued and exploited continent.

But they were unable to bring us to our knees. Our response was to massively transform ourselves into combatants; to stoically withstand shortages and difficulties; to sweat in the fields, factories and trenches; to wage countless victorious battles and to establish landmarks in internationalist aid.

Before the mortal remains of each of the 3,478 victims of terrorist acts directly organized, supported or allowed to happen by the United States authorities; before the fallen in defense of the Homeland or in the fulfillment of their internationalist duty, our people confirmed their commitment to their heroes and martyrs, to their Mambi heritage and to the examples of Martí, Céspedes, Maceo, Gómez and Agramonte, perpetuated by men such as Mella, Martínez Villena and Guiteras, symbols of the ideas and actions of an infinite number of anonymous patriots.

In essence, this has been the last half century of our history. There has been not one minute of truce in the face of the policies of the United States government, aimed at destroying the Revolution.

Heroic deeds take place everyday, in every corner of the country

In this forging of effort and sacrifice, the morale and conscience of this people has reached new heights; sons with the stature of Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González and René González have been born, able to assume with serenity, valor and dignity the duress of an unjust imprisonment, scattered in different prisons of the United States.

They are examples, but they are not exceptions, since millions of Cuban men and women are not intimidated by danger or hardship.

The exploit occurs daily in every corner of this land, as our brave athletes are demonstrating at the Panamerican Games.

And so it has been during the more than 16 years of the Special Period, of sustained effort by the entire country to overcome the difficulties and press onwards –and so it must still be, since we have not yet come out of the Special Period.

Thus, it is twice as commendable that a province attains the status of Outstanding, which as we all know is bestowed after evaluating the results obtained in the main fields.

This year, the provinces of Ciudad de La Habana, Granma, Villa Clara and Camagüey attained this distinction, and we congratulate them on behalf of the Commander in Chief, of the Party and of all the people, for having reached this important triumph. Also to Cienfuegos, Matanzas and

Sancti Spiritus for the acknowledgement received, and to Las Tunas for displaying heartening advances.

In order to decide which of them would be the venue of this main celebration, the Political Bureau especially considered the day-to-day efforts, silent and heroic in the face of difficulties. And in this way, the people of “El Camagüey”, as the Mambi used to call it, achieved these results.

The advances are the fruit of the efforts of hundreds of thousands of comrades; of the laborers, peasants and the rest of the workers; of the indispensable contributions of intellectuals, artists and workers in the cultural sector; of the heroic housewives and retirees; of the student members of the Middle-level Education Students Federation and the Federation of University Students; of our children; of the Cuban Women Federation, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, the Association of Combatants and the community Party cells who make such an important contribution to society.

Without them, without the daily work, study and sacrifice of so many men, women and children, the bugle of the Agramonte cavalry would not be resounding anew on these great flatlands.

Well then, it should not happen as it does in baseball, where the victories go only to the players and the defeats go to the team manager. It would not be fair to fail to publicly acknowledge the important role played by the leaders of the Party, the Government, the UJC and the mass and social organizations at every level, as well as the numerous administrative cadres to attain this success.

In particular, I should like to stress the good work of comrade Salvador Valdés Mesa, the current Secretary General of the Workers Union Central, who for a long time and up to 13 months ago, was the First Secretary of the Provincial Party Committee, and the excellent relief provided until the present by comrade Julio César García Rodríguez.

We need to bring everyone to the daily battle against the very errors that aggravate objective difficulties stemming from external causes

It is only fair and necessary to acknowledge what has been achieved in recent years, in these provinces and in the rest of the country, but with a clear conscience about our problems, our inefficiencies, our errors and our bureaucratic and/or slack attitudes, some of which gained ground in the circumstances deriving from the Special Period.

Pointing out the important results attained in these provinces does not mean that we ignore that the rest of the country is working. In the eastern provinces, for example, it has been necessary to do this under very difficult conditions, with a shortage of resources resulting from both objective and subjective reasons.

