



Australia-Cuba Friendship Society
NEWSLETTER
JUNE 2008

Next Meeting
Monday 2nd
June
7.30pm
CEPU Office
139 Queensbury St
Carlton

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Dear Comrades,

25 May 2008

Hope you're all OK and keeping your ears and eyes open. We certainly need all our faculties to keep up with the issues that get reported in our dailies, never mind the vastly more important ones that get buried in the back or ferreting out the stories our political masters hope will never see the light of day. Especially with that walking nightmare in the White House who wants to go out with a Big Bang. George W tried hard during his recent visit to Israel for their 60th anniversary celebrations, a visit that was supposed to coincide with Israeli air strikes on South and West Beirut to destroy Hezbollah, so that he could triumphantly strut his stuff alongside Olmert. Thankfully for all of us, reality intervened and the attack was called off – infuriating the White House no end – because Hezbollah was thought to be too strong!

Gutsy Isareli journalist Uri Avnery attacks western suckholes like Bush who blow in, fawn over everyone without uttering a word of criticism about illegal settlements, the Gaza blockade or the daily killings and humiliations of Palestinians. Avnery singled out German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who reached new heights of obsequiousness in her speech to the Knesset, evangelical pastor John Hagee (John McCain's mentor) who oozed sanctimonious flattery from every pore, neither of whom came even close to George Bush, approaching the end of the most disastrous presidency in the annals of the Republic. The common denominator of the group is that their prestige at home is close to nil, like Tony Blair. Every few weeks, says Uri, Blair convenes a press conference to trumpet the good tidings of his phenomenal success in helping the Palestinians while the situation in the Occupied Territories goes from bad to worse.

Unfortunately, we haven't quite finished with John Howard. His last rotten act was purchasing \$14 million worth of cluster bombs. Bad enough. But now it seems that at an international meeting in Dublin to ban them, our **brand new Rudd 'Labor' government** is doing all it can to frustrate the process (like it did in Kyoto when it backed US attempts to weaken the agreement) calling for the Smart 155 bomb to be excluded and for rogue nations who persist in using them to be allowed to do so. UK PM Brown supports the ban, leaving Australia increasingly isolated, with Rudd no doubt hoping no-one will notice.

It's almost impossible to avoid the looming US presidential election, especially if the Obama/Clinton war allows John McCain to slip through, who's keen to bomb the shit out of Iran, like he did decades ago in North Vietnam, until some impoverished peasants shot down his plane and captured him! Iran is a poor country of 70 million with no nuclear weapons and no missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads, much less of carrying them halfway around the world to US targets, exactly the type of country the US likes to attack. **I thought Obama was the best of a bad bunch until SBS reported that if elected he would maintain the trade embargo against Cuba.** Gutless. So what's new in a nation that has the highest percentage of its citizens in prisons of any nation on earth – 751 per 100,000 - and spends more on 'defence' than all other nations combined, leaving it stony broke, with not a brass razoo in its coffers. Whoever wins in November, will need a mighty big shovel to clean up the mess. And a good compass to change the Ship of State's direction. And the will to do it. Don't hold your breath.

Globalisation has shovelled us all together and we've all been infected by the US virus. The way its lunatic fringe has hijacked the mainstream has spread outwards and we've seen a steady erosion of our basic freedoms. A system of inverted totalitarianism where total power is wielded without the need for concentration camps or forcibly suppressing dissident elements as long as they remain ineffectual. The main sectors promoting and reinforcing this modern Shangri-La are corporate power and the military-industrial complex with the objective of increasing the profits of large corporations and dismantling the institutions of social democracy – the unions, welfare, public health, housing and education services etc. Its primary tool is privatisation using the cover of improving 'efficiency' and cost-cutting. And by keeping the general public preoccupied by trivia so they don't focus on the wider picture and betrayal of public trust. Ring any bells?

This Month...

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No wonder these mobsters hate Cuba and Venezuela and anyone daring to stand up and challenge their power. The world could do with another Rosa Luxemburg, a Polish revolutionary who devoted her life to ending capitalism. Rosa was murdered by the social democratic government of Germany in 1919 for her uncompromising views, which are just as relevant today. She argued that when democratic forms run contrary to the interests of capitalist elites, they are disposed of and how war is fundamental to capitalist development. How sad that we have yet to learn the lessons Luxemburg and her contemporaries understood 100 years ago. So enjoy the footie and 'big events', but don't get sucked in. Read between and under the lines...

Joan Coxsedg, ACFS President, Melbourne (03) 9857 9249

Cuban Health System

The Cuban Approach to Health Care: Origins, Results, and Current Challenges Evolution in the Revolutionary Period

Through the pre-revolutionary period before 1959, Cuban medical practice and research were highly influenced by the tenets and scientific approach of the US and French schools. With the arrival of the Fidel Castro government, this turned out to be a plus and a minus: Cuban physicians were highly trained and well respected, but nearly half of them left for the United States when the new government set about drastically reforming the health sector. Thus, from 1959 through 1967, when accumulated expertise was most needed, the island of six million people lost 3,000 of its 6,300 physicians and found itself with just 16 professors of medicine and a single medical school. (1) (2)

Under the mandate of the country's new leadership - which defined health and education as social responsibilities of government and individual rights of citizens - it would be the job of this lean medical corps to create a unified national health care system, and provide universal, accessible, and free health services to the whole Cuban population.

The task was daunting given the health picture in Cuba at the time, revealing wide disparities across the island and a particularly precarious existence for the rural poor. Only 11.2% of farm worker families drank milk, and only 2% were eating eggs, according to a Catholic University Group study. (3) Worse was the predicament of the eastern mountainous regions, historically home to the poorest of the poor. Here, makeshift cemeteries dotted the coastline, where families had given up hope of flagging down a passing ship to get help for a sick or dying loved one.

In the 60s, physicians at the helm of the new health system took bold steps to recruit doctors for the Rural Health Service, setting up 50 new rural hospitals; establishing over 160 community clinics in urban areas; and initiating the national children's immunization program. Just as importantly, they moved to train more health personnel.

In the 70s, the first investments were made in new general hospitals and pharmaceutical production plants. The community clinic ('polyclinic') model of primary health care was reinforced and expanded, taking on health education, prevention, and environmental monitoring. Maternal-child health, from the start a priority for the new health system, evolved into the first national comprehensive health program; it would later be joined by three more: infectious diseases, chronic diseases, and the elderly. As the numbers of medical graduates rose, more Cuban

health professionals joined international service abroad to provide free medical services primarily in the nations of Africa and Latin America. By the end of the next decade, the cumulative record showed Cuba had posted nearly 20,000 Cuban health professionals abroad. (4)

By the 1980s, Cuba's health system began to merit attention from the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and other international agencies anxious to identify viable models of health services in developing countries. It was also in this decade that tertiary care facilities and research received priority attention: medical specialization expanded to 55 fields, and national institutes were established to act as national reference centres (centres of excellence) for the rest of the country. This process included national programs for prenatal screening, installation of the first nuclear magnetic resonance equipment in Latin America, and an organ transplant program. By the end of the decade, Cuba had expanded medical education to 21 medical schools spread across the country.

The 80s was also the decade for two decisive developments which became hallmarks of Cuban medicine. The first was the takeoff of the biotechnology industry, which would put Cuba in the forefront of global vaccine research. The second was the introduction of the Family Doctor Program in 1986, which located doctor-and-nurse teams literally next door to their patients. By the early 90s, over 95% of Cuban families would receive primary medical attention in their own neighbourhoods. (See Challenges for Cuba's Family Doctor-and-Nurse Program, Reed, G. *MEDICC Review*; 2000:2(3).

http://www.medicc.org/publications/medicc_review/II/primary/sloframe.html)

The Economic Crisis of the Nineties and Health Care

With the collapse of the socialist bloc, Cuba's island economy lost 85% of its trade in two years, threatening the economy and the health system with collapse. What's more, the Cuban Democracy Act (CDA) of 1992 tightened the US embargo on Cuba at this most vulnerable moment. (See: *Denial of*

Food and Medicine: The Impact of the U.S. Embargo on Health and Nutrition in Cuba, Reed, G. and Frank, M. American Association for World Health, 1997. www.medicc.org/embargo.php).

