



Australia-Cuba Friendship Society
NEWSLETTER
OCTOBER 2007

Next Meeting
Monday 1st
OCTOBER
7.30pm
CEPU Office
139 Queensbury St
Carlton

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Dear Comrades,

25th August, -2007

We have heard from Joan and Cedric who are keeping well. Joan emailed briefly to say "We're now in Strasbourg, a very beautiful city on the border with Germany. The old part dates back to the 13th century, so I'm looking forward to doing a drawing. We've had a few adventures, nearly missing the train from Brussels after being directed to the wrong platform, and then the engine conked out near Luxembourg adding 2 hours onto the journey. I will send you stuff, if I think it would be of interest. Do hope you're all keeping well."

The eyes of the world were on Australia last month as the APEC summit got underway in Sydney, and what they've seen is a city being held under virtual martial law -- major roads blocked off, police cars outnumbering taxis and snipers openly hanging out on roof tops. Most who could afford it fled the city saying it was just impossible to get around.

Howard put climate change at the top of the APEC agenda, mainly for domestic political reasons and for a minute, it sounded like APEC might actually do something good on climate change. A quick read through the document, however, confirmed our suspicions: that APEC is being driven by the John Howard and George W Bush anti-Kyoto agenda. The spin is good. To an outsider, it looks as though they're really trying to do something.

But a closer inspection shows it's business as usual of course. They acknowledge the importance of fossil fuels (read: coal), nuclear power, and a new and expanded 'coal pact' which talks about more research into renewable technologies.

It says they are committed to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, which again sounds great. But 12 years ago world governments decided the UNFCCC would not deliver the deep cuts in emissions that the climate science is telling us we need -- that is why they negotiated Kyoto.

The APEC declaration is clearly 'Made in the USA' - covered with a thick coating of Australian coal dust.

There's talk of a "long term aspirational goal" (read: we don't want to do anything to effect coal company profits) for improving energy efficiency and stopping deforestation. But this sounds remarkably similar to the idea floated by George W Bush ahead of the G8 meeting. Bush has put discussion of his "aspirational goal" on the agenda of his upcoming "Big Emitters meeting" at the end of September. But get this: his deadline for agreeing that target is the end of 2008 -- that is, after the US elections!

Talking of dumb arrogance, W seemed unable to grasp the incredible irony that a visit from the "leader of the free world" means his hosts are treated like convicted criminals.



This Month...

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"I think the great freedom of the city of Sydney is going to return quite rapidly," Bush was reported to have said today. Well thanks, Mr Bush. We looked forward to your departure so we can carry on with our lives.

On a more positive note, the recent by-election in Willi and Albert Park showed the shift people have made away from tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum in at least some parts of the state. Even with the Liberals not running, the ALP primary vote dropped 6 percentage points from 62% to 56%. The ALP vote was under 50% in 4 of the 15 booths. We have a lot more work to do to get to real democracy - Cuban style!

Yours in solidarity,

Geraldine Brooks, ACFS Vice President (Melbourne)

2008 ACFS National Consultation

The ACFS National Consultation will run from Friday evening April 4 to Sunday lunch April 6, 2008 and will be held at the MUA HQ, 46 Ireland Street, West Melbourne 3003, tel: (03) 9329 5477.

Accommodation has been organised at the Hotel Miami, 13 Hawke Street, West Melbourne, tel: (03) 9321 2444 at: www.themiami.com.au

A booking form and further information to follow.

A Short Discussion of the Cuban Electoral System

The following text is taken from the Cuban Foreign Ministry's webpage (<http://www.cubaminrex.cu/index.htm>) which, although not everything is in English, is a mine of information on the island, its policies and principles. It was translated by an unidentified supporter of Cuba to whom we are most grateful. For those of you in doubt as to whether Cuba has elections, the comments below should put your concerns at rest. It should be noted that many elected representatives in the National Assembly are NOT Party members. It should also be noted that with the 1898 victory against the Spanish came a US-imposed style of government identical to its own. Cuba therefore knows what it is talking about when it rejects Washington's style of corporate democracy. Finally, for those who say there is no possibility of expressing one's dissent in Cuba, blank or defaced ballots are considered to be acts of opposition against the government and are counted as such. Voting is secret, of course. The figures below will indicate just how low this opposition really is.

One of the fundamental pillars of the hostile campaign against our country, led by the United States, is to put in doubt the Cuban political and electoral system. The activity against Cuba regarding democracy and human rights is not only the principal tool of the United States in its efforts to legitimize its policy of hostility and aggression towards Cuba, but also furthers the interest of the principal industrialized capitalist countries seeking to impose upon the developing countries a model of political organization that would make it easier to dominate them.

In its campaign against Cuba, Washington tries to demonstrate the incompatibility of the political system - established by the island's Constitution - with internationally accepted norms regarding democracy and human rights, and to create the image of an intolerant society that does not permit the least diversity or political plurality. To this end, it employs powerful tools of propaganda and enormous resources which it uses for the recruitment, organization, and financing of tiny counter-revolutionary groups which it portrays as a "political opposition" both inside and outside the country.

The manipulation of the concept of democracy by the principal western powers has recently reached very dangerous levels. Countries that move away from the democratic model to which the great powers pay tribute, or the patterns and values they promote, are not only put in doubt and demonised through propaganda and the international institutions which control the so-called "defence of democracy," but are also converted into potential victims of the doctrine of intervention developed by the imperialist powers.

Cuba defends and supports the right of peoples to self-determination, recognized internationally as an inalienable right in the consensus reached in the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993. In the Declaration and Program of Action of Vienna it was established that "democracy is founded in the will of the people, freely expressed, to choose their own political, economic, social, and cultural system, and in their full participation in all aspects of life," and the importance of "national and regional differences as well as diverse historical, cultural, and religious legacies" is recognised.

Upon these principles, openly rejected by those who would impose their own models as unique, is built the Cuban political system, a model chosen and defended by Cubans themselves, truly homegrown and authentic, founded upon equality and solidarity between men and women, in independence, sovereignty, and social justice.



Our country has already experienced the model others wish to impose upon us. It has lived the sad experience of the "multi-party" and "representative" system prescribed for it by the United States, which brought it external dependence, corruption, illiteracy, poverty for large sectors of the population, and racism; in sum, the complete denial

of the most elemental individual and collective rights, including the right to truly free and democratic elections.

This system and the permanent interventionist policy of the United States not only bred crooked and corrupt politicians, but brought tyrannical and murderous dictatorships, promoted and aided directly by Washington.

For all these reasons, the Cuban Revolution could not adopt such a system if it truly wished to resolve the ills inherited from it. Thus the country set about designing its own model, for which it searched among its own roots and resorted to the social, humanist, and patriotic philosophies of the most illustrious and eminent Cuban thinkers.

The first thing to stress, then, to explain the Cuban political system, is that our model is not imported, and never was a copy of the Soviet model nor of that which existed in the socialist countries at that time, as the enemies of the Revolution would have people believe. The Cuban political system was born from, and corresponds to, the historical evolution of the Cuban socio-political process, with its hits and its misses, its advances and its back-slides. The fact that the formation and development of the Cuban nation during its scarcely 130 years of existence has faced practically the same internal and external factors favoured a coherent history, permitting the development of the idea of constructing a nation forged by the Cubans themselves.

The existence of a single party in the Cuban system is determined by historical and contemporary factors, among others. Our Party is the historical continuation of the Cuban Revolutionary Party founded by José Martí to unite the entire country with the object of achieving the absolute independence of Cuba. The factors that gave rise to that party - to liberate Cuba and impede its annexation by the United States - are the same which are present today as our people face an iron blockade, economic, commercial, and financial, as well as other hostile actions intended to unseat the government and destroy the system installed in the country by the sovereign decision of all Cubans.

Our Party works through persuasion, argument, and in close and permanent contact with the people, and the decisions it adopts are binding solely upon its members. It is not an electoral party, and it is prohibited, not only from nominating candidates, but also from participating at any time in the electoral process. This conception and practice guarantees that in a system with only one party, there can be developed and predominate the widest diversity of opinions.

Characteristics of the Cuban political and electoral system:

1. Universal, automatic, and free voter registration for all citizens with the right to vote, from 16 years of age.
2. Direct nomination of candidates by the voters themselves in public assemblies (in many countries the political parties nominate the candidates).
3. Non-existence of discriminatory, expensive, offensive, defamatory, and manipulated electoral campaigns.
4. Absolutely clean and transparent elections. The ballot boxes are guarded by school children and are sealed in the presence of the population, and the votes are counted in public, open to national and foreign press, diplomats, tourists, and everyone who wishes.
5. The requirement that election be by majority. A candidate is elected only upon receiving more than 50% of valid votes cast. If this result is not achieved in the first round, the two who have received the most votes will go to a second round.

6. The voting is free, equal, and secret. All Cuban citizens have the right to vote and to be elected. As there is no party list, votes are cast directly for the desired candidate.
7. All representative bodies of state power are elected and replaceable.
8. All elected officials must account for their actions.
9. All elected officials can be recalled at any time during their term.
10. Legislators are not professionals, and as such do not receive a salary.
11. A high rate of public participation in elections. In every election since 1976, more than 95% of those eligible have voted. In the last election for Deputies in 1998, 98.35% voted. 94.98% of the ballots cast were valid, 1.66% were annulled, and only 3.36% were blank.
12. Deputies to the National Assembly (Parliament) are elected for a term of 5 years.
13. The make-up of the Parliament is representative of the most diverse sectors of Cuban society.
14. One deputy is elected for every 20,000 inhabitants or fraction over 10,000. All municipal territories are represented in the National Assembly, and the nuclear base of the system, the electoral circumscription, actively participates in its composition. Every municipality will elect at least two deputies, and beyond that a number in proportion to the population. 50% of the deputies must be delegates of the electoral circumscriptions, and those delegates must live in the territory of that circumscription.
15. The National Assembly elects the Council of State and its president, who in turn is both Head of State and Head of Government. This means that the Head of Government must be elected twice: first by popular vote as a deputy, in free, direct, and secret vote, and then by the deputies, also in a free, direct, and secret vote.
16. As the National Assembly is the supreme organ of state power, and the legislative, executive, and judicial functions are

subordinate to it, the Head of State and Government cannot dissolve it. 17. Legislative initiative is the privilege of multiple actors of society - not just the deputies, the Supreme Court, and the Attorney General, but also of workers', students', women's, and social organisations as well as the citizens themselves. In the latter case at least 10,000 citizens with the right to vote are needed for the exercise of any legislative initiative.