Nevertheless, efforts do not always bring the results hoped for. Efficiency largely depends on perseverance and good organization, especially of systematic controls and discipline, and in particular on where we have succeeded in incorporating the masses to the struggle for efficiency.

We need to bring everyone to the daily battle against the very errors which aggravate objective difficulties derived from external causes, especially those induced by the United States' economic blockade which really constitutes a relentless war against our people, as the current administration of that country is especially bent on finding even the slightest of ways to harm us.

One could point to a myriad of examples. I shall limit myself to mentioning the obstacles to the country's commercial and financial transactions abroad, often directed at the purchase of food, medicines and other basic products for the people, and the denial of access to banking services through coercion and the extra-territorial imposition of its laws.

There are also the almost insurmountable obstacles imposed by that government that goes to ridiculous lengths to prevent its people from traveling to Cuba and also on the Cuban residents there coming to visit their relatives; the denial of visas not just to our officials, but to artists, athletes, scientists and, in general, to anyone who is not willing to slander the Revolution.

As our Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently denounced, we can add to all of this the obstacles to the fulfillment of what is established in the migratory agreements with regards to the minimum number of visas to be granted annually.

This policy encourages those who turn to illegal emigration and are received there as heroes, often times after endangering the lives of children, and in spite of the fact that such an irresponsible behavior puts at risk not only the safety of Cubans, but also of Americans, the ones who the government constantly claims to be protecting, since whoever risks trafficking with human lives for money, would probably not hesitate in doing so with drugs, arms or other such things.

Cuba, for her part, will continue to honor her commitments to the migratory accords, as she has done until today.

The past twelve months have constituted a remarkable example of our people's maturity, steadfast principles, unity, trust in Fidel, in the Party and above all in themselves.

Despite our deep sorrow, no task was left undone. There is order in the country and a lot of work. The Party and the Government bodies are functioning on a daily basis in the collective search for the most effective response possible for every problem.

There is not one issue pertaining to the development of the country and the people's living conditions that has not been dealt with responsibly, working to find a solution. There is no task in the Battle of Ideas, the Energy Revolution and others promoted by the Commander in Chief that is paralyzed. As it is always the case in matters of such magnitude, we have had to make adjustments and postponements, and others might be needed in the future, due to material imperatives and the threats we are all aware of.

Operation Caguairán has made it possible to substantially strengthen our country's defensive capacity

At the same time, our people have continued since then, with serenity, discipline and modesty, to prepare themselves to face up to any enemy military adventure.

Hundreds of thousands of militiamen and reservists of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, together with officers, sergeants and soldiers in the regular army have carried out Operation Caguairán, allowing for a substantial increase in the country's defense capability, attaining levels of combat readiness that are superior to those of any other period.

It is a great effort in moments when our resources are scarce, but it is simply essential. It shall continue, as it has up till now, with the greatest of rationality, both from the material point of view as well as in the use of our people's time.

We cannot fool around with defense! The Commander in Chief directed and reaffirmed it yet once again just a few days ago. For us, as I have said so many times, avoiding a war is tantamount to winning it, but to win it by avoiding it, we must sweat a lot and invest quite a few resources.

The resounding popular response to the Proclamation of the Commander in Chief threw all the enemy plans into crisis mode; but the enemy, far from evaluating the reality and correcting its errors, insists on stubbornly crashing into the same rock. They speculate about an alleged paralysis in the country and even about a "transition" in progress. But no matter how hard they close their eyes, reality shall take care of destroying those stale, old dreams.

As the press has reported, Operation Caguairán will carry on in the next months. It will allow us to train about a million compatriots and will have as its crowning glory the Bastion 2008 Strategic Exercise which will take place at the end of the year.

By that date, therefore, we shall be better prepared to resist and win on all fronts, including defense.

Our people will never give an inch before pressure or blackmail by any country or group of countries

By that time the elections will also have taken place in the United States and the mandate of the current president of that country will have concluded along with his erratic and dangerous administration, characterized by such a reactionary and fundamentalist philosophy that it leaves no room for a rational analysis of any matter.

