

# ¡Baraguá!

publication of the National Network on Cuba



Feb/March 1993

## Thousands of ways to win!

A conversation with Alfonso Fraga, Chief of the Cuban Interests Section

by Brian Adams and Nancy Schwalb

**A**lfonso Fraga has a message for the people of the United States. Recently appointed Cuba's top representative to the U.S., Fraga is eager to tell the U.S. people about the reality of his country, a reality that is vastly different from what is reported here in the mainstream press.

Born in Havana in 1939, Fraga is very much a product of the Cuban experience. As a student at the Institute of Havana in the late 1950s, he worked with the student Revolutionary Directorate and other organizations in the underground struggle against the Batista dictatorship. After the 1959 Triumph of the Revolution, Fraga worked in the reorganization of Cuba's banking system and later at the Foreign Ministry. During these years, he also picked up a machete to cut sugarcane in voluntary mobilizations and served in the 1960s as president of his neighborhood Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) in Havana's Plaza Municipality, in addition to holding other regional CDR posts.

After joining Cuba's foreign service, he was first stationed in Yugoslavia in the '60s and was later posted to China from 1971-4. He served in Poland from 1974-8 and then returned to Havana to become chief of the European Department of the Communist Party. Fraga was Cuba's ambassador to Zimbabwe from 1984-90. In 1990 he became Director General for Europe of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And on Sept. 30, 1992, Ambassador Fraga became Chief of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, DC, Cuba's highest ranking diplomatic representative to the U.S.

*¡Baraguá!* spoke with Ambassador Fraga on January 13, 1993 at the Cuban Interests Section. The interview was conducted in English.

*¡Baraguá!*:

Given the recent passage of the Torricelli Act with Clinton's support, what do you expect from the new U.S. administration?

**AF:** Well, we don't expect anything. Of course, I think it's time for the new administration to review the policy that has been a failure for these last thirty years. It would be important for them, even in terms of the U.S.'s own national interests, not to make the mistake of following old policies of hostility. This would be important for the future of the relationship between the United States and the Cuban Revolution.

While we know the difficulties that the new administration would face in reassessing their relations with Cuba, they also have chances that other administrations haven't had. This is a new world with new conditions. And without being too optimistic, we feel that it is time that the U.S. government



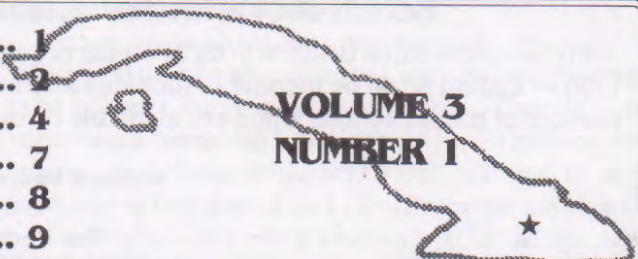
Photo courtesy Brian Adams

Alfonso Fraga

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VOLUME 3  
NUMBER 1





# Cubans ratify Revolution in enormous election turnout

by Brian Adams and Nancy Schwalb

In the first round of elections, seen by many as a virtual referendum on the Revolution, 93% of Cuba's 7,627,000 eligible voters went to the polls to elect candidates for Municipal Assemblies of People's Power on December 20. All together, 7,546,194 Cubans voted (97.2% of the registered voters), while some 216,000 people did not vote. The latter number includes those who were hospitalized, those mobilized for agricultural work, and those who voluntarily abstained. Voting is not mandatory in Cuba and everyone over 16 years of age is eligible to vote.

A total of 13,432 municipal delegates received a majority vote by secret ballot and were elected from among more than 28,500 candidates running on Dec. 20. Another 433 delegates were chosen in run-offs on Dec. 27 between the two top vote-getters in districts where no candidate received a majority during the previous week's balloting. The newly-elected municipal delegates were sworn into office on Jan. 10.

As he left his polling place in Havana, Cuban President Fidel Castro told reporters that the vote was "a very great expression of the courage of the Revolution. These are the worst conditions for an election," he said, referring to the acute economic difficulties the country is facing. Nevertheless, the enormous turnout was a demonstration of the people's confidence in the Revolution and in the island's ability to overcome the "special period," Fidel concluded.