18. Laws are submitted to a majority vote of the deputies. What is specific to the Cuban method is that a law is not brought to a discussion of the full Assembly until such time - by means of repeated consultations with deputies, and taking into account the proposals they have made - as has been clearly demonstrated that there is majority consensus for its discussion and approval. The application of this concept acquires greater relevance when it involves the participation of the population, together with the deputies, in the analysis and discussion of strategic issues. In these occasions the Parliament moves to centres of labour, of students, and of campesinos, giving life to direct and participative democracy.

The above manifests the essence of Cuban democracy, of the system instituted, endorsed, and supported by the immense majority of Cubans.

However, we do not claim to have reached the development of a perfect democracy. The principal quality of the Cuban political system is its capacity for constant improvement with regard to the needs that arise for the realization of a full, true, and systematic participation of the people in the direction and control of society - which is the essence of every democracy.

Viva Cuba

Australia-Cuba Friendship Society - www.geocities.com/melbacfs

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Esteban Lazo at investiture of Jamaica's new prime minister

ON September 11 and 12, Esteban Lazo Hernández, vice president of the Cuban Council of State, led a delegation from the island to Jamaica to be present at the investiture of that country's new Prime Minister Bruce Golding. Lazo held a cordial meeting with the Jamaican leader, during which he ratified the interest of both countries in continuing to build closer relations.

CUBA NEEDS YOU!

Join the Australia-Cuba Friendship Society

The Australia-Cuba Friendship Society aims to promote and encourage friendship, understanding, cultural, trade and other exchanges between the peoples of Australia and Cuba.

☐ I wish to join the ACFS. Enclosed is a cheque/money order for \$25 (full membership) \$10 (concession)

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

☐ I wish to donate \$ _____ towards the material aid campaign for Cuba.

Name: _____

Address: _____

P/C _____ Phone: _____

Send to: ACFS PO Box 1051, Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia

Melbourne ACFS online:
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 Email: melbacfs@vahoo.com.au

Cuba deals a blow to international drug-trafficking at airports

HAVANA, September 14 (PL).— From January 2003 until the end of June this year, Cuba has thwarted 35 international drug-trafficking operations at its airports and seized some 60 kilograms of drugs, reported press sources today. As part of operation carried out by specialized forces at the Ministry of the Interior and the General Customs Service of the Republic, some 49 individuals representing 23 nationalities have been detained, reports a full-page article in **Granma** daily this Friday. The feature writer continues that the thwarted operations highlighted the insensitivity of the organizers...

International Event to Free the Five underway

Granma international, Havana. September 14, 2007

• Solidarity groups respond to call for support • U.S. mayors demand visas for relatives of the anti-terrorist Cubans

BY GILDA FARÍÑAS RODRIGUEZ —Granma International staff writer—

FROM September 12 through October 8, men and women around the world are joining together on the side of Cuba, five men and their struggle.

Responding to a call by the International Committee to Free the Five, headquartered in the United States, progressive groups and movements are engaging in an extensive global campaign to demand the release of René, Ramón, Gerardo, Fernando and Antonio.



An International event in solidarity with the five Cuban heroes imprisoned in the United States will be observed, with activities to take place around the world from September 12 to October 8.

These Cuban men, known as the Five, are still incarcerated in maximum security prisons in the United States for defending their country from terrorist attacks.

The program for this year's International Event to Free the Five includes hundreds of activities in Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia and Africa.

For example, in Latin America, solidarity organisations in Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela and Brazil are to release five white doves in front of the U.S. embassies in their countries.

In addition to marches and political-cultural activities, the Argentine Movement in Solidarity with Cuba (MASCUBA) has announced a number of events for the activity. Joining them are other political, social, student and labor organisations.

In Panama, the movement **Freedom for the Five** announced the distribution of information and leaflets outside the U.S. embassy. In addition to this event, meetings, panel discussions, marches and press conferences are planned for the capital and in other Panamanian provinces.

Chile is another country where friendship groups announced cultural and social events in support of the international call to free the five prisoners, echoed by groups in Bolivia, Ecuador and Uruguay.

Meanwhile, similar activities are taking place in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The Committees to Free the Five in European, African and Asian countries have also begun solidarity actions.

Friends of Cuba associations and Free the Five committees in Czechoslovakia organised a political-cultural evening to launch their own campaign in support of the Cubans. In Spain, different organisations have confirmed their participation in the International Event.

This extensive solidarity network, brought together as a result of the call, will be supported in Cuba with the presentation of the book **Desde la soledad y la esperanza** (From Solitude and Hope) and the CD **Danza de los Inocentes**. (Dance of the Innocents)

According to Alicia Jrapko, from the International Committee to Free the Five, a research group at Sonoma State University in northern California has decided to include a chapter on the case of the Five in their book **Project Censored**.

"Prejudice of corporate media in the case of the Cuban Five," was written by student Jeffrey Huling who said that he had never heard of the case before becoming involved in the university project. Each year a book is published on issues that have not been covered by the media in the United States, as the 25 most censored stories of the year prior to the book's publication.

U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL URGED TO AUTHORIZE VISAS

Citing humanitarian reasons, 13 mayors of cities within the state of California have asked the U.S. Attorney General to authorize visas for Adriana Pérez O'Connor and Olga Salanueva Arango to visit their husbands imprisoned in that country.

According to Alicia Jrapko, a letter sent to Alberto Gonzales stated: "There is no way to justify the denial of these families' visitation rights."

The message explains that Gerardo Hernández, confined in Victorville, has not seen his wife Adriana in 9 years, while René González, Olga's husband, has been denied the right to see her for 7 years.

Gayle McLaughlin, mayor of Richmond and one of the signatories of the letter, said that he felt "deeply saddened by the fact that our federal government has not even allowed these two women to see their husbands." Other California mayors who signed the humanitarian request include Robert Lieber of Albany, Sam Pierce of Sebastopol, Emily Reilly of Santa Cruz, Dennis Donohue of Salinas, Mary Craton of Canyon Lake, Maricela Morales of Port Hueneme, Elba Guerrero of Huntington Park, Felipe Aguirre of Maywood, Tom Bates of Berkeley, Larry Bragman of Fairfax, Bill Bogaard of Pasadena and Woody Fridae, mayor of Winters.

Copies of the mayors' letter were sent to Paul D. Clement, who has temporarily taken over from Gonzales, who resigned September 17.

Also receiving copies are Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, California Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, as well as the president of the House of Representatives.

PRESS RELEASE BY DEFENCE COUNSELS OF THE CUBAN FIVE - antiterroristas.cu 2007-08-21

Oral argument in the appeal of Gerardo Hernández, René González, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino and Fernando González, five Cubans unjustly held in United States' prisons since 1998, took place before the three judge panel of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals on August 20, 2007.

At the hearing, as at the two prior hearings held in March 2004 and February 2006, both parties—the Government and the Defence—asserted their arguments and responded to questions from the judges.

This hearing is one more step in the long appeal process of these five men since they were sentenced in 2001. As in the past, the Government of the United States was once again unable to refute the arguments of the Defence and sustain the accusations against the five.

For its part, the Defence, demonstrated irrefutably that the improper conduct of the Government during the entire legal process against the five constituted a flagrant violation of due process that influenced the entire proceeding, primarily by the way in which the Prosecutor invented facts that were not proven at trial, promoted a hostile environment and manipulated the evidence and the jury.

Other key arguments of the Defence that demonstrate the arbitrariness of the process is lack of evidence to sustain the two main accusations—conspiracy to commit espionage and conspiracy to commit murder in the first degree—and the imposition of completely irrational and unjustifiable life sentences. The Government itself admitted during trial that it could not present a single secret document to prove espionage and that it faced an "insurmountable obstacle" to prove the charge of murder.

Throughout the tainted process the Government admitted that its real concern was to protect the anti-Cuban terrorist groups that operate with total impunity in Miami and to punish those who fight against them.

Next September 12, these five men, accused of crimes they did not commit, will begin their tenth year in prison only because they attempted to protect Cuba from terrorist acts. Cuba like the United States and any other country of the World has a legitimate right to defend itself against the scourge of terrorism that has harmed so many victims. We trust in the professionalism of the panel of judges and that sooner or later justice will prevail for Gerardo, René, Antonio, Ramón and Fernando.

W AND APEC - REFLECTIONS BY THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF

Important meetings take place at such a frantic pace and Bush flies around and speaks at such speed that it is almost impossible to keep track. En route to Sydney, he stopped over for a few hours in Iraq, no less. I can't say whether this happened two or three days ago, because when it's Thursday in Sydney and the sun is almost at high noon over the land, it's still Wednesday in Havana with its fresh night air. The globalised planet Earth changes and transforms our concepts. Only one reality remains unchanged: the Empire's network of air, sea, land and space military bases, increasingly more powerful and at the same time more vulnerable.

We don't need to go into any special efforts of persuasion. Let us allow the U.S. news agency to speak for itself.

"SYDNEY, Australia (AP) - President Bush urged Pacific Rim nations Wednesday to band together on tackling global warming, saying (China and) all major polluters must be part of any solution..."

"Bush backed an Australian proposal that Asia-Pacific countries [APEC] endorse a new [...] approach to the [...] challenge of climate change – one that unlike the current Kyoto Protocol (which both the US and Australia refused to sign) would require firmer action by China and other developing countries."

"For there to be an effective climate change policy, China needs to be at the table," Bush said at a news conference with Australian Prime Minister John Howard. Bush and Howard issued a joint statement that supported nuclear energy, new technologies and lots of dialogue to find a way forward on global warming."

"About 300 protesters, many of them high school students on a walkout to protest against Bush, the Iraq war and Howard's support for both, staged a [...] demonstration..."

"According to reports, the draft of the final declaration to be released by the Summit next weekend makes brief mention of the climate change problem. AP obtained a copy of the draft on Wednesday."

The paragraphs in quotation marks have been taken literally from the press dispatch. Other traditional international agencies affirm this in more or less detail.

However, this is not the only news coming from the unstoppable deluge of Bush's words.

For example, the DPA Agency informs that Bush sketched out some guidelines in Sydney about what must be done in Myanmar, the former British colony of Burma, having 678,500 square kilometres and a population of 42,909,464.

"Sydney, 5 Sept/07 (DPA) – President Bush of the United States today harshly criticized the military junta of Myanmar (former Burma) and called on the leaders participating this weekend at the APEC Summit in the Australian city of Sydney to do the same.



"It's inexcusable that we have this kind of tyrannical behaviour in Asia. It's inexcusable that people who have marched for freedom are then mistreated by a repressive state," he stated today in his first public declarations following his arrival in Sydney before taking part in the APEC Summit.

"The US President was referring to the violent repression of protests which took place in Myanmar at the end of August. 'And those of us who live in the comfort of a free society need to speak out about these kinds of human rights abuses,' Bush emphasized."