The new administration will have to decide whether it will maintain the absurd, illegal and failed policy against Cuba or if it will accept the olive branch that we offered on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the landing of the Granma. That is, when we reasserted our willingness to discuss on equal footing the prolonged dispute with the government of the United States, convinced that this is the only way to solve the problems of this world, ever more complex and dangerous.

If the new United States authorities were to finally desist from their arrogance and decide to talk in a civilized manner, it would be a welcome change. Otherwise, we are ready to continue confronting their policy of hostility, even for another 50 years, if need be.

Fifty years seem like a long time, but soon we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Triumph of the Revolution and the 55th anniversary of Moncada, and among so many tasks and

challenges those years have gone by and we have hardly noticed. Furthermore, practically 70% of our population was born after the blockade was imposed, and so we are well trained to continue resisting it and finally defeating it.

Some who have been influenced by enemy propaganda or are simply confused, do not perceive the real danger or the undeniable fact that the blockade has a direct influence both on the major economic decisions as well as on each Cuban's most basic needs.

Directly and on a daily basis, it weighs heavily on our food supply, transportation, housing and even on the fact that we cannot rely on the necessary raw materials and equipment to work with.

The enemy established it half a century ago for this reason, as we were saying, and today it still dreams of forcing us to submit to its will. President Bush himself insists on repeating that he will not allow the Cuban Revolution to continue. It would be interesting to ask him just how he intends to do that.

How little they have learned from history!

In his Manifesto published on June 18, Fidel said to them once again what every revolutionary on this island is convinced of: "They shall never have Cuba!"

Our people will never give an inch of ground under the attempt of any country or group of countries to pressure us, nor will it make the slightest unilateral concession to send any kind of signal to anybody.

We have a duty to precisely identify and profoundly evaluate every problem within our range of action

With respect to the economic and social tasks ahead of us, we know the tensions that Party cadres are subjected to, especially at the base, where there's hardly ever a balance between accumulated needs and available resources.

We are also aware that, because of the extreme objective difficulties that we face, wages today are clearly insufficient to satisfy all needs and have thus ceased to play a role in ensuring the socialist principle that each should contribute according to their capacity and receive according to their work. This has bred forms of social indiscipline and tolerance which, having taken root, prove difficult to eradicate, even after the objective causes behind them are eradicated.

I can responsibly assure you that the Party and government have been studying these and other complex and difficult problems in depth, problems which must be addressed comprehensively and through a differentiated approach in each concrete case.

All of us, from the leaders to the rank-and-file workers, are duty-bound to accurately identify and analyze every problem in depth, within our working areas, in order to combat the problem with the most convenient methods.

This differs greatly from the attitude of those who use existing difficulties to shield themselves from criticisms, leveled against them for not acting with the necessary swiftness and efficiency, or for lacking the political sensitivity and courage needed to explain why a problem cannot be solved immediately.

I will limit myself to drawing your attention to these crucial issues. A simple criticism or appeal will not solve these problems, even when they are made at a ceremony like this. They demand, above all else, organized work, control and dedication, day after day; systematic rigor, order and discipline, from the national level down to the thousands of places where something is produced or a service is offered.

I remind you that not all problems can be solved overnight

This is where the country's efforts are headed, as they are in other areas of similar importance and strategic significance. We are working hastily but not desperately, avoiding unnecessary public statements so as not to raise false hopes. And, again, speaking with the sincerity which has always characterized the Revolution, I remind you that all problems cannot be solved overnight.

I am not exaggerating when I say that we face a very trying international economic situation, where, in addition to wars, lack of political stability, the deterioration of the environment and the rise in oil prices—apparently an irreversible trend—we now face, like comrade Fidel has recently denounced, the decision made primarily by the United States, to transform corn, soy and other food products into fuel. This move is bound to make the price of these products, and those directly dependent upon these such as meats and milk prices, climb dramatically as it has been the case in recent months.

I will just mention some figures. Today, the price of an oil barrel is around 80 dollars, nearly three times what it was only 4 years ago, when it was priced at 28 dollars. This has an impact on practically everything, for, to produce anything or to offer any kind of service, one requires a given quantity of fuel, directly or indirectly.