The results were devastating: from 1989 to 1993, Cuba's economy shrunk by 35%; the hard currency available for medicines, equipment and supplies by 70%; and Cubans' daily caloric intake dropped by 33%, proteins by 39%. Fuel shortages ground transportation and water pumping facilities nearly to a halt; blackouts extended to 16 hours a day in the heat of the summer; Cuban peso salaries became nearly worthless (reaching 145 to the US dollar); food was scarce and rationed; and urban dwellers headed for city parks in search of firewood for cooking fuel.

The remarkable paradox is that - with the exception of the 1992-93 neuropathy epidemic (5) and a few "early warning signs" such as increased low birth weight - Cuban health indicators held the line. In some cases, especially as the island began to find its way out of the crisis, they actually improved.

Infant mortality was 10.7 per 1,000 live births in 1990, down to 9.4 by 1995, and to 7.2 by 2000. Under-five mortality shows the same pattern: 13.2 in 1990, 12.5 in 1995, and 11.1 by 2000. Only life expectancy dipped slightly during the worst years: 75.2 in 1989, 74.8 in 1995, and back up to 76 by 2000. (Source: *Annual Statistical Yearbook*, Ministry of Public Health, Havana, 2003).

The Results: Explaining the Paradox

Analysts have explained Cuba's health results in the face of adversity by pointing to the following key components:

- During the worst years of the crisis, the health status of the population remained a fundamental government priority. In fact, the Cuban Parliament actually increased the health sector budget in Cuban pesos and the share of GDP earmarked for health care at the expense of spending for the military and state administration. At the same time, the health sector hard currency budget was forced down by two-thirds as a result of dropping exports.

Table 1: Cuba's Public Health Budget – 1990, 1995, 1998

Year	Health Budget*	Per Inhabitant	% of GDP	% of National Budget
1990	1,045.1	98.6	5.3	7.4
1995	1,221.9	111.3	5.8	8.8
1998	1,473.1	132.4	6.4	13.1

*in millions of Cuban pesos

Source: Ministry of Finance, Havana.

• **Although scarcities abounded, they were shared**, prompting a report published by the UNDP in 1999 to state, “An evaluation of 25 countries in the Americas, measuring relative inequalities in health, revealed that Cuba is the country with the best health situation in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is also the country which has achieved the most effective impact with resources, although scarce, invested in the health sector.” (*Study on Human Development and Equity in Cuba*. UNDP, 1999: p.103).

• **Key medical resources were centralized and moved to where they were most critically needed.** In this context, the Minister of Public Health initiated a Tuesday morning meeting of all major health sectors to assess the exact amount of hard currency available that week, and decide which purchases were possible and essential (often only the life-saving ones were made). Similar weekly sessions were held in all Cuban hospitals, to tally the medications on hand and send out an SOS for those patients not covered by current stocks. A program soliciting international donations at one point yielded some USD\$20 million annually in medicines and equipment, under the consistent proviso that international agencies could inspect end-use facilities to see their donations were getting to the intended patients.

• **The educational status of the Cuban population itself worked for continued hygiene measures and health education.** While many of the other “social determinants of health” spiraled downward, the average educational level of Cubans by 2002 was ninth grade (Source: *Libro Blanco 2006*. MINREX; 2006, Havana, Cuba.); secondary school (through 9th grade) was required; and over 99% of young people (ages 15-24) who graduated from secondary school were going on to high school. (Source: *Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio: Cuba, Segundo Informe*, July, 2005; Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Económicas, La Habana, p. 33). As has been amply demonstrated in international reports, the educational level of a population (and especially of women) augurs well for health promotion

and disease prevention, and this was certainly the case in resource-scarce Cuba in the 1990s and remains so today.

• **The dedication of Cuban health professionals**, working under the most stressful conditions, was without doubt, indispensable for the Cuban population to emerge from the worst of the crisis with their health status essentially intact. Heart surgeons, riding to work on bicycles, would wait half an hour for their hands to stop shaking before entering the operating room. Nephrologists were working round-the-clock to dialyse ever-more patients on ever-fewer artificial kidneys. Clinicians in hospitals across the island were phoning each other, the Ministry and colleagues abroad to find life-saving antibiotics for their patients.

• **The health status of the Cuban population, vastly improved** by the health care system since 1960, provided a sound foundation which could not be easily eroded. By the 90s, Cuban children were being vaccinated against 13 childhood diseases -- more than any other country in the world, including the United States. A host of diseases had been eradicated altogether, infectious diseases were at a minimum, and Cubans were dying of the same chronic conditions described in the mortality charts of industrialised countries. A significant socio-political corollary was that the majority of Cubans trusted the health care system to work for them.

• Perhaps the most important single catalyst determining the positive outcome from the precarious 1990s was **the presence of a solid community-oriented primary care network accessible to virtually every family in Cuba**. The family doctor-and-nurse teams, responsible for the health of some 150 families in a given neighbourhood, concentrated their attention on health promotion, prevention of disease, environmental cleanup, priority attention to children and the elderly, prenatal care, and early detection of infection and chronic disease. Most of these activities required little in the way of material support, but they went a long way towards keeping the levels of disease from reaching the already over-extended hospital wards and emergency rooms.

Challenges Facing Cuba's Health Care System Today

The collapse of socialist Europe and the tightened US embargo on Cuba did not take an even toll on all levels

of Cuba's public health system: the greater the specialization, the greater the harm that was done. This is true, of course, because more specialized treatments require sophisticated and expensive equipment, disposable parts and other supplies, specially trained personnel, professionals completely updated in their field, and continuous investments in research. In Cuba during the 1990s, all of these were imperilled. Hospitals barely had light bulbs and first-generation antibiotics, equipment was old and in disrepair for want of parts, and all attention and resources were focused on the immediate patient load.

As Cuba continues to emerge from the crisis, its highly trained and dedicated medical science community looks around to find the physical plant of hospitals and research centres are no longer capable of sustaining their diagnostic laboratories, their ability to dispense quality patient care, or their essential research. In short, Cuba has the accumulated medical training and intelligence to move forward, but faces serious challenges to refurbish and rebuild the physical plant and provide updated technology.

Thus in 2004, a national program for refurbishing the country's 444 community polyclinics was carried out and 52 hospitals and tertiary institutes were designated to become national “centres of excellence” once they were themselves remodelled and newly equipped. The first of these new centres were completed in 2006 -- the Hermanos Ameijeiras Hospital, Pando Ferrer Ophthalmological Institute and the Enrique Cabrera Clinical-Surgical Hospital (all in Havana).

Synergies in the System Today

One of the hallmarks of the Cuban health system since the early 1980s has been its research results and applications -- ranging from high-tech biotechnology and vaccine R&D, to broad community-based epidemiological studies on chronic diseases.

The health system - its universal access and coverage, as well as statistical records - has provided the formidable backbone for research, enabling massive informed-consent participation in clinical trials of new medications and vaccines, as well as longitudinal studies on conditions such as chronic vascular diseases and cancer.

The Cuban philosophy is “closed-loop” research, in which investigation priorities are based on priority health problems that need solving, whether outbreaks of disease (such as meningitis or hepatitis); the financial urgency of replacing expensive imported drugs; or the conditions that come with aging. Research is carried out, and then results applied nationally and/or internationally, thus “closing the loop.” Vaccine research is currently being carried out into such “neglected diseases” as cholera, dengue, tuberculosis and leptospirosis.

In addition, the universal nature of the health system has greatly facilitated national studies on key topics. One such study on the disabled has led to reforms in the health and education systems to more adequately meet the needs of these persons. (See *Por la Vida*, Casa Editorial Abril, La Habana, 2003.). National registries - in everything from sickle cell anemia to twins - have also been developed as a way to direct better attention to specific populations within the country.

As Cuba emerged from the economic hurricane of the 90s, the country's health system began to share its experience more widely with other developing countries, engendering South-South synergies that continue to develop today, both in medical services, research and medical education (see *Cuba and Global Health* <http://www.saludthefilm.net/ns/cuba-and-global-health.html>).

The Road Ahead

Cubans are wont to say: '*no es fácil*' (it's not easy), but just as apt to say '*no hay problema*' (it's no problem). And this paradox could certainly be used to describe where the ever-evolving Cuban health system finds itself today.

There is no doubt that resources - material, financial, and human - are stretched as Cuban health authorities

attempt to cover their own population and carry out an expanding program of global cooperation in health, unprecedented in scope for any developing country. While some new resources are procured from South-South agreements, particularly with Venezuela, the US embargo continues to throw up serious obstacles to attaining the latest medications and technology. And the program to refurbish Cuban hospitals, converting over 50 into centers of excellence, has not kept pace with original timetables. All of this, of course, places a particular burden on health professionals in the country once again.