It is well-known that in Iraq around a million people have died and two million have been forced to emigrate since the country was invaded by the troops of the United States and its allies, the Australians among them. Neither of these two countries signed the Kyoto Protocol, with the permanent representatives of their governments becoming *rarae avis* at the United Nations, where the rejection is practically unanimous. Likewise, we know that Blair's replacement has planned the withdrawal of British troops from Iraq. In those three countries, naturally including the United States and Australia, there is a growing resistance to the Iraq adventure, to which today we can add the Afghanistan adventure. In

this country, the fields have been planted with poppies which will enable them to produce ninety percent of all of the world's opium.

In Afghanistan, a country with a tradition of independence and rebellion, such a phenomenon had never occurred. It is coming up now under foreign occupation. Most of its inhabitants, 84 percent, are Sunni Muslim. The soldiers and weapons of the United States and its NATO allies kill women and children there every day. As if that were not enough, Bush has threatened to return Pakistan to the Stone Age. He has labelled the Guardians of the Revolution terrorists; this is a contingent of millions of men closely associated with the Iranian army. At the same time, he is strongly pressuring the Prime Minister of Iraq, who has been kept in power up until the present by the invading forces, using the same excuse of fighting against terrorism.

Let us allow everyone to meditate on the atrocious actions of the repressive governments which the United States trained for Latin America during decades in the US academies of torturers, and the role of drugs supported by the markets of the empire's consumer society. That is the kind of democracy W preaches to APEC. All bearing the US brand name and patent.

They would like to punish Myanmar the same way they have been punishing Cuba. Why don't they create for them an Adjustment Act so that their emigrants who are qualified nurses, doctors, engineers and persons capable of producing capital gains for the multinationals will have the right to reside in the United States?

This reflection is getting very long and I have to conclude.

Since in our country every institution or important event is celebrating yet another year of life, five, ten and even fifty or more, I take advantage of this opportunity to share the glory of the people of Cienfuegos, who two days ago celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the marines' revolt at the Cayo Loco Naval District Headquarters, lead by the July 26 Movement, and that of the creation of the Computer Youth Clubs, whose 20th anniversary will be celebrated tomorrow, on Saturday. I send to all my warmest congratulations.

Fidel Castro Ruz

September 7, 2007 - 6:14 p.m.

U.S. Secret Air War Pulverizes Afghanistan and Iraq

by Conn Hallinan, September 16, 2007 - Foreign Policy in Focus, ZNet

According to the residents of Datta Khel, a town in Pakistan's North Waziristan, three missiles streaked out of Afghanistan's Pakitka Province and slammed into a Madrassa, or Islamic school, this past June. When the smoke cleared, the *Asia Times* reported, 30 people were dead.

The killers were robots, General Atomics MQ-1 Predators. The AGM-114 Hellfire missiles they used in the attack were directed from a base deep in the southern Nevada desert.

It was not the first time Predators had struck. The previous year a CIA Predator took a shot at al-Qaeda's number two man, Ayman al-Zawahiri, but missed. The missile, however, killed 18 people. According to the *Asia Times* piece, at least one other suspected al-Qaeda member was assassinated by a Predator in Pakistan's northern frontier area, and in 2002 a Predator killed six "suspected al-Qaeda" members in Yemen.

These assaults are part of what may be the best kept secret of the Iraq-Afghanistan conflicts: an enormous intensification of US bombardments in these and other countries in the region, the increasing number of civilian casualties such a strategy entails, and the growing role of pilot-less killers in the conflict.

According to *Associated Press*, there has been a five-fold increase in the number of bombs dropped on Iraq during the first six months of 2007 over the same period in 2006. More than 30 tons of those have been cluster weapons, which take an especially heavy toll on civilians.

The U.S. Navy has added an aircraft carrier to its Persian Gulf force, and the Air Force has moved F-16s into Balad air base north of Baghdad.

Balad, which currently conducts 10,000 air operations a week, is strengthening runways to handle the increase in air activity. Col. David Reynolds told the *AP*, "We would like to get to be a field like Langley, if you will." The Langley field in Virginia is one of the Air Force's biggest and most sophisticated airfields. The Air Force certainly appears to be settling in for a long war. "Until we can determine that the Iraqis have got their air force to significant capability," says Lt Gen. Gary North, the regional air commander, "I think the coalition will be here to support that effort."

The Iraqi air force is virtually non-existent. It has no combat aircraft and only a handful of transports.

Improving the runways has allowed the Air Force to move B1-B bombers from Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean to Balad, where the big aircraft have been carrying out daily strikes. A B1-B can carry up to 24 tons of bombs.

The step-up in air attacks is partly a reflection of how beaten up and overextended U.S. ground troops are. While Army units put in 15-month tours, Air Force deployments are only four months, with some only half that. And Iraqi and Afghani insurgents have virtually no ability to inflict casualties on aircraft flying at 20,000 feet and using laser and satellite-guided weapons, in contrast to the serious damage they are doing to US ground troops.

Besides increasing the number of F-16s, B1-Bs, and A-10 attack planes, Predator flight hours over both countries have doubled from 2005. "The Predator is coming into its own as a no-kidding weapon verses a reconnaissance-only platform," brags Maj. Jon Dagley, commander of the 46th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron.

The Air Force is also deploying a bigger, faster and more muscular version of the Predator, the MQ-9 "Reaper" -- as in grim -- a robot capable of carrying four Hellfire missiles, plus two 500 lb. bombs.

The Predators and the Reapers have several advantages, the most obvious being they don't need pilots. "With more Reapers I could send manned airplanes home," says North.

At \$8.5 million an aircraft -- the smaller Predator comes in at \$4.5 million apiece -- they are also considerably cheaper than

the F-16 (\$19 million) the B1-B (\$200+ million) and even the A-10 (\$9.8 million).

The Air Force plans to deploy 170 Predators and 70 Reapers over the next three years. "It is possible that in our lifetime we will be able to run a war without ever leaving the US," Lt Col David Branham told the *New York Times*.

The result of the stepped up air war, according to the London-based organization *Iraq Body Count*, is an increase in civilian casualties. A *Lancet* study of "excess deaths" caused by the Iraq war found that air attacks were responsible for 13% of the deaths -- 76,000 as of June 2006 -- and that 50% of the deaths of children under 15 were caused by air strikes.

The number of civilian deaths in Afghanistan from air strikes has created a rift between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the United States.

"A senior British commander," according to the *New York Times*, has pressed U.S. Special Forces (SF) to leave southern Afghanistan because their use of air power was alienating the local people. SFs work in small teams and are dependent on air power for support.

SFs called in an air strike last November near Kandahar that killed 31 nomads. This past April, a similar air strike in Western Afghanistan killed 57 villagers, half of them women and children. Coalition forces are now killing more Afghan civilians than the Taliban are. The escalating death toll has thrown the government of Hamid Karzai into a crisis and the NATO governments into turmoil. "We need to understand that preventing civilian casualties is crucially important in sustaining the support of the population," British Defense Minister Des Browne told the *Financial Times*.

It has also opened up the allies to the charge of war crimes. In a recent air attack in southern Afghanistan that killed 25 civilians, NATO spokesman Lt. Col Mike Smith said the Taliban were responsible because they were hiding among the civilian population.

But *Article 48* of the Geneva Conventions clearly states: "The Parties to the conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants." *Article 50* dictates that "The presence within the civilian population of individuals who do not come within the definition of civilian does not deprive the population of its civilian character."

The stepped-up air war in both countries has less to do with a strategic military decision than the reality that the occupations are coming apart at the seams.

For all intents and purposes, the U.S. Army in Iraq is broken, the victim of multiple tours, inadequate forces, and the kind of war Iraq has become: a conflict of shadows, low-tech but highly effective roadside bombs, and a population which is either hostile to the occupation or at least sympathetic to the resistance.

It is much the same in Afghanistan. Lord Inge, the former British chief of staff, recently said, "The situation in Afghanistan is much worse than many people recognize...it is much more serious that people want to recognize." A well-placed military source told the *Observer*, "If you talk privately to the generals, they are very worried." Faced with defeat or bloody stalemate on the ground, the allies have turned to air power, much as the U.S. did in Vietnam. But, as in Vietnam, the terrible toll bombing inflicts on civilians all but guarantees long-term failure.

"Far from bringing about the intended softening up of the opposition," Phillip Gordon, a Brookings Institute Fellow, told the *Asia Times*, "bombing tends to rally people behind their leaders and cause them to dig in against outsiders who, whatever the justification, are destroying their homeland."

Conn Hallinan is a *Foreign Policy In Focus* columnist.

“Tear Down That Wall!” – by Sue Ferguson, September 16, 2007 - [This Magazine](#)

Imagination. Creativity. Inspiration.

Three words to stir the soul crown the towering windows of Toronto's flagship Indigo bookstore. At ground level, shoppers pass in and out of wood-framed glass doors, navigating planters and benches intended to create a friendly, front-porch sort of welcome. They take little notice as, on the sidewalk beyond, two women unfurl an off-white canvas banner. Printed on one side are another three words, less poetic perhaps than the store's motto, but the intended effect is just as moving: Boycott Chapters/Indigo.

No, the protest is not a last-ditch attempt by independent booksellers to draw the literate back into their fold. Rather, the activists—11 have turned up on this Friday in April, the first truly warm day of spring—are taking a page from a much larger book. They are members of the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA), a network of Palestinian rights, Jewish peace and socialist groups doing their part to promote an international boycott campaign against Israel. They compare themselves to the early voices against South African apartheid, and history, they believe, can repeat itself: If international pressure could help rescue South Africa from apartheid, the same can be true for Israel.

Indigo picketer and Holocaust survivor Suzanne Weiss greets approaching pedestrians at the corner of Bloor and Bay streets, “Have a bookmark.” Weiss is handing out rectangular pieces of cardstock. Printed on each are the logos of Chapters, Indigo and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) with the words “Partners in Apartheid” beneath. Flip it over and a short statement explains why Indigo Books and Music is the coalition's first and most prominent target: Two years ago, the chain's founder and CEO, Heather Reisman, and her husband, Gerry Schwartz, chairman and CEO of Onex Corporation, launched the Heseg Foundation for lone soldiers. About 6,000 lone soldiers – so-called because they have no family living in Israel – serve in the Israeli army. Heseg (Hebrew for “achievement”) awards 100 scholarships each year to those who, after completing service, want to remain and study in Israel. Reisman and Schwartz donate \$3 million a year to the cause. The impetus behind such generosity? “We are a family,” Schwartz announced to the scholarship's first recipients in December 2005. “As Jews who live outside of Israel, I can tell you that family extends to so many nations around the globe... and you're here not just for yourself, or just for the State of Israel, you are here protecting the freedom of Jews around the world.”