Another case in point is the price of powdered milk, which was 2,100 dollars the ton in 2004. This already placed great strains on our ability to make this product available, as its import meant an investment of 105 million dollars. A total of 160 million dollars were spent to purchase the needed quantities in 2007, as prices shot up to 2,450 dollars the ton. In these four years, nearly 500 million dollars have been spent in these purchases.

Currently, the price of powdered milk is over 5,200 dollars the ton. Therefore, should domestic production not continue to increase, to meet consumption needs in the next 2008, we would have to spend 340 million dollars in milk alone, more than three times what was spent in 2004. That is, if prices do not continue to rise.

In the case of milled rice, it was priced at 390 dollars a ton in 2006 and is sold today at 435 a ton. Some years ago, we were buying frozen chicken at 500 dollars a ton. We made plans on the assumption its price would go up to 800; in fact, it went up to its current price of 1,186 dollars.

This is the case with practically all products the country imports to meet, essentially, the needs of the population, products which, as it is known, the people purchase at prices which have practically remained unchanged in spite of the circumstances.

And I am talking of products that I think can be grown here—it seems to me that there is plenty of land—and we have had good rains last year and this. As I drove in here I could see that

everything around is green and pretty, but what drew my attention the most, what I found prettier was the marabú (a thorny bush) growing along the road.

Nobody — not a single person in any country— can afford the luxury of spending more than they have

Therefore, any increase in wages or decrease in prices, to be real, can only stem from a greater and more efficient production and services offer, which will increase the country's incomes.

No one, no individual or country, can afford to spend more than what they have. It seems elementary, but we do not always think and act in accordance with this inescapable reality.

To have more, we have to begin by producing more, with a sense of rationality and efficiency, so that we may reduce imports, especially of food products —that may be grown here— whose domestic production is still a long way away from meeting the needs of the population.

We face the imperative of making our land produce more; and the land is there to be tilted either with tractors or with oxen, as it was done before the tractor existed. We need to expeditiously apply the experiences of producers whose work is outstanding, be they in the state or farm sector, on a mass scale, but without improvising, and to offer these producers adequate incentives for the work they carry out in Cuba's suffocating heat.

To reach these goals, the needed structural and conceptual changes will have to be introduced.

We are already working in this direction and a number of modest results can already be appreciated. As demanded by the National Assembly of the People's Power, all debts to farmers were settled; in addition to this, there has been a discrete improvement in the delivery of inputs to some productive sectors and a notable increase in the prices of various products, that is to say, the price the state pays to the producer, not the price the population pays, which remains unchanged. This measure had an impact on important production items, such as meat and milk.

Producing the Most Milk Possible

With respect to milk production and distribution, we are aware that the material resources we have managed to secure for the livestock industry are still very limited. However, in the last two years nature has been on our side and everything indicates that we will reach the planned figure of 384 million liters of milk, which is still far lower than the 900 million we were producing when we had all the fodder and other required inputs.

In addition to this, since March, an experiment has been underway in six municipalities — Mantua and San Cristóbal in Pinar del Rio, Melena del Sur in La Habana, Calimete in Matanzas, Aguada de Pasajeros in Cienfuegos and Yaguajay in Sancti Spiritus—where 20 thousand liters of milk have been directly and consistently delivered by the producer to 230 rationed stores and for social consumption in these localities every day.

In this fashion, we have eliminated absurd procedures through which this valuable food product traveled hundreds of miles before reaching a consumer who, quite often, lived a few hundred meters away from the livestock farm, and, with this, the product losses and fuel expenses involved.

I will give you one example or maybe two in order to mention one from Camaguey. Currently, in Mantua, one of the western most municipalities in Pinar del Rio, 2,492 liters of milk, which meet established consumption needs, are being distributed directly to the municipality's 40 rationed stores and 2,000 liters of fuel are being saved every month.

What was the situation until four months ago?