The challenges are many and will remain so for some time. These include re-organizing the system where necessary, mainly at the primary care level and in medical education; finishing the remodeling of dilapidated hospitals and institutes, plus the effective management and maintenance of these new facilities; increasing the efficacy and quality of medical attention and preventive programs; and paying sufficient attention to the opinions of health care professionals as the system addresses each of these issues.

Notes & References

1. Centro Nacional de Información de Ciencias Médicas. *Emigración Médica*. 1968. A total of 1,975 had left the country by March, 1965, and by the end of 1967, another 1,025 had applied to do so. (pp. 21 and 26).
2. Medina, C et al. Recuento histórico de la enseñanza de la medicina en Cuba. *MEDISAN* 2001; 5(2):46-51.
3. Agrupación Católica Universitaria, "Encuesta de los Trabajadores Rurales 1956-1957". In *Economía y Desarrollo*. July-August 1972;12:198.
4. Database of the Unidad Central de Colaboración, Ministerio de Salud Pública, Havana, 2003, showing a cumulative total of 19,126 health professionals posted abroad from 1963 through 1989. NOTE: This represents the sum total of professionals posted abroad each year. If a person served more than once or more than one year, each "person-year" is counted separately.
5. See Hadad J. International Workshop on Epidemic Neuropathy in Cuba: Report Summary. *MEDICC Review*, VII:7 2005. 27-30. http://www.medicc.org/publications/medicc_review/0705/cuban-medical-literature-2.html

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☐ I am interested in the annual work/study trip to Cuba. Please send me information.

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More Doctors for the World - Gail Reed

April 14, 2008 - "Traditional models of medical training cannot resolve the terrible lack of health professionals and the urgent need for access to health care in today's world," says Dr. Yiliam Jimenez, the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations' Vice Minister for International Cooperation.

Addressing some 300 leaders of Latin American social movements who last week took aim at the US-sponsored free trade agreements for the region, Dr. Jimenez provided a panorama of Cuba's four decades of global health cooperation and its evolving models of medical education. New "extra-muros" models are training physicians in Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Guine Bissau, Ecuadorial Guinea and Gambia, among other developing countries. "We are returning to the tutorial method," said Dr. Jimenez, "supplemented by information technologies and other teaching aids, so that students from low-income families can go be educated in classrooms and clinics in their own communities, where their services are so sorely needed." Cuba has been scaling up training of doctors for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean since 1999, when the Latin American Medical School (ELAM) was founded in Havana. Cuban medical educators are now training some 24,000 international medical students on the island; plus 29,000 Cubans and another 20,000 in countries such as the ones mentioned above. At the first ELAM graduation in 2005, former President Fidel Castro pledged the country would train 100,000 physicians from the Global South by 2015.

In 2008, it is estimated that medical schools in Cuba will graduate 1,730 international MDs, and 2,860 Cuban doctors. Total enrollment in university-level health sciences in Cuba for the 2007-2008 academic year is 202,276 – including medicine, dentistry, nursing, clinical psychology and 21 technical specialties.



Dr. Yiliam Jimenez

Cuba Urges Issue of Food Crisis to be Discussed at Europe-Latin American and Caribbean Summit

PERÚ, May 14, 2008.-Cuba urged for the issue of the current world food crisis to be included in the agenda of the 5th Europe-Latin America and the Caribbean Summit which kicks off on Tuesday in Lima, Peru.

In statements to a group of reporters at the Press Center, Cuba's Deputy Foreign Minister Abelardo Moreno stressed that the issue of the lack and price hikes of food is floating in the air, although for the moment the theme has been excluded from the official program.

"It is an issue that has not been discussed too much, but without a doubt its very important", said the Deputy Foreign Minister who is attending the 25th High Ranking Experts Meeting which begins on Tuesday in Lima.

For the Cuban diplomat it is not possible to talk about the fight against poverty (one of the key issue of the Summit) without mentioning the uncontrolled increase of food prices worldwide.

Abelardo Moreno said that "what we currently have in the world is a food crisis which precisely jeopardizes the fight against hunger".

He added that the issue might be discussed during the Summit and later, according to the conclusions of the debates, something on the matter might be added to the final declaration.

Regarding the discussions at the experts meeting that will be held behind closed doors, Moreno said that the representatives of both regions have already approved the agenda that will be dealt with during the Foreign Ministers Forum on Thursday.

(Cubaminrex- RHC)

Cuba's Environmental Panorama

ORFILIO PELAEZ



Cuba's National Statistics Office presented a new publication Thursday entitled Cuba's Environmental Panorama 2007 as part of activities leading up to World Environment Day on June 5.

The book reports on a series of indicators related to population, atmosphere, water, soils, biodiversity, energy, wastes and other topics. It also describes the steps taken by the country to join the international effort to design sustainable development policies.

Fernando Gonzalez Bermudez, acting minister of Science, Technology and the Environment (CITMA), said the figures and data contained in the text constitute a valuable tool to work to protect the environment as well as to improve on the national strategy to deal with climate change.

Among those attending the book presentation were Oscar Mederos, director of the National Statistics Office; CITMA deputy Ministers Alfonso Casanova and Jose Antonio Diaz; Susan McDade, representative in Cuba of the UN Development Fund; and a high level delegation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), led by Luis Beccaria director of Statistics and Economic Projects.

Sustainable Development: The Environment, Climate Change and Energy

Address by José Ramón Machado Ventura, First Vice-President of the Councils of State and Ministers at the 5th European Union – Latin America and the Caribbean Summit in Lima, Peru

Your Excellency,

At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro 16 years ago, Fidel Castro uttered a prophetic warning, stating that "an important biological species is at risk of disappearing as a result of the rapid and progressive destruction of its natural living conditions: humanity". Time has proven him right.

Let us not mince our words: we shan't attain sustainable development, the negative impacts of climate change will neither be halted nor reversed, the environment will not be preserved for future generations, if the irrational patterns of production, distribution and consumption imposed upon us by capitalism prevail. The globalization of neo-liberal policies has drastically exacerbated the crisis.

Facing the vital crisis that threatens humanity today cannot consist in preventing the development of those who need development the most. We have common, albeit differentiated, responsibilities. Those who have unjustly and selfishly hoarded riches and technologies, who are responsible for 76 percent of greenhouse gas emissions since 1850, must bear most of the weight of this effort.

Developed countries must honour the commitments assumed at Kyoto in connection with the mitigation of this phenomenon and, in addition to this, mobilize additional resources to aid in adaptation efforts undertaken in South countries.

If, for instance, the United States were to reallocate, as official aid for sustainable development, a small portion of its military budget for the 2008 fiscal year, a budget which reaches the astronomical figure of 696 billion dollars, a vital contribution to this effort could be made. European Union countries—several of which register the highest military budgets on the planet—could be the first to take steps in this direction and steer their main ally to follow in their footsteps.

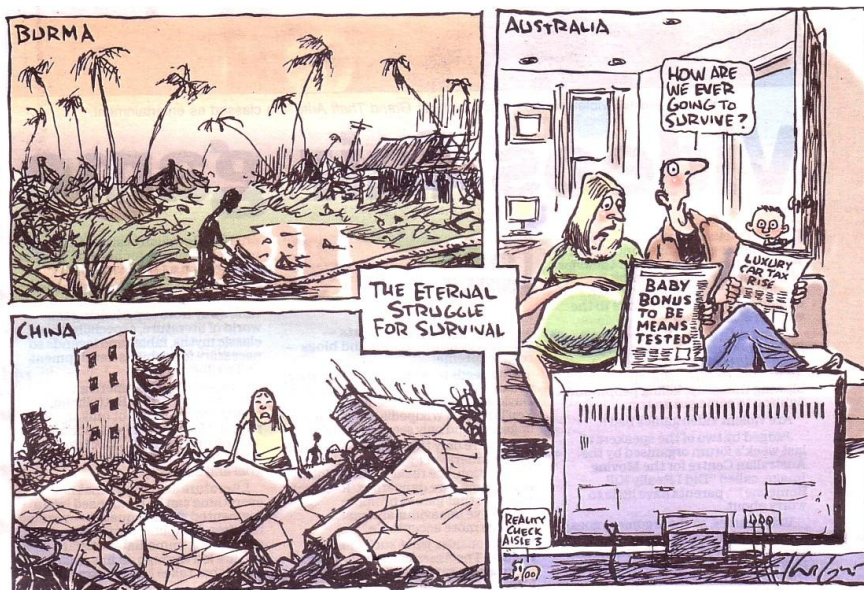
A growing number of countries can no longer afford to pay the price of many food products. Hunger continues to claim lives and the situation is getting worse. The sinister plans to convert food into fuel advanced by the President of the United States must be combated on the strength of scientific arguments and the unquestionable evidence and eloquent facts afforded us by everyday life.