The candidates for Municipal Assemblies were nominated in neighborhood meetings in November and early December in which citizens proposed candidates. A minimum of two and a maximum of seven persons vied for office in each district. The Communist Party neither nominated nor endorsed candidates. Biographies and photos of the candi-

dates in each district were posted in prominent places but campaigning and expenditures of money on campaign publicity are strictly prohibited in Cuba.

Cuba's electoral process now proceeds to the provincial and national levels. Nominating commissions made up of representatives from the mass organizations, including the Cuban Workers Federation (CTC), the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs), the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP), the Federation of University Students (FEU), and the Federation of Secondary Students (FEEM), are presently proposing candidates for the Provincial and National Assemblies. Their proposals must be ratified by the Municipal Assemblies. Up to 50% of the candidates at the provincial and national levels will

come from the ranks of the elected municipal delegates, in accordance with Cuba's new electoral law approved by the National Assembly last fall.

Under the new law, candidates for National

Assembly Deputy and Provincial Delegate will face off in direct elections scheduled for February 24. Previously, national and provincial lawmakers were elected by the Municipal Assemblies. Once again, candidates will be required to obtain an absolute majority of the vote in order to be elected and campaign spending and advertising will be prohibited.

Asked if he thought Cuba was in the vanguard of democracy, Fidel said, "I'm absolutely convinced of that. Whether that is recognized or not is another thing, because there is virtually nothing democratic about the famous elections of the capitalist world you read about. There, it's money and publicity which prevails." Members of Cuba's governing Council of State, including President Castro, are elected by the National Assembly.

34<sup>4</sup> más  
pa'lante

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## Nico: Nomination of a delegate

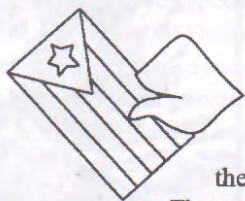
by Santiago Cardosa Arias

*Granma International*, December 6, 1992

First it was the rain, torrential and somewhat cold. Then when we sheltered in "old Rafael's" carpenter's shop, with its pleasant, pungent smell of sawdust, plywood, pine and caoba shavings and neighbors' furniture waiting to be mended, there was darkness for a few moments, an electrical short. Deft hands hurried to correct the fault, light was restored and a small tape recorder sparked to life, with the national anthem ready to play for the neighborhood at the high point of the evening.

The few minutes wait gave time for an initial reflection. Neither the rain, the blackout, nor the heat in the small room kept people away. No one was going to lose enthusiasm for the greatest event in the history of community area meetings.

Just like the other 13,855 electoral districts around the country in 169 municipalities, we were going to nominate our candidate for delegate to the Municipal Assembly of People's Power by open vote and, whoever was nominated would go on to a list of candidates to be elected by direct and secret ballot in a new election. On obtaining more than 50 percent of the vote, our candidate would be elected at that level.



But there was more. According to the new Electoral Law, our candidate could become one of the 1190 provincial delegates in a second stage of the process using the same system of universal voting.

The candidate could even become one of the 589 deputies that would make up the National Assembly, the number of seats corresponding to the 10,821,684 inhabitants in the country at the end of June, 1992.

That is why there was an air of expectation in the neighborhood that night. "Nico," our present delegate, was there as always, but this time with a certain impatience, staring at the fleeting storm cloud, along with the officials of the grassroots organizations: Paneque, Arrinda, Toly, and the ceaselessly industrious Ada. The second secretary of the Party in the 10 de Octubre municipality was also there, alongside Mario the municipal coordinator of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs) and a number of Pioneers [a children's organization] who shouted and laughed as though it were a great game every time the lights flickered and went out before coming on for good.

The rain stopped, and almost in a mad rush the long wooden benches lent by Caridad ("Puchita") Rojas from CDR No. 10 were returned to their places outside the carpenter's shop. At that time in the evening there was no noise from the nearby Cuban Steelworks (formerly American Steel), and Claudio, the section head of the National Revolutionary Police (PNR), was controlling the flow of cars, motorcycles and bikes.