The closest pasteurizer is located in the Sandino municipality, 40 kilometers away from Mantua, the most important town in the area. Thus, in order to deliver the milk to that plant, a truck had to travel a minimum of 80 kilometers –because distances are different– each day to make the round journey. I say “a minimum” because other areas of the municipality are even farther away.

The milk that children and other consumers in Mantua receive on a regulated basis, once pasteurized at the Sandino plant, returned, shortly afterwards, on a vehicle which, as it is logical to assume, had to return to its base of operations after delivering the product. In total, it traveled 160 kilometers, a journey which, as I explained, was in fact longer.

I don't know if at the moment this is still the case but some time ago, as I was touring the southeast of Camaguey and in a place known as Los Raules –my namesake– I asked a few questions. It happened that all the milk produced at Los Raules was brought to Camaguey for pasteurizing, and the milk assigned to the children at Los Raules had to be taken back there after that. Is that still the case?

On one occasion, not long ago, less than a year, I asked if that insane and absurd crisscrossing had been eliminated. I assure you that I was told it had, and now we are finding out this.

Try thinking about things like these and you'll see the spending they mean.

The commendable aim of all of this crisscrossing was, as we can see, to pasteurize all milk. This measure makes sense and it is necessary in the case of large urban centers—even though it is customary in Cuba to boil all milk at home, whether the milk is pasteurized or not—and all milk needed to supply cities will thus continue to be stocked and pasteurized, but it does not prove viable for a truck –or hundreds of trucks– to travel these long distances every day to deliver a few liters of milk, to places which produce enough of it to be self-sufficient.

As from the victory of the Revolution, the Cubans have learned to travel from west to east, mostly from east to west really, but our wishes to travel have led us to make the milk travel as well.

In addition to the municipalities participating in this experiment, which I mentioned already, another 3,500 rationed stores in other municipalities and provinces are also directly distributing milk, and over 7 million liters of milk have already been distributed.

This procedure will gradually begin to be applied in more and more places, as expediently as possible but without any rash attempts at making it a general formula. In all cases, its application will be preceded by a comprehensive study that demonstrates its viability in a specific place and reveals the existence of the needed organizational and material conditions.

We will continue to work in this direction until all of the country's municipalities that produce the needed quantities of milk become self-sufficient and can complete, within their jurisdiction, the cycle which begins when a cow is milked and ends when a child or any other person drinks the milk, to the extent that present conditions allow.

That is to say, the chief aim of these efforts is to produce as much milk as possible, and I say this is possible in the overwhelming majority of municipalities, except for those in the capital of the country, that is, those which are not in the outskirts of the city, because there they can produce milk too. There are already some capital cities in various provinces that can produce enough in their main municipalities; such is the case of Sancti Spiritus. And, we must definitely produce more milk!

I mean, the main purpose is to produce more milk to first ensure what we need for our children. We are talking about a basic food for children, and for the ill people; we cannot fool around with that either. But we should neither renounce the possibility that others may also receive it in the future.

Additionally, this program intends to continue increasing fuel savings; something very important, too.

This program responds to today's existing situation, where dreams of the vast imports of fodder and other inputs of decades past, when the world was very different from what it is today, are just that: dreams.

This is but one example of the abundant resources that become available when we organize ourselves better and analyze an issue as deeply as required, mindful of all the involved factors.

We are studying the possibility of securing more foreign investment

I reiterate that our problems will not be solved spectacularly. We need time and, most importantly, we need to work systematically and with devotion to consolidate every achievement, no matter how small.

Another nearly endless source of resources—if we consider how much we squander—is to be found in saving, particularly, as we said, the saving of fuel, whose price is increasingly prohibitive, and very unlikely to decrease.

This is a task of strategic importance which is not always undertaken with the necessary care, and wasteful practices have not yet been halted. The example with the milk is enough.

Wherever it is rational to do so, we must also recover domestic industrial production and begin producing new products that eliminate the need for imports or create new possibilities for export.