Sustainable development presupposes a revolution in our values and in the way we confront the inequalities of today and the challenges of tomorrow. We must undertake a global energy revolution sustained by savings, rationality and efficiency.

Cuba hopes the members of the European Union shall assume their duties. The responsible conduct of its members shall serve to expedite the assumption, by the rest of developed countries, of the commitment to reduce their greenhouse emissions, by 2020, by no less than 40 percent in relation to their 1990 levels.

The European Union, a world leader in the production of clean technologies and the export of renewable energy sources, is in a position to create a mechanism for the transfer of these technologies, under completely preferential conditions, to the countries of Latin America, the Caribbean and the rest of the Third World.

I will mention but one example: the generosity of the people and government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and initiatives such as PETROCARIBE and ALBA are an example that ought to be followed by the European Union.



The time is ripe for acting, in the spirit of solidarity, and without demagoguery.

Thank you very much.

Address by José Ramón Machado Ventura, First Vice-President of the Councils of State and Ministers for the Round Table named "Poverty, Inequality, Inclusion".

HUMAN RIGHTS IN CUBA

The Republic of Cuba is a socialist state of workers, independent and sovereign, organized by all and for the welfare of all, as a unitary and democratic republic, for the enjoyment of political freedom, social justice, individual and collective welfare and human solidarity.

It is ruled by a Constitution adopted in 1976, by referendum and free and secret vote and with 96 percent of voters in favour. This Constitution was amended in 1992 and in 2002, when 8'198'237 citizens over the age of 16, in a popular plebiscite, signed in favour of the constitutional reform, ensuring the irrevocable nature of the socialist system and preventing changes altering its essential content. Moreover, the amendments make it clear that Cuba will never return to capitalism and that economic, diplomatic and political relations with any other state can never be negotiated in the face of aggression, threat or coercion from a foreign power. In a roll call vote, the 559 deputies present at the special session of Parliament (out of a total membership of 578) stood up in their seats to pronounce their "Yes," in an exercise of their right of expression, converted into unanimous approval, the resonance of which transcended the legislative benches to be heard in Cuban homes, live and direct on television and radio broadcasts of the session. Amendments of this nature require the approval of two thirds of the National Assembly's members

The Cuban democratic system has a large popular participation and social representation. Access to public and state positions is not reached through political competence, but through personal merits accumulated in the service to society and Nation, therefore, they should meet and report their voters on their

activities periodically and, if they lose their merits, they can be revoked by them.

Candidates are postulated by the people and elected, without any campaigns and with equal conditions, from the grassroots to the Parliament, through open, direct and secret elections. Municipal delegates are elected every two years and a half and deputies every five years. Voting is not compulsory, however usually over 95 percent of adults vote. The supreme body of power is the National Assembly of People's Power, with legislative and constituent power, elected through free, direct and secret vote. It is unicameral and it has two ordinary sessions, and extraordinary sessions when they are requested by over half the total number of deputies.

The National Assembly of People's Power elects, from among the deputies, the Council of State, the body that represents the Assembly when there is no ongoing session, it has a collegiate nature and, nationally and internationally it is the supreme representation of the State.

The President of the Council of State is the President of the Republic. To occupy such dignified position he has to be elected first by the people as a deputy to the Parliament and then, he should be proposed and elected by the deputies as Head of State.

The executive function of the State is carried out by the Council of Ministers that is the highest executive and administrative body and represents the Government of the Republic. Their members are appointed by the National Assembly at the proposal of the Council of State.

The Supreme Court and the other courts are in charge of the legal issues. Courts are a

system of state bodies, structured with functional independence from any other body and hierarchically subordinated to the National Assembly of People's Power and the Council of State.

For more information, please, see:

[The Cuban Government official web site](#)
[The National Assembly of People's Power official web site](#)

HUMAN RIGHTS FOR CUBANS

The human rights of Cubans are consecrated on the Constitution of the Republic. They are not declarative goals but practical accomplishments that have placed the Cuban people among the freest, most educated, healthiest and most dignified and fully-fledged peoples of the world.

As in every sovereign, free and independent state, these liberties and rights are enjoyed within the context established by the Constitution itself, the laws and the goals of the society, so they can not be used against what is already established, as it is stated in the article 62 of the Constitution and in the article 30 of the very Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

These rights include:

- The right to life.
- The right to work and its just remuneration.
- The right to rest with pay.
- The right to social security.
- The right to protection, security and hygiene of work.
- The right to healthcare and protection.
- The right to free education.
- The right to physical education, sports and recreation.

- The right to freedom of expression and press.
- The right to assembly and association, including the unconditional rights to initiatives and criticism.
- Right to freedom of conscience and religion, freedom to change his religion or belief, and profess his preferred worship.
- The right to the inviolability of domicile.
- The right to the inviolability of mail and communications.
- The right to the inviolability of the human person.
- The right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty.
- The right to not be prosecuted or sentenced by a relevant court by virtue of laws prior to the crime.
- The right to unbiased and just defense in oral public trial.
- The right that violence, coercion or pressures are not used against a defendant or prisoner.
- The right to address complaints and requests to the authorities and to receive answers.
- The right to participate in the defense of the Country, to have a weapon, a place and a way to defend his country.

The National Assembly of People's Power, through its Committees for Constitutional and Legal Affairs and Attention to the Population, as well as the Courts and the social and non-governmental organizations all together keep watch over the full practice of these rights and channel citizens' claims and complaints.

The Centre for the Study of the People's Opinions is an additional mechanism for the control and information to the top leadership of the country on the population's opinion, its concerns and interests, its criticism, as well as its dissatisfactions regarding the Government performance at any level of society.

There are also ways of public consultation and citizen

participation through which Cubans exercise their rights, control governmental, politic and economic activity.

FROM CUBANS

In Cuba there is a work experience supporting human rights that is barely known. The country has cooperated and has the willingness to continue to cooperate in the context of the United Nations with the different mechanisms, without selectivity, without manipulations and without politicization.

Over the years, we have enhanced our cooperation with the established mechanisms and have kept dialogue with different states.

Cuba was the first country that invited the High Commissioner, Ambassador José Ayala Lazo. We have also invited the Special Rapporteurs on Mercenarism and on Violence against Women.

Cuba has received numerous recognition gestures by the Secretary of the UN Human Rights Commission for its willingness to report and provide requested information. Likewise, Cuba answers periodical reports of other UN bodies such as the Conventions on Torture, on Racism, on the Rights of the Child, and on the Rights of Women.

Out of the 25 human rights instruments acknowledged by the Human Rights Commission and by the Office of the High Commissioner Cuba determined to adhere to 16, and it did the same with all the instruments (12) devoted to fight terrorism.

1. Universal Declaration on Human Rights.
2. Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.
3. International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid.

4. International Convention against Apartheid in Sports.
5. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.
6. Convention on Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity.
7. Convention on the Rights of the Child.
8. Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.
9. Convention on the Political Rights of Women.
10. Convention on the Nationality of Married Women.
11. Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages.
12. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
13. 1926 Slavery Convention and 1953 Protocol Amending the Slavery Convention
14. Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery the Slave Trade, and Institutions.
15. Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.
16. Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

As a matter of comparison, Cuba is part of 37 Human Rights Instruments of 54 existing, the European Union is part of 22 and the United States of 15. Nevertheless, Cuba is willing to enhance its membership to the different human rights mechanisms and has announced that it intends to adhere soon to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

DEATH PENALTY

Currently, there are 83 countries in the world with the death penalty still in force in their legislation, only 57 have abolished it and 15 use it to punish common offences.

In Cuba, death penalty is exceptionally applied. Death penalties that have survived all legal resources go to the Council of State to be ratified, so no court can apply it.

Though Cuba lives an exceptional situation of harassment and aggression, the country aspires that one day and by their own decision death penalty can be abolished.

Of course, in the country there are no tortures, extrajudicial murders or missing people. The Revolution eradicated them in 1958.