It started just a few minutes after nine. Other residents arrived and there was hardly enough room for us all. The Cuban national anthem rang out, vibrant, and full of contagious patriotism. The microphone also began to act up. "Nico" wasn't worried. His voice sounded strong, so much so that it seemed he didn't need the mike, but it was also fixed in moments. His account of what he had done as a delegate in the previous term of office was brief. He didn't harp on his achievements. Rather, he talked about all there was left to be done. Of course, he had to mention how a huge water leak in one street was fixed and the other urgent things that had to be done. He gave special mention to an award received by Mónaco fruit and vegetable market for its efficient distribution of goods as part of the Food Program.

Then the much-awaited moment arrived. "Time to make suggestions for candidates" said the president of the Electoral Commission. The first person to raise her hand was a woman. "Coco" Malmierca, as she is known affectionately to everyone, respected because she is a lieutenant colonel in the Ministry of the Interior (to me she will always be my travel companion in the delegation to the Helsinki World Youth Festival in 1962), detailed in her proposal the merits, virtues and experience of one of her neighbors, Portela, whose modesty caused him to look at the floor when he heard the things she was saying about him.

Another proposal was made. Once again it was from a well-respected neighborhood resident, a retired worker who had always devoted himself to all revolutionary activities. "I don't have," he said in simple language, "the same facility with words as the previous comrade. I can't say pretty things, but I don't think they are needed. All of us here know our delegate "Nico", and know what he has done. In my opinion he has all the qualities necessary to go on being a delegate..." And he didn't say anything else, just listened to the applause.

The president asked once, twice, three times if there were other proposals. But there weren't. Then the voting took place. First for Portela, according to the order in which they were proposed. The secretary added up the votes. Next, for "Nico." The current delegate, Antonio (Nico) Pérez, received the most votes. The margin between the two was minimal, but there was a majority.

Democracy had been fully implemented. Among other things, I left thinking about integrity, and how I couldn't even exert influence in my own family of four. Three of them voted for a different candidate than I did. The meeting was an example of Cuban democracy. If Bush, although he can't now come as President of the United States, has any doubts, he would have seen it with his own eyes, if he had been here on a health tourism package.



# NNC to Clinton & Congress: Normalize relations now!

by Henry Reeve

**W**hat follows below is information on the recent initiation of the National Network on Cuba's (NNC) National Campaign to Normalize U.S.-Cuba Relations, a commentary on the recent heat and fire resulting from the nomination-then-no-nomination of Mario Baeza to the post of Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, and a conclusion of sorts. For more information on the Campaign call (202) 986-1561 or write the Legislative Working Group — NNC; Box 21744; Kalorama Station; Washington, DC 20009.

On the weekend of Dec. 12-13 the National Network on Cuba (NNC) held an emergency meeting in New York City to discuss recent important events affecting U.S.-Cuba relations. These included the victory of Bill Clinton over George Bush, the U.N. General Assembly vote condemning the U.S. blockade of the island and the successful breaking of the blockade by the U.S.-Cuba Friendshipment. In addition the NNC meeting approved a proposal for a national campaign to step up its work to normalize U.S.-Cuba relations.

This National Campaign will be broad-based and will be informed by both local and national activities aimed at raising the pressure on the U.S. Congress and the new administration to move away from the morally bankrupt, illegal and impractical U.S. blockade that has passed as "Cuba policy" for over 30 years.

The campaign will include the following components:

- ◆ an educational program for members of Congress on U.S.-Cuba relations.
- ◆ delegations and visits — locally and in Washington, DC — to key members of Congress.
- ◆ engagement of the Executive Branch on the need to change U.S. policy toward Cuba.
- ◆ heightened networking with national organizations in order to bring to bear greater pressure on the U.S. government to change U.S.-Cuba relations. Encouragement of these organizations to mount their own independent campaigns.
- ◆ expansion and heightened financial support to the Legislative Working Group of NNC.
- ◆ the launching of draft legislative proposals that would nullify the U.S. blockade, the recent so-called "Cuban Democracy Act of 1992" (CDA), and all other "legal" justifications of the illegal U.S. blockade of Cuba.
- ◆ the development of local activities aimed at educating the public on the need to change U.S.-Cuba relations, thus

showing the congressional representative in each locale that this is an issue they must speak to positively.

- ◆ the preparation of a data bank on members of Congress that profiles their views on U.S.-Cuba relations and other related matters. This profile would be available to members of NNC and to organizations and individuals in touch with particular members of Congress or congressional committees.