Schwartz, Reisman and the lone soldiers share a deep commitment to political Zionism—a variant of

the Jewish religious doctrine advocating pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Born of hundreds of years of anti-Semitism, the 19th century doctrine holds that only a nation-state, Israel, can guarantee Jews freedom from persecution. It follows then, that for hundreds of thousands of people around the world, an attack on Israel, whether physical or ideological, is tantamount to an attack on the very right of Jews to exist.

Outside Indigo, the protesters—mostly older Jewish peaceniks and socialists—could not be easily mistaken for anti-Semites. And although one participant, jazz composer Charnie Guettel, says she senses “a turning point in consciousness,” she acknowledges some passers-by are contemptuous and hostile. Most people, however, ignore them. Fair enough. Eleven protesters on a downtown Toronto sidewalk doesn't look much like a revolution, but they are part of a broader movement gaining momentum and commanding attention on the world stage.

In July 2005, 171 Palestinian community organizations issued a joint call for international action to isolate Israel. The resulting Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign has since migrated from a loose but committed group of artists, intellectuals and political activists to churchgoers, unions and professionals in an impressive array of countries. British, Israeli and South African newspapers are keeping a close eye on its activities and, recently, criticism of Israel and the idea of international trade sanctions have found a hearing in loftier, more powerful bodies—in parliaments in Europe, the UK and South Africa. Former U.S. president Jimmy Carter has also weighed in, lending credibility to the movement's contentious analogy with his 2006 book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*.

The moment, say activists, is ripe for action. The ever-intensifying strife in the West Bank and Gaza reminds the world almost daily of the international community's failure to hammer out a workable peace accord. But recent moves by Israel – the widely condemned bombing of Lebanon last summer and the construction of a 730 km wall physically breaking up Palestinian homes and communities – are pushing some (including a healthy contingent of liberals in the Jewish Diaspora) to sharpen their criticism. For many today, Israel is less likely to symbolize the helping hand of the liberator, than the fist of the oppressor.

On the ground, the BDS campaign is simmering, both in Canada and abroad, where it focuses on academic links to Israeli universities, supermarkets selling Israeli produce, and mining, telecommunications and other hi-tech companies with links to Israel. Labour endorsements include COSATU, South Africa's 1.8-million strong trade union coalition, the

Irish Congress of Trade Unions (which passed the motion “to actively and vigorously promote a policy of divestment” without any internal opposition), Britain's 800,000 members of the Transport and General Workers' Union, Britain's National Union of Journalists and CUPE Ontario's 200,000 members.

A heated debate inside British universities and colleges resulted in a national faculty union voting to condemn “the complicity of Israeli academia in the occupation,” and to “actively encourage and support branches to create direct links with Palestinians' educational institutions.” (Opponents of the initiative cite academic freedom, pointing out that the Israeli professoriate includes some of the regime's most trenchant critics.) Similar wrangling in ecumenical circles has led a number of churches (including the United Church of Canada) to condemn Israeli treatment of Palestinians, while in the U.S., the Presbyterian Church's Mission Responsibility Through Investment committee is targeting such corporations as Citigroup, Motorola and Caterpillar for dealing with Israel. On the cultural front, John Berger, Arundhati Roy, Ken Loach and Brian Eno head a long list of artists and intellectuals speaking up against Israeli policies. And a letter published in the April 21, 2007, *Guardian* signed by 130 UK physicians calls for a boycott of the Israeli Medical Association, citing human rights infractions. “Ambulances are fired on... and their personnel killed,” write the doctors. “Desperately ill people, and newborn babies, die at checkpoints because soldiers bar the way to hospital.”

With the voices of doctors, pastors, journalists and professors backing up the grassroots chorus, a handful of politicians are listening. In June, Bloc Québécois and Parti Québécois members led a march through the streets of Montreal organized by that province's anti-apartheid activists. Around the same time, 45 members of the European Parliament stood right before a House debate, expressing solidarity with the 45 imprisoned Palestinian MPs. And MPs in the British House of Commons have registered deep concern over the “complex system of separation under which Palestinians must live,” while raising the spectre of suspending European Union-Israeli trade relations. Meanwhile, in South Africa, BDS activists have an unlikely ally in ANC Intelligence Minister Ronnie Kasrils. “Although the government is not supportive of the boycott, Kasrils has written about it extensively,” says activist and University of Witwatersrand senior researcher and lecturer Salim Vally. “We have differences with him but we've made common cause.”

We've seen something like this before. In the late 1980s, a sweeping international movement pushed to isolate the once tolerated (if not fully embraced) white regime in South Africa. As their cause seeps into the mainstream, BDS activists are stoked by the hope that their campaign has the same potential as the anti-apartheid movement on which it is

modelled. Is this merely wishful thinking, another great revolutionary fantasy of the left? Or not?

While today's conflict parallels white South African rule, say veterans of the South African movement and others, it is not identical. Most significantly, Israel is not widely seen as a racist state. Indeed, for many, it's the solution to intractable discrimination. As a result, there's little moral prevaricating in the support for Israel issuing from U.S., Canadian and other powerful allies. It's hard to imagine, then, that the admonishments of a few well-meaning groups of activists can cause a similarly momentous upheaval. Yet, as Linda Freeman, a southern African scholar at Carleton University and former anti-apartheid activist, recalls, “Our groups fought for many years really in the wasteland, getting absolutely nowhere, and treated with condescension and contempt. Then everything changed.” One thing is certain, she adds: “History is surprising.”

History is also contested. The UN put Israel on the map in 1947 and, depending on who's telling the story, the following year 750,000 Arabs living in the area either fled voluntarily or were forced from their homes by Israeli soldiers, becoming permanent refugees. According to those promoting the BDS campaign, the remaining Palestinians, both in the Occupied Territories (the West Bank and Gaza Strip) or in Israel proper, are excluded from the social, political, economic and cultural life of the state as a whole – a situation that parallels apartheid South Africa. This claim, as might be expected, is hotly contested.

Believed to be first used in 1917 by a soon-to-be-elected prime minister of South Africa, the term “apartheid” is most famously associated with the social and political segregation along racial lines in that country between 1948 and 1994. The creation of Bantustans in the 1950s, so-called homelands subject to quasi-tribal law, effectively excluded blacks from participation and representation in the country's legal and justice systems. Some of its more visible results were sub-standard health and education services for blacks, pass books monitoring blacks' movements and brutal repression. By ensuring a steady supply of cheap labour in the mines and elsewhere, says York University professor emeritus and southern Africa expert John Saul, apartheid policies enforced a racialized class system, which was the basis of a vibrant first-world economy, the benefits of which remained in the hands of whites.

The idea of Israeli apartheid emerged in the final years of the white South African regime. According to Vally, ex-patriot Palestinians supportive in toppling that regime drew the link between Israel and South Africa, which intensified in the early 1990s. “There was a widespread view,” he recalls, “that Israel needed to be isolated in the same way apartheid South Africa was and for the same reasons –its intransigence, its violation of international law.”

That view gained currency with the international left at the 2001 World Conference against Racism in Durban: over the course of a week, 10,000 people signed the committee's declaration on apartheid Israel. But it was another South African, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who introduced the analogy to a more mainstream audience. In a 2002 article he wrote for the British Guardian, Tutu applauded the fight against anti-Semitism and affirmed Israel's "right to secure borders." At the same time, he condemned the segregation of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, as well as the military violence and restrictions on their movement, writing "It reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa." Jimmy Carter's book merely cemented the term's association with Israel for a North American audience.

BDS campaigners do not claim Israel is an exact replica of apartheid South Africa. Still, they insist on the analogy. The 750,000 Palestinians who fled in 1948, they point out, can not return and reclaim citizenship, whereas the Law of Return grants any willing Jewish person in the world automatic citizenship. Because many of their houses sit on "unrecognized" land, they're not serviced with electricity, water or sewage. Discrimination in Israel's housing and health care budgets means vast differentials in social services as well. (According to BDS campaign literature, the 2002 housing budget dispensed about \$30 per person to Israeli-Palestinians and up to \$3,250 per person to Jewish Israelis, while the health ministry gave less than half a million dollars to Palestinian communities, and \$76 million to Israeli communities.) Palestinians also face a sort of de facto discrimination. They cannot apply for certain jobs and welfare benefits if they have not served in the Israeli army.

Within the Occupied Territories, says Vally and others, the restrictions and segregation are even more pronounced. The Israeli army has destroyed thousands of Palestinian houses, schools and hospitals since its occupation, and Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip are required to show identity cards as they enter and exit their communities. Because car license plates identify their owners' origins, Palestinians driving on Jewish-only highways can be easily apprehended. Moreover, Israeli childhood ends at age 18, but the Israeli legal system considers any Palestinian over 16 an adult.

All these policies and laws, say BDS supporters, are evidence of a made-in-Israel apartheid. But the most visible evidence is in the form of Israeli encroachments. Since 1948 – and even more so since the 1993 Oslo Accord – Palestinians have been squeezed onto ever-smaller parcels of land, producing what the campaign literature refers to as the "bantustanization" of the Occupied Territories. Speeding this

process along is the ongoing construction of the wall winding through the West Bank. With the completion of the wall, which began in June 2002, an estimated 1.5 million Palestinians will occupy about 12 percent of historic Palestine. Carter picks up on the same point: "It is obvious that the Palestinians will be left with no territory in which to establish a viable state."

But to Israel's supporters, the A-word is an affront – "an odious comparison," according to Warren Kinsella, a member of the Canada-Israel Committee and author of two books about anti-Semitism in Canada. Its application to Israel is neither fair nor accurate, he insists, pointing to the basic rights Arab-Isrealis enjoy. They can vote, run for election to the Knesset (Israel's legislature), go to public schools and use public health services. Moreover, Israel permitted Fatah (a major Palestinian political party) members to cross back into the country in May, the same week Palestinians were firing rockets at Sderot in southern Israel. "No regime in South Africa would have done this."

What you see in Israel, says Kinsella, is "the mirror image of apartheid-economic engagement" with the Palestinians. At least, that's what he saw when, as chief of staff to former Liberal government services minister David Dingwall in 1994, he met with Israel's then-foreign affairs minister Shimon Peres. After tentatively raising the possibility of meeting with the PLO, Peres's response "blew us away," he says. "He was emphatic we must meet with them," insisting that the possibility for peace hinged upon a healthy Palestinian economy.