ANTI-CUBAN RESOLUTION IN GENEVA

Since 1994, the United States of America, in their urge for overthrowing the constitutional government and the political system that the Cuban people has freely chosen and defended at all costs, have imposed, through political manipulations and outrageous and humiliating pressures, a resolution against Cuba at the UN Human Rights Commission, in Geneva.

It is an immoral practice on the side of the Administration of the power that has organized and carried out, or financed and protected the lengthy economic warfare during the last 40 years, the Blockade, Aggressions and terrorist acts that have cost the lives of thousands of Cubans and the damage they have caused is over 181 billion dollars.

The countries supporting this political vendetta are turning, this way, into accomplices of the mass and blatant violation of the human rights of the Cuban people.

ACFS Melbourne Letter to the White House

On 21 May 2008, the White House launched 'The Day in Solidarity with Cuba', a provocative action claiming that Cuba harbours 'political prisoners', the objective being to put pressure on the world to accept its definition of the 'democratisation of Cuba'. At very short notice, ACFS branches were asked to send protest emails to the White House.

I sent the following message to George W Bush on behalf of the Melbourne ACFS:

'In face of your catastrophic Iraq debacle and mounting hostility around the world to your militaristic interventions, why are you running the curiously titled 'The Day in Solidarity with Cuba', when everyone knows that for the past five decades the US has shown nothing but unremitting aggression to the tiny island nation. You have the gall to accuse Cuba of harbouring political prisoners and yet you allow a convicted career terrorist like Luis Posada Carriles – who masterminded the bombing of a Cuban airliner killing all 73 on board – to freely walk your streets. Instead of attacking Cuba, perhaps it's about time you put your own house in order. What a shameful legacy you're leaving, that in the world's richest country, 28 million Americans have to rely on food stamps simply to survive.'

Joan Coxsedg, ACFS President, Melbourne

Within minutes, the White House replied: *'On behalf of President Bush, thank you for your correspondence. We appreciate hearing your views and welcome your suggestions. Due to the large volume of email received, the White House cannot respond to every message. Thank you again for taking the time to write.'*

Spain: Secret Meeting of Anti-Cuban Forces headed by Caleb McCarry, the US State Department's so-called Cuba transition coordinator

CUBA, April 23, 2008. A secret meeting between individuals who support terrorist acts against Cuba recently took place in Spain, headed by Caleb McCarry,

McCarry visited Madrid almost clandestinely and met at the US embassy with notorious terrorists and CIA agents. The official holds a position similar to the post of Iraq administrator held by Paul Bremer after the US invasion.

The meeting with people of the likes of Carlos Alberto Montaner and Leopoldo Fernandez Pujals took place with the objective "not to impart doctrine, but to listen," reported the rightwing ABC newspaper in an article entitled Diplomacia discreta [Discreet diplomacy].

According to ABC, the meeting was organized by US ambassador to Spain Eduardo Aguirre, known for his close friendship with President Bush and his continuous intromissions into the internal affairs of Spain.

To the surprise of many political analysts, McCarry was also received in Spain by the General Director for Ibero-America Javier Sandomingo of the Spanish Foreign Ministry, whom ABC said regularly converses with McCarry.

Proconsul McCarry arrived camouflaged to Madrid, as part of a secret tour of several European countries, designed to compel the European Union (EU) to maintain a hostile stance towards Cuba. His European trip takes place at a time when there is a favourable rapprochement of the EU towards Cuba; and Washington is alarmed that the EU could eliminate its sanctions against Cuba, which are currently suspended.

In June, the EU is scheduled to revise sanctions it imposed on Cuba in 2003, a move that was criticized as bowing down to US interests. The Bush administration has worked tirelessly and used all types of pressures to get the EU to maintain its sanctions against Cuba.

Last year, after a favourable official visit to Havana by Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, Washington stepped up its pressure, urgently sending several White House envoys, including McCarry, to Europe to press the Bush administration's agenda.

By PATRICIO MONTESINOS. (Cubaminrex- Granma)

ECONOMIC UPDATE

The complex international situation, the negative economic environment and the increased aggressiveness on the part of the US government has forced Cuba to make huge efforts to reach the progress that our social development has recently seen.

A profound renewal of the Revolution's social policy has been produced with the objective of reaching the best possible results from minimum resources, and so the strategic bases for our future economic development have been created and so we have proved that under a low development level a new and more just society is attainable.

Among the achievements we can mention the progress in terms of an educational revolution; in terms of a special attention regarding health, in terms of an increased potential for the pharmaceutical industry, in terms of social assistance, cultural development, the recovery of the agricultural industry, and milk production, as well as the modernizing of the electrical industry, among others.

At present the Cuban economy is structured on the bases of a service economy. The number of tourism reached an estimated increase of a 12.7% and a 16% increase in generated incomes. For the year 2004 this sector expects to receive 1,900,000

tourists, and for that it will have 41,600 rooms.

Biotechnology, medicine and medicine equipment production, and the computer science are other relevant sector in the economy.

In terms of biotechnology, we have excellent centres aimed at the development of high technology. This industry develops new products which are exported to over 40 countries, and such exports increased in a 13%.

The pharmaceutical industry produces at present a 67% of the whole country's consumption, and a special attention is given to the reparation of drug stores, and polyclinics. 1927 drugstores were repaired in the year 2003, twenty-seven polyclinics in the capital and thirty-six other along the country.

In terms of computer science, there are 45,000 computers in primary and secondary schools, and 4,000 students at the University of Computer Science.

Cuba offers a program aimed at achieving a full integration in terms of education, and for this, it carries out the introduction of a comprehensive plan of audio-visual means as well as deep transformations in education. These changes comprise the attention of up to 20 student per teacher in primary school and 15 students in secondary school, and the formation of new professors.

The overall formation is a step forward in the development of culture and the strengthening of our identity. At present the schools for the formation of art instructors are working with 16,000 students. The book Fair was extended to

30 seats. The educational channel broadcasts 112 programs and comprises the broadcasting of 8 TV courses as part of the educational program Universidad para Todos.

The banking system was modernized and transformed and the change control was implemented for the reduction of the dollarization.

The agricultural industry increased the production of citrus, vegetables, bananas, beans, eggs, and pork meat. The urban agriculture produces around 3,700,000 tons of food which has given jobs to 326,000 people.

The growth in the Gross Domestic Product was of a 2.6% in the year 2003, above the 1.5% planned for the year.

Cuba is working on a proposal which reflects the added value of services in GDP, which estimated on the bases of this proposal reached a 3.8% which represents an increase of an extra 4,800 million pesos.

The transformations that the Cuban economy has seen have rendered important results which are reflected in the coming figures:

The production of national crude oil grew a 2.9% and 4.3 million was higher than a 4.0 million for the year 2002.

The production of electricity grew a 2.1%, the consumption of oil from national sources reached a 83.4% and 50 000 homes were given the needed service of electricity.

The restructuring in the sugar industry still requires hard efforts on the part of the country. The production of nickel was below the 4.7% regarding 2002 but higher incomes were perceived due to the increase in prices.

Other 60 000 telephone lines were established and the digitalization of these services has reached a 79%.

The graphic industry increased a 23.2%, the food industry a 4.8%, beverages and tobacco 3.4%, communication 5.1%, trade 4.7%, services 4.0%, import rationality grew a 13.4%, national productions for tourism reached a 69% and the supply of shops for dollar collection 49%. Exports grew a 14.1% and the untraditional exports grew a 23.6% of the overall figure. Investments grew an 11.6% in the invested resources, public feeding grew 15.7%, and the volume of liquidez in Cuban pesos was of a 2.3% lower than for the year 2002.

For the year 2004 the Government has planned a budget of 20,661 million pesos, 13% higher than 2002 aiming at strengthening the social conquests of the revolution and the new programs for the social development of our country.

Source: Report on the economic results for the year 2003 and the social and economic plan for 2004. Report on the issues of the Plan for the National Economy and the State Budget and the project for the State Budget in 2004, presented at the Second Period of Sessions of the People's Power National Assembly.



SUMMARY OF THE MAIN TERRORIST ACTIONS AGAINST CUBA (1990-2000)

From 1959 on, counterrevolutionary groups created and run by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) have carried out numerous terrorist activities which have cost our country valuable lives and vast amounts of resources. Encouraged by the fall of the socialist camp at the beginning of the 90s, these groups intensified their violent actions against the Cuban people and its leaders from US territory and from other bases of operations in Central America.

Below are listed some of the most important of these actions, which are of public domain.