In this connection, we are currently studying the possibility of securing more foreign investment, of the kind that can provide us with capital, technology or markets, to avail ourselves of its contribution to the country's development, careful not to repeat the mistakes of the past, owed to naivety or our ignorance about these partnerships, of using the positive experiences we've had to work with serious entrepreneurs, upon well-defined legal bases which preserve the role of the State and the predominance of socialist property. ;

We shall step up our cooperative efforts with other nations more and more, aware that only united, and on the basis of utter respect for the path chosen by every country, will we prevail. Proof of this are the steps we are taking forward next to our brothers in Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua, and our solid ties to China and Vietnam, to mention but a few noteworthy examples of the growing number of countries in all continents with which relations of all kinds are being re-established and extended.

We will continue to make a priority of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the growing international movement of solidarity towards the Revolution. We will also continue to work with the United Nations Organization and other multilateral organizations of which Cuba is a member, which respect the norms of international law and contribute to the development of nations and to peace.

The only thing that any Cuban revolutionary should never question is our unwavering decision to build socialism

Many are the battles we face simultaneously and which require us to bring together our forces to maintain the unity of the people, the Revolution's greatest weapon, and to take advantage of the potential of a socialist society like ours. The coming People's Power elections will be a new opportunity to demonstrate how extraordinarily strong our democracy—a true democracy—is.

It is the duty of each and every one of us, of Party cadres especially, not to allow ourselves be overwhelmed by any difficulty, no matter how great or insurmountable it may seem to us at a given moment.

We must remember how, despite the initial confusion and discouragement, we managed to face up to the first, harsh years of the Special Period early the last decade, and how we managed to move forward. What we said then we can more justifiably repeat today: Yes, we can do it!

In response to bigger problems or challenges, more organization, more systematic and effective work, more studies and predictions on the basis of plans where our priorities are clearly established and no one attempts to solve their problems at any cost or at the expense of others.

We must also work with a critical and creative spirit, avoiding stagnation and schematics. We must never fall prey to the idea that what we do is perfect but rather examine it again. The one thing a Cuban revolutionary will never question is our unwavering decision to build socialism.

It was with the same profound conviction that, in this very place, on July 26, 1989, exactly 18 years ago to this day, Fidel historically and prophetically affirmed that, even in the hypothetical case that the Soviet Union were to collapse, we would continue to move forward with the Revolution, determined to pay the steep price of freedom and to act on the basis of dignity and principles.

History has offered abundant proof that our people's determination is as hard as rock. To honor this determination, we are duty-bound to question everything we do as we strive to materialize our will more and more perfectly, to change concepts and methods which were appropriate at one point but have been surpassed by life itself.

We must always remember — and not to repeat it from memory like a dogma, but rather to apply it creatively in our work every day—what comrade Fidel affirmed on May 1st, 2000, with a definition which embodies the quintessence of political and ideological work:

“Revolution means a sense of our moment in history, it means changing all that ought to be changed; it is full equality and freedom; it is being treated and treating others like human beings; it is emancipating ourselves by ourselves, and through our own efforts; it is defying powerful and ruling forces inside and outside of the social and national spheres; it is defending values that are believed in at the cost of any sacrifice; it is modesty, selflessness, altruism, solidarity and heroism; it is fighting with audacity, intelligence and realism; it is never lying or violating ethical principles; it is the profound conviction that there is no force in the world capable of crushing the strength of truth and ideas. Revolution is unity, it is independence, it is fighting for our dreams for justice for Cuba and for the world, it is the foundation of our patriotism, our socialism and our internationalism.”

The best tribute we can pay the Commander in Chief today, the greatest contribution to his recovery we can make, is to ratify the decision to make a guide of those principles and, most importantly, to act in accordance with them every day, at whatever post has been assigned us.

True to the legacy of our glorious dead, we will work tirelessly to wholly meet the directives of his Proclamation, the many he has given us since then and as many as he gives us in the future.

There is no room for fear of difficulties or danger in our country, which shall never lower its guard before its enemies. That is the essential guarantee that, in our squares and, should it be necessary, in our trenches too, these are the cries that shall always resound in our land:

Long live the Revolution!

Long live Fidel