Derek Penslar, director of Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto, likely wouldn't go so far. "The Palestinians are oppressed," he says – both within the Occupied Territories and Israel itself. And they are, he acknowledges, "functionally separated" from Israelis. But this is not apartheid. Apartheid is a specific arrangement "based along racial lines, in which the entire black population was fundamentally disenfranchised," he says. Not only have Palestinians "known freedom of movement in the past," the Israeli state is not enforcing a racial regime, but in some cases, responding to violence perpetrated against a civilian population (although he concedes the balance of power favours the Israelis).

The BDS campaign plays to a more generalized criticism of Israeli policies, most strikingly evident in the faultline developing within the Jewish Diaspora community. Last December, the right-wing American Jewish Committee posted an essay on its website decrying liberal Jews who are critical of Israeli policies, accusing them of fomenting anti-Semitism. That debate, says Yakov Rabkin, a University of Montreal historian and author of *A Threat From Within: A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism*, signals "a growing awareness that Israel isn't

so much a Jewish state as a state that takes a certain political stance in the Middle East, and that brings the sympathy of conservative, right wing circles in the world." Many Jews oppose "the idea of having a state reserved for just one particular ethnic group," he says, noting the discussion is nowhere more vibrant than inside Israel, where the government has just set up a task force to deal with the academic boycott. And elsewhere, in Sweden, France, Italy, Belgium, the U.S., South Africa and Canada, networks of liberal Jews critical of political Zionism are spreading. Here, the Alliance of Concerned Jewish Canadians endorses the BDS campaign.

Rabkin, who prefers the term "separate development" to "apartheid" (they mean the same thing, but the former is less provocative, he claims), believes a shift in international opinion is not a pipe dream. Even the "pro-establishment" Economist magazine has questioned Israel's relevance to the younger generation of Jews, he observes. Its January 13, 2007, issue reported that 17 percent of Jewish Americans are pro-Zionist, and just over half say "caring about Israel is a very important part" of being Jewish. The article suggests Israeli policies in the Middle East are at least partially responsible for this disaffection. Rabkin also cites a BBC World Service poll in which Israel is ranked the lowest, just below Iran, as the country perceived to have the most "negative influence" on the world. While overwhelming majorities within mostly Muslim countries skewed the figures, Canada, Britain and other EU countries were also highly critical of Israel. Support from the right for Israel today may be "massive," concludes Rabkin. "But it's very fragile."

The white South African regime enjoyed widespread support once as well. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s and well into the 1980s, the global anti-apartheid movement sat impatiently on the fringes – meeting in church basements, leafleting shareholder conventions and giving talks to audiences of half a dozen people.

John Saul was among those activists. He recalls a stunt he and his fellow rabble-rousers dreamed up to draw attention to the hundreds of millions of dollars in direct Canadian bank loans made to South Africa. The Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa (TCLSAC) printed fake withdrawal slips with a summary of the banks' activities on the back and then surreptitiously tucked them into Toronto bank counters. "We put a lot of them out there," he says. "That got a certain notoriety for us, but I don't know whether these things have any larger impact. At least the banks knew that somebody was watching them."

The Canadian government, for its part, largely ignored the activists. While it made the occasional gesture – John Diefenbaker helped push South Africa out of the Commonwealth in 1961, Pierre Trudeau introduced sanctions in 1977 – its efforts were "half-hearted," says Freeman. "Ultimately and ironically it was Mulroney" who stood up to the Commonwealth and imposed a few compulsory trade sanctions. But when domestic issues took priority, she notes, he also "basically let it down."

Joe Clark, then minister of foreign affairs, cites a number of factors pushing the Tories to act, including his and Mulroney's ambition to take up Diefenbaker's mantle. As members of the young Progressive Conservatives in the early 1960s, explains Clark in an email, "We considered the fight against apartheid to be a central element of the activist Progressive Conservative tradition in international affairs." Still, he acknowledges, "growing international concern" about human rights abuses in South Africa did play a part. "The public anti-apartheid campaign maintained a steady pressure on the government, often criticizing our pace and, in an increasing number of cases, working with us in proposing initiatives, and giving effect to policy."

Both Saul and Freeman stress it's impossible to draw a straight line from their activism to the upheaval in South Africa. Rather, events inside that country were key. As long as the political and economic elite felt they were in control, "the not-so-mild embarrassment that we could cause them was a business cost they could live with," says Saul. "I don't think they liked it, but I don't think they felt themselves terribly threatened by it either." By 1984, however, recalls Freeman, "things in South Africa were really boiling and burning." The Vaal township uprising that year, the state's response, and an economic crisis split the South African ruling class, with some arguing that apartheid was simply too costly to continue. (Internal developments within Israel and the Occupied Territories have taken on a different complexion, in part because the Israeli economy isn't as dependent upon Palestinian labour, and in part because of U.S. and other international interests in the area.) Anti-apartheid activism in places like Canada was only a small – albeit essential – part of the equation. "It kept their minds alert to the fact that they were paying some price for this," says Saul. "In that sense, the cumulative anti-apartheid activity made a difference."

For the Toronto BDS campaign to make a difference, it has to first get noticed. Formed in 2005 (under the name Coalition Against Israel's War Crimes) in anticipation of then-Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to the city, the group held demonstrations, leafleting and public talks. Taking up the Palestinian call to action a year later, says York University grad student and coalition member Adam Hanieh, provided a welcome focus and greater exposure. The group publishes a long list of Israeli-made imports to boycott, including everything from toiletries to garden sheds to wines produced in the Occupied Territories for Israeli firms (they are also researching a sporting and military boycott), but Chapters/Indigo is by far the biggest, and most familiar, name.

Since the first Indigo picket aimed at Christmas shoppers on December 23, 2006, interest has grown steadily. Pickets have shot up at other Canadian stores without any direction from the coalition. People "are really taking their own initiative," says Hanieh. They're sending emails to

CAIA saying, "I'll organize a picket. Just give me the material." Regular protests now take place at the Toronto store and Indigo or Chapters outlets in Montreal, Vancouver, Victoria and Halifax. (A thousand people stopped to chant outside Montreal's McGill College Ave. Indigo outlet during a June march, which was endorsed by Quebec trade unionists, feminists and CEGEP student unions.) And in a stunt reminiscent of TCLSAC's bank action, some boycotters have moved their efforts inside, slipping End Israeli Apartheid bookmarks into bestsellers on store shelves. For the most part, the actions are small, and members know they're a long way from winning their core demand – that Reisman cut all ties with Heseq. But there are other measures of success, says Hanieh. "The whole idea of the boycott strategy is around public education – to make it clear that dealing with Israel is not on." On that level, he believes the group is having some impact. Asking people to consider

the way in which money spent at these bookstores contributes to the oppression of the Palestinians, he says, not only pushes the debate into the open, it draws attention to how individual Canadians are implicated in that oppression. "It's not an abstract thing. It's not just something that's going on in a weird land. There is a connection you can see between your location here and what's happening in Israel."

That's the message CAIA members are also pushing in the unions. Since the CUPE Ontario resolution passed in May 2006, they've published a booklet and run education sessions at Ontario locals. "It's very exciting," says Hanieh. "Each week we're reaching a lot of new people, and it's being very well received. People want to get involved." Union work, he adds, was important to the earlier anti-apartheid struggle. Not only did some unions, like the postal workers, refuse to handle South African goods and mail, members were well placed to identify which products were coming from South Africa, and where and when shipments were arriving.

As for the Indigo picket, it's not going away – although the official response has been minimal. B'nai Brith Canada issued a press release denouncing CAIA for targeting Reisman and Schwartz, whose philanthropy, it points out, "has benefited Canadians of all backgrounds." It calls the boycott "misguided," an example of "blind hatred for Israel." According to Anita Bromberg, director of legal affairs at the Jewish human rights organization, CAIA is "unfairly singling" Israel out. "Where in their materials does it discuss the apartheid state of Syria? Or Lebanon, where Palestinian refugees are kept in camps for 60 years, where they don't have the right to vote, where Jews had their property confiscated and were driven out. Have they raised their issues there?" Israel, she insists, is a democratic state, in which Arab-Israeli citizens "enjoy rights."

But Indigo Books and Music is staying on the sidelines – or at least trying to. Reisman's publicist stopped returning my calls and, except for the dark-suited security guard who strides by at the beginning and end of each picket, the company has not responded to CAIA. "They realize we're kind of fringe," says Hanieh. "Basically, they're

hoping it'll fizzle out." When activists confronted Reisman at a store book launch in May, her voice was cool and firm: "I won't engage in a debate on this subject." She then announced the protesters had their facts wrong, and promptly shut down the event. Meanwhile, the picketers at the corner of Bay and Bloor streets soldier on. The occasional passerby glares contemptuously, a few stop to chat and learn more. But most walk by, oblivious to anything except maybe the warmth of the long-awaited spring sunshine. As I lean against a concrete planter watching, two familiar faces exit the store's main doors, both former bosses of mine. I mention the picket to them. "I didn't notice this when we went in," quips one. "Having noticed it, I'm now ignoring it." The choice is his to make – at least for now.

More than 1,000,000 Iraqis murdered since 2003 invasion

By ORB, September 16, 2007 - Courtesy Znet

More than 1,000,000 Iraqis murdered since 2003 invasion
In the week in which General Patraeus reports back to US Congress on the impact the recent 'surge' is having in Iraq, a new poll reveals that more than 1,000,000 Iraqi citizens have been murdered since the invasion took place in 2003. Previous estimates, most noticeably the one published in the Lancet in October 2006, suggested almost half this number (654,965 deaths).

These findings come from a poll released today by O.R.B., the British polling agency that have been tracking public opinion in Iraq since 2005. In conjunction with their Iraqi fieldwork agency a representative sample of 1,461 adults aged 18+ answered the following question:-

Q How many members of your household, if any, have died as a result of the conflict in Iraq since 2003 (ie as a result of violence rather than a natural death such as old age)? Please note that I mean those who were actually living under your roof.

None 78%
One death 16%
Two deaths 5%
Threedeadths 1%
Four+ deaths 0.002%

Given that from the 2005 census there are a total of 4,050,597 households this data suggests a total of 1,220,580 deaths since the invasion in 2003.

Detailed analysis (which is available on our website) indicates that almost one in two households in Baghdad have lost a family member, significantly higher than in any other area of the country. The governorates of Diyala (42%) and Ninewa (35%) were next.

The poll also questioned the surviving relatives on the method in which their loved ones were killed. It reveals that 48% died from a gunshot wound, 20% from the

impact of a car bomb, 9% from aerial bombardment, 6% as a result of an accident and 6% from another blast/ordnance. This is significant because more often than not it is car bombs and aerial bombardments that make the news – with gunshots rarely in the headlines.