July 17, 1990. Following lobbying by Florida Republican Congresspersons, Ileana Ross and Connie Mack, U.S. President George H. Bush released from jail well-known terrorist Orlando Bosch, the man chiefly responsible for the October 1976 blasting of a Cuban civil airplane in mid-flight, killing all 73 on board.

October 14, 1990. Two armed terrorists sneaked into Santa Cruz del Norte as part of an action concocted in Miami. They had orders to carry out violent actions. Their weapons and false documents supplied in Miami were confiscated. They also carried literature urging people to join what they called "The Cuban Liberation Army" headed by Higinio Díaz Anne who had given them money and propaganda before they set out.

May 15, 1991. José Basulto, an ex-Bay of Pigs mercenary and well-known terrorist and CIA agent founded the so-called "Brothers to the Rescue". He asked U.S. President George H. Bush for three U.S. Air Force type 0-2 planes, the military version of the Cessna which had been used in the war in El Salvador. Congresswoman Ileana Ross started a public campaign and lobbied until the three planes were obtained. A photo of the planes received by this counterrevolutionary group appeared in the press for the first time with a July 19 article by the publisher of the Miami Herald, who flew with Brothers to the Rescue. The letters USAF (United States Air Force) are clearly visible on the planes.

September 17, 1991. Two counterrevolutionaries from Miami infiltrated into Cuba. Their mission was to sabotage tourist shops to spread terror among foreign tourists. Their weapons and a radio transmitter were confiscated.

December 29, 1991. Three terrorists from the so-called Commandos L group in Miami entered Cuba illegally. Their weapons and other war materiel were confiscated. These three had received training with 50 or 60 other men in a camp on 168 Street in Miami.

May 8 1992. Cuba files a complaint with the United Nations about terrorist activities organized against its territory. At Cuba's request, a June 23, 1989 decision of the U.S. Department of Justice is circulated as an official Security Council document. The decision states that Orlando Bosch is banned from entering the U.S. territory because there is substantial proof concerning his past and present terrorist activities, including the 1976 blasting off of a Cuban civil aviation plane in mid-flight. Today this individual freely walks the streets of Miami after George H. Bush granted him a presidential pardon.

July 4, 1992. A group of terrorists set out from the United States to attack economic targets along the Havana coastline. Once detected by Cuban patrol boats, they moved to waters off Varadero, where U.S. coastguards rescued them after their boat had a mechanical failure. The FBI released them after

the confiscation of weapons, maps and videos made during their journey.

July 1992. An operation to infiltrate a U.S. based terrorist into Cuba with the mission to sabotage an economic target in Villa Clara province failed. He was carrying the weapons and explosives needed for the job and had the assistance of Brothers to the Rescue who kept him informed about the position of the U.S. coastguard to make it easier for him to reach Cuban territory.

September 9, 1992. The FBI for illegal possession of firearms and violation of the Law of Neutrality arrests a Cuban born terrorist. He is released without charges.

October 7, 1992. An armed attack against the Varadero Meliá Hotel is perpetrated from a vessel manned by four Miami terrorists who were later arrested and questioned by the FBI, then released.

October 19, 1992. Three Miami based counterrevolutionaries entered Cuba illegally with plenty of weapons and military equipment that were confiscated. At the same time, three other terrorists were arrested in the Bahamas with weapons and explosives apparently destined for Cuba, which were also seized from them. These terrorists had left Miami on October 17.

January 1993. Five terrorists on board a vessel armed with heavy machine guns and other weapons were arrested by the U.S. coastguard as they were heading toward the Cuban coastline. They were soon released.

January 7, 1993. At a press conference in Miami, Tony Bryant, leader of the terrorist group "Commandos L" announced plans to carry out more attacks against targets in Cuba, especially hotels. He said: "from now on we are at war with Cuba" and warned foreign tourists to "stay away from Cuba."

April 2, 1993. The tanker ship "Mikonos" sailing under the Cypriot flag was fired on 7 miles north of Matanzas from a vessel crewed by Cuban born, U.S. based terrorists.

May 18, 1993. A violation of Cuban airspace by a plane registered to "Brothers to the Rescue" with the number N8447.

May 21, 1993. Nine terrorists arrested by the U.S. Customs Service on board a vessel as they prepared to sail for Cuba to launch attacks on that country. Their weapons and explosives were seized. On August 21, Judge Lawrence King dismissed charges against them.

May 1993. "Brothers to the Rescue" planned to blow up a high-tension pylon near San Nicolás de Bari in Havana province.

October 1993. "Brothers to the Rescue" publicly encouraged attempts on the life of President Fidel Castro and violence against Cuba. It also confirmed its readiness to accept "the risks that come with doing this". Andrés Nazario Sargén, head of terrorist group Alpha 66, makes an announcement in the United States that his organization has recently carried out five operations against Cuba.

October 18, 1993. A terrorist living in the United States is arrested on his arrival in Cuba. His orders were to carry out acts of violence on Cuban soil. November 7, 1993. Humberto Pérez, spokesperson for Alpha 66, said in a press conference in Miami that their war against Cuba would soon be extended to any tourist visiting the island: "We

consider anyone staying in a Cuban hotel to be an enemy ", he affirmed.

1993. A Cuban citizen visiting the United States is recruited by a terrorist organization to carry out sabotage in Cuba against the tourism and agricultural sectors. He was supplied with some of the materials needed for such actions and was offered the sum of 20,000 US dollars.

March 11, 1994. A terrorist group from Miami fires on the "Guitart Cayo Coco Hotel."

April 17, 1994. Planes owned by "Brothers to the Rescue" fly at extremely low altitude over Havana and drop smoke bombs. In the following months of 1994 the same group carried out at least seven other similar violations of Cuba's airspace.

September 4, 1994. Two U.S. based terrorists infiltrated into the area around Caibarién, Villa Clara, with the aim of carrying out sabotage in that province. A number of weapons and large amounts of military equipment were seized.

October 6, 1994. Another armed group fired automatic weapons at the "Guitart Cayo Coco Hotel" from a boat that set out from Florida.

October 15, 1994. A group of armed terrorists coming from the United States landed on the causeway to "Cayo Santa María" near Caibarién, Villa Clara, and murdered comrade Arcelio Rodríguez García.

October 1994. "Brothers to the Rescue" uses one of its planes to train members of a Florida based counterrevolutionary organization to carry out acts of sabotage on the Cienfuegos oil refinery.

In **November** of that same year, they also planned to make an attempt on the life of President Fidel Castro and other leaders of the Revolution and to smuggle arms and explosives into Cuba.

November 1994. Terrorist Luis Posada Carriles and five of his accomplices smuggled weapons into Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, during the IV Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government in order to make an attempt on the life of President Fidel Castro. However, the security belt keeps him at a distance thus thwarting his aim. Posada Carriles later told the New York Times: "I was standing behind some journalists and I saw Castro's friend, García Márquez, but I could only see Castro from a long way away."

November 11, 1994. Four terrorists were arrested in Varadero, Matanzas. After sneaking into Cuba, they were relieved of weapons and munitions.

March 2, 1995. Two terrorists from the United States sneaked into the coast near Puerto Padre, Las Tunas. They were carrying 51 pounds of C - 4 explosives and other munitions.

April 4, 1995. A C - 337 light plane violates Cuban airspace north of Havana between Santa Fé and Guanabo beach.

May 20, 1995. The "Guitart Cayo Coco Hotel" was once again attacked by terrorists manning a fast launch coming from the United States.

July 12, 1995. Three terrorists were arrested in the United States as they were preparing to sneak into Cuba using an act of provocation just off the Cuban coast as cover. Despite confiscation of their weapons and explosives, U.S. authorities released them.

July 13, 1995. Organized by "Brothers to the Rescue" eleven vessels, six light planes and two helicopters coming from the United States enter Cuban territorial waters and airspace.

One of the light planes flew over the heart of Havana and dropped propaganda material.

December 16, 1995. Two terrorists were arrested in the United States as they readied to sneak into Cuba through Pinar del Río to carry out subversive actions. Despite confiscation of their weapons and explosive, U.S. authorities released them.

January 9, 1996. Two light planes departing from Opa-locka airport in Florida violated Cuban airspace.

January 12, 1996. A Cuban immigrant living in the United States was arrested while trying to transport explosives from the City of Havana to Pinar del Río.

January 13, 1996. Several "Brothers to the Rescue" planes violated Cuban airspace over the City of Havana. Later, terrorist Basulto said: "They say I was flying over Cuban airspace, something everybody knows and which I have never denied."

January 23, 1996. U.S. authorities intercepted a vessel in Marathon Key with five armed terrorists on board. It was headed for Cuba. The FBI released the five that same day.

February 11, 1996. After firing on our coastline, a vessel coming from the United States carrying three terrorists was captured by the Cuban a cost guard patrol.

February 24, 1996. "Brothers to the Rescue" launched a new foray. Three light planes violated Cuban airspace over the heart of Havana and two of them were shot down. In the 20 months prior to this incident there had been at least 25 other violations of Cuban airspace.

June 26, 1996. At a session of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the Chairman of the Investigating Committee acknowledges that at least one of the "Brothers to the Rescue" planes in Opa-locka airport still has the insignia of the U.S. Air Force on it: "the 'F' is a little pale, it looks as if it is beginning to fade, but you can still see it".

August 21, 1996. An U.S. citizen is arrested in Cuba. He had clandestinely brought military equipment into the country and was planning to carry out terrorist actions on Cuban soil.

September 16, 1996. A person is arrested who was sneaking into Cuba through Punta Alegre, Ciego de Ávila, on a boat carrying weapons and a great deal of military equipment.

21 October 1996. An SS-RR light plane, registration number N3093M owned by the U.S. State Department sprays a substance containing the pest "Thrip Palmi Karny" as it flies over the "Girón" international corridor about 25-30 kilometers south of Varadero.

November 1996. Miami television channel 23 carried a live interview with Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch where they stressed their intentions of continuing with their terrorist activities against Cuba.

April 12, 1997. An explosive device was detonated in the "Meliá Cohíba" Hotel in the City of Havana.

April 30, 1997. Discovery of an explosive device in the "Meliá Cohíba" Hotel.

July 12, 1997. Bombs blasted in the "Capri" and "National" hotels.

August 4, 1997. Another bomb exploded in the "Meliá Cohíba" Hotel.

August 11, 1997. The Miami press published a statement from the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) giving

unconditional support to the terrorist bomb attacks against civilian and tourist targets in Cuba. The chairman of this organization claimed: "We do not think of these as terrorist actions" and went on to say that any action against Cuba was legitimate.

August 22, 1997. Bomb exploded in the "Sol Palmeras" Hotel in Varadero.

September 4, 1997. Several bombs exploded in the "Tritón", "Chateau Miramar" and "Copacabana" hotels. The explosion in the latter killed young Italian tourist Fabio Di Celmo. On that same day another bomb exploded at "La Bodeguita del Medio" restaurant.

September 10, 1997. The Cuban Government announced the arrest of Salvadoran national Raúl Cruz León, the person responsible of placing six of the bombs that exploded in various hotels in the Cuban capital, including the one that killed Italian tourist Fabio Di Celmo. Cruz León admitted that he had been paid 4,500 US dollars for each bomb.

October 19, 1997. An explosive device was found in a tourist van.

October 27, 1997. The U.S. Coastguard arrested a vessel West of Puerto Rico. They confiscated 2 high velocity rifles .50 caliber with their tripods, night vision gear, and military uniforms and communications equipment. These sophisticated weapons, strictly military in nature, are designed for long-range attacks on vehicles and aircraft. One of those on the vessel said that his aim was to assassinate President Fidel Castro when he arrived on Margarita Island, Venezuela, on November 7, 1997 to attend the Ibero-American Summit. U.S. authorities found that the vessel was registered by a Florida company whose chief executive officer, manager, secretary and treasurer is José Antonio Llama, a director of the CANF and a Bay of Pigs mercenary. One of the guns was registered in the name of José Francisco "Pepe" Hernández, CANF co-chairman. A member of Brigade 2506 had bought the other in 1994. The four crew members on the vessel were identified as: a well-known CIA agent; the captain of a CIA boat used by Florida infiltration teams sneaking into Cuba; the chairman of a New Jersey counterrevolutionary group and a member of Alpha 66. Despite their confessions and clear proof of the illegal possession of arms, false testimony and arms smuggling, these terrorists were acquitted by a Federal court of law in December 1999 after a rigged trial.

October 30, 1997. Discovery of an explosive device in a kiosk outside terminal 2 at the "José Martí" International Airport in the City of Havana. Two men originally from El Salvador and three originally from Guatemala would later be arrested for crimes against tourist facilities. They all were linked with terrorist Luis Posada Carriles.

November 16, 1997. Following a two months investigation, a Florida newspaper reported that the series of bomb explosions in Havana were bankrolled and directed by Miami anti-Cuban groups and that Luis Posada Carriles, a fugitive from justice for having blown up a Cuban plane in 1976, was at the heart of the operation.

May 1998. Two terrorists sneaked into Santa Lucía, Pinar del Río. They had set out from the United States with a great deal of weapons and war materiel.

June 16, 1998. After several meetings in which the Cuban Government gave information to the FBI and other U.S. Government agencies about terrorist activities concocted in the United States against Cuba, an official U.S. delegation traveled to Havana including two of FBI top brass, which was given precise details, even films, recordings and other

material evidence on the activities of 40 terrorists who operated out of the United States.

July 12, 1998. An article in The New York Times for this date published statements by Cuban American Antonio Jorge Alvarez concerning the fact that the FBI had not investigated information he had volunteered related to an attempt on the life of President Fidel Castro that was being planned for the Ibero-American Summit in Venezuela. Alvarez claimed that the previous year he had provided information that Posada Carriles, and a group working in his factory in Guatemala, were preparing this attempt and the bomb explosions in Havana: "I risked my business and my life and they did nothing," he said.

July 12 and 13, 1998. In an interview with The New York Times, Luis Posada Carriles admitted to having organized the bomb campaign against Cuban tourist centers. He also acknowledged that the leaders of the CANF had bankrolled his operations and that its chairman Jorge Mas Canosa was personally in charge of overseeing the flow of funds and logistic support to those operations: "Jorge Mas Canosa controlled everything, whenever I needed money he would say that he would give me 5 0000, 10 000, even 15 000 and he did." Posada also admitted to having paid Raúl Cruz León for placing the bombs in Havana hotels. Referring to the Italian tourist killed by one of those bombs, he told the Times: "... he was sitting in the wrong place at the wrong time." In compiling these reports, the Times used CIA and FBI files, testimony from more than 100 people and more than 13 hours of recorded interviews with Posada Carriles and even documents signed by him.

July 23, 1998. The Miami press published an article entitled "In the United States anti-Castro plots rarely lead to jail". The article mentions several cases, such as the 1990 acquittal of 6 terrorists who took guns and other weapons to Nicaragua for an attempt on the life of the Cuban President. It also mentions the Rodolfo Frómata and Fausto Marimóm's 1994 acquittals of charges of planning to use Stinger antiaircraft missiles and other weapons in terrorist attacks. The article quotes statements too from well-known terrorist Tony Bryant who said that in 1989 the FBI stopped him in a boat loaded with weapons and explosives and they let him go. He added that he had been intercepted in two of his 14 missions against Cuba, but they never did anything to him.

August 2, 1998. Posada Carriles, in an interview for the program Opposing Points of View for CBS news, said that he intended to launch more attacks on Cuban facilities, either inside or outside the island.

August 1998. Even before President Fidel Castro's announcement that he would attend the Summit of Heads of State and Government of CARIFORUM in the Dominican Republic, several Cuban born terrorists had planned an attempt on his life to be carried out some time between August 20 and 25. To that end, terrorist Posada Carriles arranged a meeting in the Guatemala City Holiday Inn Hotel one month before the summit to plan how to get weapons and explosives into Santo Domingo.

September 12 1998. Five Cuban patriots were arrested in Miami who were defending both Cuban and U.S. citizens from the terrorist actions which, with total impunity, are organized, prepared and launched against Cuba from the United States territory.

November 17, 2000. A group of terrorists headed by Posada Carriles was arrested in Panama. They had entered Panama with false documents to make an attempt on the life of President Fidel Castro during the X Ibero American Summit of Heads of State and Government. Their weapons,

explosives and a sketch of Castro's route and public meetings were seized from them. The Cuban American National Foundation is paying for the team of lawyers defending the terrorists.

April 26, 2001. Three terrorists of the Commandos Groups F-45 and Alpha 66 tried to land on the north coast of Villa Clara province and, after firing shots at Cuban coastguard troops who had spotted them, were taken prisoner. Four AKM rifles, one M-3 rifle with a silencer, 3 hand guns, a great deal of materiel, night vision equipment and communications

equipment were confiscated to them, all of which they intended to use to carry out sabotage and terrorist actions on Cuban soil.