As well as a murder rate that now exceeds the Rwanda genocide from

1994 (800,000 murdered), not only have more than one million been injured but our poll calculates that of the millions of Iraqis that have fled their neighbourhoods, 52% have moved within Iraq but 48% have crossed its borders, with Syria taking the brunt of refugees.

And for those left in Iraq, although 81% may describe the availability of basic groceries such as bread and fresh vegetables as "very/fairly good", more than one in two (54%) consider them to be "expensive".

Note:

The opinion poll was conducted by O.R.B. and the survey details are as follows:

- Results are based face-to-face interviews amongst a nationally representative sample of 1720 adults aged 18+ throughout Iraq.
- The standard margin of error on the sample size is +2.4% • The methodology uses multi-stage random probability sampling and covers fifteen of the eighteen governorates within Iraq. For security reasons Karbala and Al Anbar were not included. Irbil was excluded as the authorities refused our field team a permit.
- Interviews conducted August 12th – 19th 2007.
- Full results and data tabulations are available at www.opinion.co.uk/newsroom.aspx • O.R.B. are full members of the British Polling Council and abide by its rules

Howard's Australia: 1 in 10 in poverty

The Guardian 12 September, 2007

Bob Briton



Two million Australians — 9.9 per cent of the population including 365,270 children — are currently living below a very austere poverty line. The figure is up from 7.6 per cent ten years ago. A home of one's own has switched from being the great Aussie dream into a joke for many young people. Around 600,000 Australians are languishing on years-long waiting lists for dental treatment. Wage-earning households are paying 18 per cent more for the same goods and services than they did five years ago. Pensioners are paying 15.8 per cent more. Aboriginal health is an internationally recognised scandal.

These are some of the grim facts and conclusions brought together by the Australia Fair coalition of welfare groups in their recently released report, *Australia Fair: International Comparisons 2007*. The damning document was based on research from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the University of NSW and international comparative reports from the UN and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

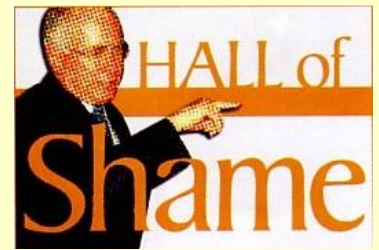
The poverty line in the study was set at the most common international standard — 50 per cent of median income for a single person. In Australia this is a miserable \$249 per week. While almost one in ten Australians wage a daily battle to survive on this amount, the Federal Government remains in denial. Australia is among only eight of the 30 OECD countries not to have a poverty reduction strategy. The government let the subject die when a 2003-04 Senate inquiry into poverty broke up over the issue of how to measure the phenomenon in Australia. No doubt an investigation of poverty would have exposed a number of the myths surrounding the "booming" economy built up in the Howard era.

Members of the Howard front bench have all taken pot shots at the Australia Fair report. "I have difficulty with their measurements of poverty", the PM said. "It is logic that if there are fewer people out of work there must be less poverty — the greatest driver of poverty is people without jobs." Logic? The report confirms that, despite official denials, jobs growth in the past 15 years has mostly been in very low-paying part-time casual work. Australia now has a sizeable population of working poor.

While family payments have softened the impact of the neo-liberal agenda, housing costs in particular have taken their toll. Australia has inherited a high rate of home ownership — sixth highest in the OECD. This is set to change. House prices are now higher in Australia than in New Zealand, Britain, the United States, Canada and Ireland. The supply of public housing is the fourth worst among OECD countries. Rents have skyrocketed. Initiatives — like that taken by the City of London which has mandated that a percentage of new housing must be affordable — are not likely given the current political climate in Australia.

Outside government circles, reactions to the report confirm the conclusions about growing poverty and social exclusion in Australia. Dr John Falzon of the St Vincent de Paul Society regularly sees the effects of low pay, lack of job security, a welfare system that breaches people too easily, rising rents, health and transport costs. "Considering we've had up to 15 years of sustained economic growth, it's a national scandal to think we had it within our means to structurally address the causes of poverty and inequality in Australia", he told *ABC News*.

In Bendigo in Victoria, one in four residents are living below the poverty line including an astounding 33 per cent of Eaglehawk residents. "Bendigo's got significant pockets of disadvantage and areas where families are under real stress", chief executive of St Luke's Bendigo David Pugh told the *Bendigo Advertiser*. "We know there are lots of families who regularly choose between putting food on the table and paying bills."



Not so casual

THE Workplace Ombudsman has conducted a "lightning raid" on Adelaide furniture chain Casual Living, over allegations that the firm's new owner applied duress to force 40 existing workers to sign AWAs to keep their jobs. The business sent home workers who had failed to sign AWAs, and refused to negotiate with employees.

Ford drives roughshod

IN AUGUST the AIRC granted Ford Australia's application to suspend the bargaining period at key supplier, Venture, alleging millions of dollars in loss and damage in an AMWU-led strike. It was the first WorkChoices case of a third party suspending protected industrial action, forcing strikers back to work.

AMWU members staged an indefinite strike over \$25m in unpaid employee entitlements after 1850 workers were stood down without pay in August.

Under the AMMA

AUSTRALIAN Mines and Metals Association (AMMA) has told the ALP it wants a salary threshold of just \$75,000 - including allowances and overtime - and a no-strike provision under any new workplace laws. It is responding to the ALP's proposal to allow employees on high salaries exemption from prescriptive award conditions.

Texas Grill massacres rights

OWS will prosecute three companies for alleged breaches of the Workplace Relations Act. Chilli's Texas Grill in Wollongong allegedly required workers to supply their own "floats", to be docked if a customer left without paying. National let Systems is accused of forcing three pilots to sign AWAs and withholding pay rises. And defence contractor Serco Sodexho pressured two young women to sign AWAs or lose their jobs.

Overwhelming Support of Cuba at UN Human Rights Council

GENEVA, Switzerland, June 12, 2007.- — Twenty-five countries offered their support to Cuba and demanded the end of mandates by countries at the UN Human Rights Council .

"We will drink a toast with our Cuban friends and celebrate by singing La Guantanamera very soon, when these politicized, selective mandates are over," said the Palestinian representative, making habitually restrained delegates laugh.

The Palestinian delegation was in fact the 19th to speak with admiration towards Cuba, following representatives from Sri Lanka, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Vietnam, Ecuador, Iran, Bolivia, China and South Africa.

The unusual chain of speeches in favor of a country in the Palais des Nations in Geneva took place after a report presented by the so-called Special Representative for Cuba Christine Chanet to the now defunct UN Human Rights Commission.


Representatives from Russia, India, Indonesia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Algeria, Syria, Sudan, Malaysia, Libya, Angola, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Belarus, Pakistan and Uzbekistan joined the choir, discrediting Chanet's report.

Especially eloquent, the speech given by the delegation from Sri Lanka recalled the role played by Cuba in wiping out apartheid, and the words of Nelson Mandela, who said that he owed his freedom to Cuba's contribution to the war of liberation of Angola.

Vietnam, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Bolivia praised the example of Cuba in the fields of education and health, and highlighted its achievements in all fields, despite the economic blockade imposed by the US for more than 40 years.

Cuban Ambassador to international bodies in Geneva Juan Antonio Fernandez described the report presented by Chanet as a farce which, he said, deserves no credibility.

Echoing the feelings of his audience, the Cuban diplomat warned that "this grotesque show will soon be over." (Cubaminrex-PL)



CHE
Guevara
40 years
commemoration
40 years of struggle, dignity and solidarity

*And if we were all capable of uniting...
how great the future would be, and how near!*
—Che Guevara

This October we commemorate the 40th anniversary of the death of Che Guevara at the hands of the CIA and the Bolivian army.

Che Guevara has become a symbol of dignity, rebellion and struggle against the unjust. Che is much more than just an image; he was a political activist, a revolutionary leader, an internationalist, and his writings on politics and economics to this day are studied around the world.

**Come to commemorate this important date
on Sunday October 7 @ Trades Hall, from 1:30-5:30**


The activities will include:

- A seminar on Che's legacy that will include an international speaker
- Film and documentary screening
- Books & poster display

Tuesday October 9, 6:30 @ Trades Hall
**The committee will unveil a plaque to the
memory of Che Guevara.**

All welcome

Please email: che40yearscommemoration@yahoo.com
Or call Lourdes on: 0431 574 931
or Marisol: 0413 597 315





PUBLIC MOVIE NIGHT

Featuring...

The power of community: how Cuba survived peak oil
When the Soviet Union collapsed, Cuba's economy went into a tailspin. With imports of oil cut by more than 50% and food by 80% people were desperate. This film tells of the hardships and struggles as well as the community and creativity of the Cuban people during this difficult time.

Constructing Fear
In 2005, an industry watchdog was established with powers which remove the basic civil rights of building workers. This is the story of what happened next.





**W
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**OCT
10**


**Victoria University
Convention Centre**
460 Ballarat Rd, Sunshine
Melway Ref: Map 26, J10

**MOVIES
START @
7:30PM**

For more information
T: 0434 856 429
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Join the 25th Southern Cross work/study tour and support Cuba

in the most direct manner by working for a few days picking fruit or pruning fruit trees and then visiting schools, hospitals, sugar mills, etc You will experience at first hand the cultural, political and social conditions in revolutionary Cuba. This year you will also be informed of Cuba's innovative approaches to the environment and climate change. Children are welcome on this tour as are older participants. Our Cuban hosts take great care of visitors of all ages. The main features of the Brigade include:

- Talks on various aspects of conditions in Cuba given by prominent Cuban speakers;
- Working with Cubans
- Visits to places of interest (eg schools, hospitals, factories);
- Opportunities to explore Havana independently;
- Visits to provincial centres;
- Homestays with Cuban families in Granma Province for several nights;
- Participation in cultural activities.

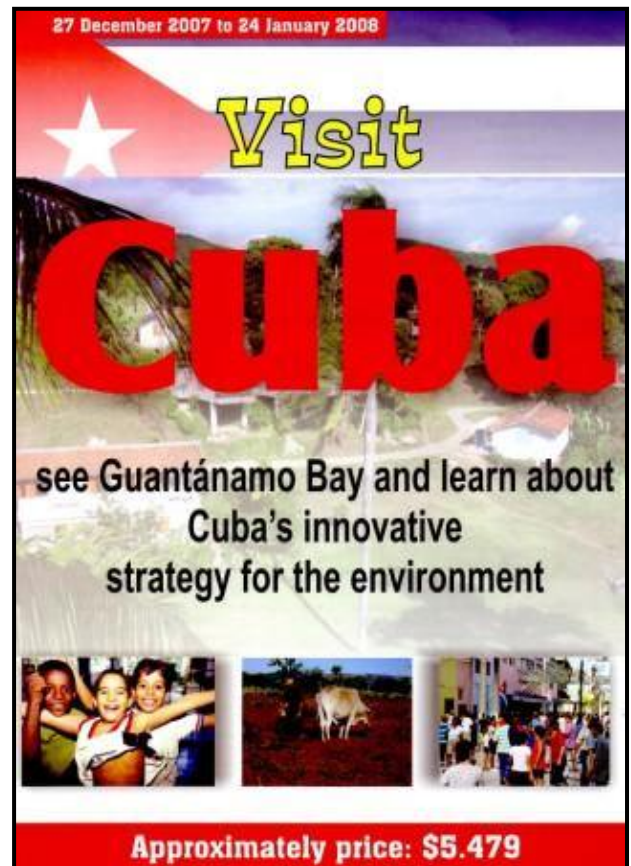
Flights

The group will depart from Australia/New Zealand on 28 December 2007, travelling via Chile together with the leader of the group. They will spend one night each way in Santiago the capital of Chile.

The group will return to Australia/New Zealand by the same route and will arrive back in Australia/New Zealand on 24 January 2008.

For Further Information:

Contact the National Co-ordinator, Flora on 03 9470 5300 or write to 15 Malpas St Preston, Vic.3072 or your state representative.



The Empire and its Lies

Reflections by the President Fidel Castro

It was Reagan who created the Cuban American National Foundation, whose sinister involvement in the blockade and in terrorist actions against Cuba would be revealed years later, when the United States declassified secret documents, albeit full of information that had been shamefully crossed out. Had these documents come to light earlier, our conduct would not have been different. When, on March 30, 1981, we received news in Cuba that Reagan had been shot with a low-caliber weapon in an assassination attempt, we sent him a message condemning the act. The 22-caliber lead bullet lodged in one of his lungs was causing him pain and putting his life at risk. The message is contained in the conversation that, following precise instructions, our then minister of foreign affairs, Isidoro Malmierca, had with Wayne Smith,

former head of the US Interests Section in Havana.

What follow are excerpts, quoted verbatim, of the conversation between the two: "ISIDORO MALMIERCA: We summoned you to this meeting on the express request of President Fidel Castro. He asked me to begin by expressing our appreciation for the information on the assassination attempt on President Reagan that you provided us with through director Joaquín Más. On behalf of President Fidel Castro, we also wish to express how deeply we regret this event and our sincere hope that President Reagan will recover from this attack as quickly as possible. "WAYNE SMITH: Thank you, very much.

"ISIDORO MALMIERCA: We have been receiving information about the medical attention the President is receiving. Initially, you had also received information that the consequences of the attack did not appear to be that severe, but it seems the situation is more complicated and he is undergoing surgery. "WAYNE SMITH: Yes. Our impression is that he has been operated on already, but over the radio they are now saying that the operation is to begin now. It is likely to be over in, say, an hour. A 3-hour surgery, I mean, is nothing simple, especially for a 70-year-old man. They say there's no danger. My interpretation of this is that there's no immediate danger. But, for a 70-year-old man, a 3-hour surgery is a serious matter. They say he is not in serious condition, that his condition is stable. We hope everything goes well. I thank you for your best

wishes, your concern and President Fidel Castro's message.

"ISIDORO MALMIERCA: In Washington, Mr. Frechette also approached the Cuban Interests Section and conveyed us information on this situation. He explained that you had also received information on this.

Again, President Fidel Castro personally asked me to meet with you and to express our sincere hope that President Reagan recover promptly from the consequences of the attack.

"WAYNE SMITH: Thank you, very much. My God! This is a difficult situation. President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas and it looks as though the person responsible for the assassination attempt on Reagan is from Dallas. He currently lives in Colorado, but he's from Dallas. I don't know...

"ISIDORO MALMIERCA: In some cables, I read that he was born near Denver, 30 kilometers from Denver.

"WAYNE SMITH: I don't know. One of my consuls here in the Interests Section told me he had heard on the radio that it's a guy who studied in the same school he did. I don't know, he may have lived a number of years in Dallas. I don't know what's in the air people breath in Dallas.

"ISIDORO MALMIERCA: They say they're three brothers, the sons of a man who's in the oil business.

"WAYNE SMITH: His dad, yes. He's 22 years old. He was a student at Yale University, but he had recently abandoned his studies. He may feel bitter, a young man who has failed, who acted out of resentment. To be completely frank, I'm glad it's a guy like that and not, say, a Puerto Rican or something like that, which could have political implications.

"ISIDORO MALMIERCA: You mean speculations about the political motivations behind that.

"WAYNE SMITH: Yes, that could, undeniably, prompt, encourage political readings. An attack by a white man from Colorado, Texas does not lend itself easily to political interpretations.

"ISIDORO MALMIERCA: There have even been a number of police reports which say that he acted alone, that he has no ties to any groups...

"WAYNE SMITH: Yes, it must have been an insane or fanatical person. He got so close to the President...He was captured immediately. He took out his weapon and fired... "ISIDORO

MALMIERCA: Brady died? "WAYNE SMITH: No.

"ISIDORO MALMIERCA: They were saying he died.

"WAYNE SMITH: Yes. There were reports to that effect, that he had died. But the latest news is that he didn't, that he's in very serious condition, but that he hasn't died. I imagine that that a 45-calibre round would have been deadly, but a 22-calibre certainly gives him possibilities... It seems the shot hit him on the head, apparently in the head...That's not good news, there isn't much hope.

"ISIDORO MALMIERCA: A shot to the head, no matter what the caliber, is something very serious.

"WAYNE SMITH: Brady is in critical condition. He may survive, but he'd be a vegetable.

"ISIDORO MALMIERCA: I do regret that we should meet because of such an unfortunate event.

"WAYNE SMITH: I thank you for your best wishes. I will immediately send out a cable telling my government of our conversation. I kindly ask that you express my gratitude to President Fidel Castro. No comments are needed.

Malmierca's version, written immediately after the meeting, speaks for itself. Wayne Smith is today a staunch opponent of the blockade and aggressions against Cuba.

But this is not the only example of our conduct towards the President of a country which, since the days of Eisenhower, has hatched hundreds of plots to physically eliminate me.

A highly confidential report submitted in the summer of 1984 to an agent responsible for the security of Cuban representatives in the UN warned of a possible assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan by a far-right group in North Carolina. Upon receiving it, we immediately informed US authorities. Our official suggested that we deliver the information via Robert C. Muller, head of security of the US mission to the United Nations, with whom we maintained contact to ensure the protection of Cuban delegations visiting the international organization.

The assassination was planned for an imminent date, for Reagan's visit to North Carolina, as part of his re-election campaign.

We had all of the information at our disposal. We had the names of those implicated in the plot; the day, time

and place where the assassination was to take place; the types of weapons the terrorists had and where they were being kept. In addition to all this, we knew where the elements who were plotting this were meeting and had a brief account of what had been said at a meeting.

The information was given Muller at a meeting in a building located in 37 and 3rd Avenue, two blocks away from the Cuban mission.

We provided him with all the information, making sure the most important details, such as the names of those involved, the place, time and type of weapons to be used, were clear.

At the end of the conversation, our official informed Muller he had received instructions from the Cuban government to report the matter urgently and that we had selected him because we knew he was an expert on security matters.

Muller read out what he had written down to ensure he had not changed anything and that all of the important information was there.

He asked about the source and was told it was reliable. He said that the Secret Service would need to meet with the Cuban officials. He was told this would not be a problem.

At around four thirty in the afternoon that day, Secret Service agents met with the Cuban representatives.

The meeting was held in apartment 34-F, in the 34th floor of the Ruppert Towers building located in 92, between Third and Second Avenue, in uptown Manhattan.

The agents were two young, white men with brush haircuts wearing suits. Their chief aim was to verify what Muller had reported, as evidenced by the copy of the cable he had sent them they brought with them. When the contents of the cable were read, they were told no information was missing.

The Secret Service agents wanted to know who had provided the information and how it had come into our possession. They were told what Muller was told.

They were also interested in knowing if we could elaborate on the information, and they were told that, if any new information were to arrive, they would be immediately informed.

They left their cards and asked to be contacted directly if any additional information was received, saying there was no need to use Muller as an intermediary.

The following Monday, we received news that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had detained a group of people in North Carolina, against whom a number of charges had been brought, none, as is

logical to assume, related to the plan to assassinate President Reagan, who traveled to that State shortly afterwards as part of his presidential e-election campaign.

Four or five days following the arrests, at the end of the week, Muller phoned the Cuban mission to invite the Cuban official to lunch. They had lunch at the UN delegates' lounge. The first thing Muller did was ask that the official convey the United States' gratitude to the Cuban government for the information provided, confirming that an operation against those involved had been carried out. A Cuban anti-terrorist activist had saved the life of a US President! Some US press reports mention an intimate diary, over 700 pages long, kept by Reagan— from the time he entered office to the day he handed the presidency over to Bush Sr.— which tries to suggest that his Government was not that aggressive towards Cuba.

However, according to some accounts, in his memoirs, Robert McFarlane, then Undersecretary of State under Alexander Haig, wrote that, of all the governments that had had dealings with Fidel Castro since 1959, Reagan's seemed the least indicated to hold talks with Cuba's communist regime. Perhaps Reagan was grateful for our concern, when he was nearly assassinated in 1981, and for the warning that saved his life from imminent danger, and he expressed this gratitude through Robert C. Muller. Reagan signed the first migratory accord with Cuba, but he could not rise above his milieu, for there were others, further to the right than he was, who would have physically eliminated him, as they did Kennedy after he faced the terrible risk of a thermonuclear war. To be sure, Reagan did change his policy towards Cuba in an electoral year, did not honour the accord he signed which guaranteed the granting of up to 20 thousand visas a year for safe trips by granting less than a thousand, and kept in effect the Cuban Adjustment Act, which has cost Cuba many lives. On September 11, 2001, true chaos reigned in this neighbouring country. For long, planes were forbidden to land at airports. A countless number of passenger planes were mid-flight somewhere. These were the news spread by the media in the United States. There were reports of thousands of victims in New York, including Twin Tower staff, firefighters and visitors. There were also reports of people on a

passenger plane which was flown into the Pentagon. We offered to supply the United States with clean blood from regular donors if it was needed for any eventuality. Blood donations have long constituted a tradition of the Revolution.

These events happened to coincide with the day in which we had convened nearly 15,000 higher education students and university graduates for a 6:00 pm gathering, on the occasion of the re-opening of the Salvador Allende School, where 3,599 young people would begin higher studies and avail themselves of new and tried methods to become primary school teachers.