In addition to the plots listed above, our authorities learned of 16 other plots to assassinate the President of Cuba, 8 plots to try to kill other leaders of the Revolution and 140 other terrorist plots hatched between 1990 and 2001. These were foiled, discouraged or prevented by the work of the Cuban Security and Intelligence Services.

The US century: Oblivion becomes the oblivious

By David Hirst, The AGE - May 23, 2008

AS THE price of oil skyrockets there is evidence that the US is blindly bumbling into superpower oblivion; that the American century is passing before our eyes. An empire built on oil is losing supremacy and, indeed, internal coherence.

The US will remain, but the superpower period is passing, just as did the USSR. There is no wall to fall as there was with the Soviet Empire but the sole superpower can be no more.

No other great power in history became as dependent on one single substance for projection and protection as America on oil — America's precious bodily fluid.

Abundant, exceedingly affordable petroleum made possible the American automotive and trucking industries, the airline industry, the mechanisation of petrochemical and plastics industries, indeed the rebuilding of the nation around suburbs linked by freeways. The very term is a metaphor for America; a people chained to SUVs drinking petrol at \$US4 a gallon. The "freeways" are forever clogged with commuters spending four hours a day and more getting to and from work.

According to the US Department of Energy, the US is importing 13 million barrels of oil a day. At about \$US130 per barrel, that's \$US1.7 billion a day. A total yearly bill beyond \$US1 trillion may not be far away. JPMorgan thinks two years; but its \$US200-a-barrel estimate is weeks old and a week is a long time in oil.

Oil, well before the current leap, was already the single largest contribution to America's balance-of-payments deficit, and to the dollar's ongoing drop in value. Now a vicious cycle is setting in: dearer oil driving down the value of the dollar, causing dearer oil ...

America gives it sons and daughters for oil: war for oil is the supreme metaphor as the addict expels all their energy and oil getting more oil. The sums are astronomical and staggering.

The Department of Defense consumes more than the entire nation of Sweden, every day.

And, in a breathtaking departure from reality, that same department is dying for a fight with Iran, an act that would make JPMorgan's \$US200-a-barrel prediction in two years look optimistic.

If President George Bush's closest confidants get their way, the President will leave his successor with another unwinnable war with an oil-producing giant and, more likely than not, the Gulf of Hormuz closed.

On September 11, 2001, oil was about \$US20 a barrel; Bush could easily help it to \$US200.

Bush has extinguished the US as a military and economic superpower. If a President had set out carefully and systematically to destroy his nation, he could have been more successful only if he had targeted American cities with his thousands of nuclear weapons and launched them.

Billions of dollars, maybe soon trillions, go directly into the coffers of, on the whole, the satrapies the US has, in conjunction with the European powers, established in the Middle East. As the US dollar diminishes in value, it is increasingly recycled back to the place where it still has worth: America. Capital, as Karl Marx said, knows no home, but dollars do.

While credit remains choked in the US, the oil regimes are recycling dollars through sovereign investment funds (SIFs) — state-controlled investment companies that buy up prized foreign assets in order to secure non-oil-dependent sources of wealth. These funds already hold several trillion dollars.

The richest, the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, holds \$US875 billion. As the dollars go home, home is owned by those who are investing them. Another part of America is owned by another part of the world.

According to Michael Klare, professor of peace and world security studies at Hampshire College and author of the just-released *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet: The New Geopolitics of Energy*, the ADIA first made headlines in November 2007, when it acquired a \$US7.5 billion stake in Citigroup, America's largest bank holding company. The fund has also made big investments in Advanced Micro Systems, a major chip maker, and the Carlyle Group, the private equity giant. Another big SIF, the Kuwait Investment Authority, also acquired a multibillion-dollar stake in Citigroup, along with a

\$US6.6 billion chunk of Merrill Lynch.

And these are but the first of a series of major moves by America's Arab friends to take stakes in top American banks and corporations. Not-so-friendly investor-nations include China, whose official foreign currency reserves approach \$US1.7 trillion and Russia, with reserves of \$US600 billion and growing rapidly.

Are the US's allies in the region, Klare continues, especially the Sunni kingdoms of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, which presumably look to Washington to stabilise Iraq and curb the growing power of Shiite Iran, willing to help the Pentagon out by supplying US troops with free or deeply discounted petroleum? No such luck. Except for some partially subsidised oil supplied by Kuwait, all oil-producing US allies in the region charge the market rate for petroleum. Take that as a striking reflection of how little credence even countries whose ruling elites have traditionally looked to the US for protection now attach to its supposed superpower status.

While Congress pretends to fret about the jewels of empire being plucked from the crown it does nothing to reverse forces that are now assuming a natural, organic direction away from and out of the nation's lawmakers' hands. For if the SIFs were not standing by, the other options would be to sell to the Chinese — reluctant buyers — to demand wholesale taxpayer bail-outs, or allow companies like Citicorp to go the way of Bear Stearns, a prospect that cannot be broached in an election year. Indeed, for taxpayers to be forced to clean up the mess may drive them into revolt.

But the US's soft underbelly lies wide open while those charged with defending the nation plan attacks on countries far away, oblivious to the insidious evils at home and hooked on an oil dependency last seriously confronted by Jimmy Carter; and he was laughed off the stage.

David Hirst is a journalist, documentary maker, financial consultant and investor. His column Planet Wall Street is syndicated by News Bites, a Melbourne-based sharemarket and business news publisher.

Activist workshop:

Saturday 14 June 2008, 12.30 to 5pm

Guam, military bases and the struggle for an independent Pacific

Join us for an afternoon workshop with panels, presentations and action planning on US bases and militarisation in Australia, Japan and the Pacific.

Our two special guests are Lisa Natividad and Julian Aguon, two Chamoru activists from Guahan (Guam) who are campaigning against US military bases on their land. As the Pentagon prepares to move thousands of Marines from Okinawa to Guam, find out about the struggle for indigenous self-determination in the Pacific and Australia's links to regional militarisation.

Speakers include:

- **Lisa Natividad and Julian Aguon - Chamoru activists from Guam**
- **Maki Yonaha - Japanese for Peace**
- **Nic Maclellan - Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific**
- **Richard Tanter - Nautilus Institute**

**Venue: Green Building,
60 Leicester Street, Carlton 3053**

12.30 to 5pm, Saturday 14 June

Supported by Medical Association for Prevention of War (MAPW), the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), Japanese for Peace, CICD, Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Campaign, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and other groups.

Further information:

Nic Maclellan (NFIP), 0421 840 100 or Dale Hess (Religious Society of Friends), 9592 5247.

Militarisation of the Pacific

US militarisation of the north-west Pacific is anchored around the small island of Guam, east of the Philippines. The island, known as Guahan to its indigenous Chamoru population, is three hours' flying time from Japan, Okinawa, Indonesia and the Philippines. Flying to China or North Korea from Guahan takes four hours. Guahan is currently a US territory, so the Pentagon can act there without seeking permission from allies.

Guahan is strategically located close to several of the world's most important sea lanes through which some 50% of the world's oil passes each year. In addition to the upgrading of facilities and increased deployments of planes, submarines and other equipment, Guahan now faces a doubling of the military troops stationed there. Washington and Tokyo have agreed to move 8,000 Marines to Guahan from Okinawa by 2014. This build-up will add 35,000 people to Guahan's current population of 170,000.

The Struggle of the Chamoru people

The Chamoru people of Guahan have resisted the take over of their land and waters since the arrival of Europeans in 1668. They are not prepared to give up that struggle. In October 2006, a delegation of young Chamoru stood before the United Nations' Special Committee on Decolonisation and demanded that they "hold the United States accountable, as Guahan's administering power, to its moral and legal responsibilities to ensure the ... right to self-determination of the native Chamoru people" and put an end to the "massive US military build-up [which] hinders the right of Chamorus to decolonization and violates the human rights of all people from Guahan".

The link with Australia

Australia's military alliance with the United States allows US Air Force planes from Guam to fly across our country for exercises and to use bombing ranges. The alliance makes us complicit in the denial of Chamoru indigenous rights and in the threat to regional peace and security posed by the militarisation of Guahan. In addition, the Australian Defence Force participates in various military exercises with US forces based in Guahan and ADF elements visit and transit through Guahan during these war games.