That painful incident occurred six years ago today. Today, we know that the public was deliberately misinformed. I don't recall any talk, that day, of the fact that, in the basements of those towers, whose higher floors housed the banks of multinational corporations and other offices, lay nearly 200 tons in gold bars. An order to shoot to death anyone who attempted to get to the gold had been issued. The calculations with respect to the steel structures, plane impacts, the black boxes recovered and what they revealed do not coincide with the opinions of mathematicians, seismologists, information, demolition experts and others. What is most shocking is the claim that we may never know what actually happened. It is known, however, that a number of people en route to San Francisco from New Jersey, had conversations with their relatives when the air vessels were already under the control of individuals who were not members of the crew. An analysis of the impact of planes similar to those against the towers, following accidental plane crashes in densely-populated cities, concludes that no plane crashed against the Pentagon and that only a projectile could have created the geometrically round hole that the alleged plane created. No passenger that perished there has turned up, either. No one in the world questioned the news about the attack on the Pentagon building. We were deceived, as were the rest of the planet's inhabitants. When I spoke at the Ciudad Deportiva sports complex that September 11th, I spoke of the tragedy that had hit the United States. In the interests of

conciseness, I am reproducing the following excerpts from that speech: (...) We did not even consider postponing the ceremony. It could not be postponed, despite the international tension created by such events. I would imagine that almost everyone knows about them, but to briefly summarize, at approximately 9:00 this morning, a Boeing airplane, a really big one, crashed straight into one of the two New York famous towers which make up one of the highest buildings in the world. Naturally, the tower caught on fire because of all the fuel from such a big airplane, and some horrific scenes began. And then, 18 minutes later, another plane, also from an U.S. airline, crashed straight into the second tower.

A few minutes later, another plane crashed into the Pentagon. News arrived, in the midst of a certain amount of confusion, of a bomb outside the State Department, and other alarming events, although I have mentioned the most important.

Obviously, the country had fallen victim to a violent surprise attack, unexpected, unimaginable, something truly unheard of. And the scenes that ensued were appalling, especially when the two towers were burning, and foremost when they both collapsed, all 100 floors, spilling over onto neighbouring buildings, when it was known that there were tens of thousands of people working there, in offices representing many companies from various countries.

It was only logical that this would be a shock for the United States and the rest of the world. The stock markets started to collapse, and because of the political, economic and technological importance and the power of the United States, the whole world was shaken up today by those events. So, we had to follow the events throughout the day, but at the same time, we also had to continue thinking about the conditions and circumstances in which this ceremony would take place. Therefore, there were two issues: the school and the extremely important course it will offer, and the political and human catastrophe that had taken place over there, especially in New York.

(...) Today is a day of tragedy for the United States. You know very well that hatred against the American people has never been sown here. Perhaps, precisely because of its culture, its lack of prejudice, its sense of full freedom—with a homeland and without a master— Cuba is the country where Americans are treated with the greatest respect. We have never preached any kind of national hatred, or anything similar to fanaticism,

and that is the reason for our strength, because our conduct is based on principles and ideas. We treat all Americans who visit us with great respect, and they have noticed this and said so themselves.

Furthermore, we cannot forget the American people who put an end to the Vietnam War with their overwhelming opposition to that genocidal war. We cannot forget the American people who—in numbers that exceeded 80% of the population—supported the return of Elián González to his homeland. We cannot forget their idealism, although it is often undermined by deception, because—as we have said often times—in order to mislead Americans to support an unjust cause, or an unjust war, they must first be deceived. The classic method used by that huge country in international politics is that of deceiving the people first, to count on their support later. When it is the other way around, and the people realize that something is unjust, then based on their traditional idealism they oppose what they have been supporting. Often these are extremely unjust causes, which they had supported convinced that they were doing the right thing. Therefore, although unaware of the exact number of victims but seeing those moving scenes of suffering, we have felt profound grief and sadness for the American people.

We do not go around flattering any government, or asking for forgiveness or favours. We neither harbour in our hearts a single atom of fear. The history of our Revolution has proven its capacity to stand up to challenges, its capacity to fight and its capacity to resist whatever it has to; that is what has turned us into an invincible people. These are our principles. Our Revolution is based on ideas and persuasion, and not on the use of force. (...) That has been our reaction, and we wanted our people to see the scenes and watch the tragedy. We have not hesitated to express our sentiments publicly, and right here I have a statement, which was drafted as soon as the facts were known and handed out to the international media around 3:00 p.m. In the meantime, our television networks were broadcasting news of the events. This statement was scheduled to be read to the Cuban public tonight during the evening TV newscast. I am going to move the time up a few minutes by reading to you here and now the Official Statement from the Government of Cuba on the events that

took place in the United States: "The Government of the Republic of Cuba has learned with grief and sadness of the violent surprise attacks carried out this morning against civilian and official facilities in the cities of New York and Washington, which have caused numerous deaths.

(...) "It is not possible to forget that for over four decades our country has been the target of such actions fostered from within the United States territory.

"Both for historical reasons and ethical principles, the Government of our country strongly repudiates and condemns the attacks against the aforementioned facilities and hereby expresses its most heartfelt sympathies to the American people for the painful, unjustifiable loss of human lives resulting from these attacks.

"In this bitter hour for all Americans, our people express their solidarity with the American people and their full willingness to cooperate, to the extent of their modest possibilities, with the health care institutions and any other medical or humanitarian organisation in that country in the treatment, care and rehabilitation of the victims of this morning's events." Although it is not known whether the casualties are 5000, 10,000, 15,000 or 20,000, it is known that the planes that crashed into the Twin Towers and into the Pentagon were carrying hundreds of passengers, and we have offered to provide whatever we can, if necessary.

That is a country with great scientific and medical development and resources, but at some point in time it could need blood of a specific type or plasma—any other product that we could donate, we would be most willing to give—or medical support or paramedics. We know many hospitals are short of specific technicians and professionals. In other words, we want to express our disposition and readiness to be helpful in relation to these tragic events.

(...) The hijacking of planes—a method used against Cuba—became a universal plague, and it was Cuba that solved this problem when, after repeated warnings, we sent two hijackers back to the United States. It is painful because they were Cubans but we had issued public warnings, so they came and we returned them. We complied with our public pledge,

yet they never again provided us with any information about them to give to their relatives. They have their own ways of doing things. No one knows. I know they were sentenced to 40 years imprisonment, and that put an end to those hijackings".

(...) None of the problems affecting today's world can be solved with the use of force; there is no global, technological or military power that can guarantee immunity against such acts, because they can be organised by small groups [which are] difficult to detect.

(...) It is very important to know what the reaction of the U.S. Government might be. Possibly the world will be living dangerous days, and I am not talking about Cuba. Cuba is the most peaceful country in the world, for several reasons: our policies, our forms of struggle, our doctrine, our ethics, and also, comrades, and due to an absolute absence of fear. Nothing troubles us. Nothing intimidates us. It would be very difficult to concoct a slanderous accusation against Cuba; not even its inventor and the patent holder would believe it. It would be very difficult. And Cuba means something in the world today. It has a very high moral position, and a very sound political position in the world.

The days to come will be tense inside the United States. A number of people will start putting forward opinions.

(...) We would advise the leaders of that powerful empire to remain calm, to act with a cool head, to avoid getting carried away by a fit of rage or hatred, and not to start trying to hunt people down by throwing bombs just anywhere.

I reiterate that none of the world's problems, not even terrorism, can be solved with the use of force, and every act of force, every imprudent action that entails the use of force anywhere, is going to seriously aggravate the world problems. The way is neither the use of force nor the war. I say this with the full authority of someone who has always talked honestly, of someone with sound convictions and the experience of surviving the years of struggle that Cuba has lived through. Only reason, and the intelligent policy of seeking strength through consensus and international public opinion, can definitely eradicate this problem. I think this unexpected episode should be used to undertake an international effort against terrorism. However, this international struggle against terrorism cannot be won by eliminating a terrorist here and another one there, by killing people here and there, using similar methods to theirs and sacrificing innocent lives. It can only be won, among other ways, by putting an end

to State terrorism and other repulsive forms of killing, by putting an end to genocide, and by seriously pursuing a policy of peace and respect for moral and legal standards. The world cannot be saved unless a path of international peace and cooperation is pursued. (...) We have proven that we can survive, live and make progress, and everything seen here today is an expression of unprecedented progress in all of human history. Progress is not achieved only through the manufacturing of automobiles;

developing people's minds, providing knowledge, promoting culture, and looking after human beings the way they should be looked after makes progress. That is the secret of the tremendous strength of our Revolution. The world cannot be saved in any other way, and by that I mean the situations of violence. Let us seek peace everywhere and protect all the people from that plague of terrorism. There is another horrible plague today, which is called AIDS, for

instance. There is another plague, which kills tens of millions of children, teenagers and adults in the world, that is, hunger, disease and a lack of health care and medicines.

In the political arena, there are absolutist ideas, and attempts to impose a single way of thinking on the world; this fosters rebellious attitudes and irritation everywhere.

This world cannot be saved –and this does not have anything to do with terrorism-- if this unfair economic and social order continues to be developed and applied; an

order that is leading the world to disaster, along a path from which there is no escape for the 6.2 billion people living today and the future inhabitants of this planet, suffering ever greater destruction and plunged further into poverty, unemployment, hunger and despair. This has been proven by the masses in places that have already gone down in history, like Seattle, Quebec, Washington and Genoa.

The world's most powerful economic and political leaders now find it almost impossible to meet; everywhere we can see that people are less and less afraid, and are rising up. I was recently in Durban, a province in South Africa, and there I saw thousands and thousands of people members of non-governmental organizations; discontent is spreading like wildfire around the globe (...). How enormously different is the conduct of the Cuban government from that of the government of the United States! The Revolution, based on truth, and the empire, based on lies!

Fidel Castro Ruz
September 11, 2007
5:25 p.m

Documentary night:

Posada Carriles. Terrorismo made in USA

From the Venezuelan director Angel Posada, from TeleSur

Free the Cuban Five!

tea, coffee and biscuits available. **BAFFLE**

Friday October 19 7:30pm Trades Hall

(corner Victoria & Lygon St., Carlton)

Luis Posada Carriles is one of the terrorists responsible for blowing up an airplane from Cubana, killing all the 73 passengers. He has also tortured and killed dozens of people in Venezuela as a CIA agent.

While he is free, the US Government imprisoned 5 Cubans that were fighting terrorism. This September is the 9th anniversary of their imprisonment.

LATIN AMERICAN UPDATE
Sunday 10.30 - 11am
News, current happenings and music from Latin America. Presented by the Latin American Information Centre.

For further information:
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Organised by
Australia-Cuba Friendship Society (ACFS-Melbourne)
and the Bolivarian Circle
in support of the ongoing campaign to free the Cuban 5