- ◆ the exploration of the possibility of mounting legal challenges to current U.S. "policies" toward Cuba.

- ◆ the calling for a national meeting of organizations and concerned individuals to discuss their work on U.S.-Cuba relations, share experiences, and to set up mechanisms to better coordinate their efforts to improve U.S.-Cuba relations.

- ◆ the development of letter and telegram campaigns to the Executive and to our congressional representatives.

- ◆ attending public meetings where members of Congress are speaking and raising the necessity of improving U.S.-Cuba relations.

- ◆ the creation of a major briefing document on U.S.-Cuba relations aimed at members of Congress, personnel in the new administration, leaders of major sector organizations and those actively participating in Cuba solidarity and non-intervention work. This document will include information on the following:

- a. Historical background on the imposition of the U.S. blockade, the vested minority interests behind that illegal act, etc.

- b. Refutation of positions given for not normalizing relations with Cuba.

- c. Losses and costs to the U.S. people of this 30-something years of hostility and aggression toward our neighbor.

- d. Losses and costs to the people of Cuba as a result of the blockade.

- e. Proposals for moving forward, i.e. dismantling the blockade and "good faith" gestures on the part of the people of the U.S. and their government toward the people and government of Cuba.

- ◆ close coordination with members of the Congressional Black Caucus and other progressive members of Congress who have shown a willingness to "fight the good fight" for improved U.S.-Cuba relations in the past.





This more or less summarizes the ideas and activities proposed for the Campaign. Of course, some of the above has already been implemented by various members of NNC, and of course much of the above has not as of yet. The coming period will see (and has already seen) an increase in concern about U.S.-Cuba relations coming from many corners. The NNC campaign, in concert with other initiatives will definitely raise the profile of the issue of U.S.-Cuba relations. We hope it will also increase the pressure on our lawmakers and on the new administration.

Lastly, what is outlined above is the result of initial discussions. It is by no means set in stone. Please feel free to add on or delete. Most importantly, we need your input and participation at the local level. Keep us informed as to what is happening in your areas.

### The Baeza Affair

In the days following the inauguration of the new Clinton Administration it became clear that new, more moderate voices other than the reactionary Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF) had President Clinton's ear. Surprising the DC pundits who were mentioning all kinds of people for the post of Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (the position currently held by Bernard Aronson), the new administration moved to place Mario Baeza at the top of its list. Baeza, a black Cuban-American corporate lawyer specializing in privatization and working out of the firm of DeBevoise & Plimpton in New York was thought to be a wise choice for a number of expedient political reasons. But his selection also heralded the larger Clinton agenda for Latin America, i.e., "economic development and the expansion of democratic institutions" — U.S. style.

But as Richard Cohen, in a column for the *Washington Post* on Feb. 4, noted, "Baeza is not a product of the Miami Cuban-American community but is a Jersey boy (born to Cuban emigres)...his views on Castro, while conventionally hostile, fall short of the required lunacy demanded by some in the Cuban-American community. Moreover, Baeza is black — a distinct minority in the Cuban-American community, less so in Cuba itself."

Indeed, the right-wing CANF, supported by Rep. Robert Torricelli (author of the so-called "Cuban Democracy Act"), moved to oppose Baeza's possible appointment, sparking opposition from the Congressional Black Caucus and others. Rep. Charles Rangel, in a column in the *Miami Herald* stated that, "...an extraordinarily gifted nominee

[Baeza] is being opposed by right-wing Cuban-American activists because he is not one of them and because he is black. These ideologues have a stranglehold on U.S. policy toward Cuba. Now they want to dictate U.S. policy toward the region. They are bullying the Clinton Administration to appoint one of their own. They identify their own exclusively in terms of the exiled Cuban elite and its obsession with taking power in Cuba."

The fight over Baeza was not limited to members of Congress. Numerous individuals and groups let the administration know how they felt. Most important in this were moderate Cuban-American organizations and the efforts led by members of NNC and the U.S.-Cuba Friendshipment who put out alerts and urged that faxes and letters be sent protesting Baeza's treatment. It was so intense that at one point it was thought that the tide was turning again in his favor. Writing in the Jan. 28 edition of the *Miami Herald*, Christopher Marquis noted that senior Clinton officials were receiving "...scores of faxes, letters, and phone calls from Baeza supporters, far more than from critics."

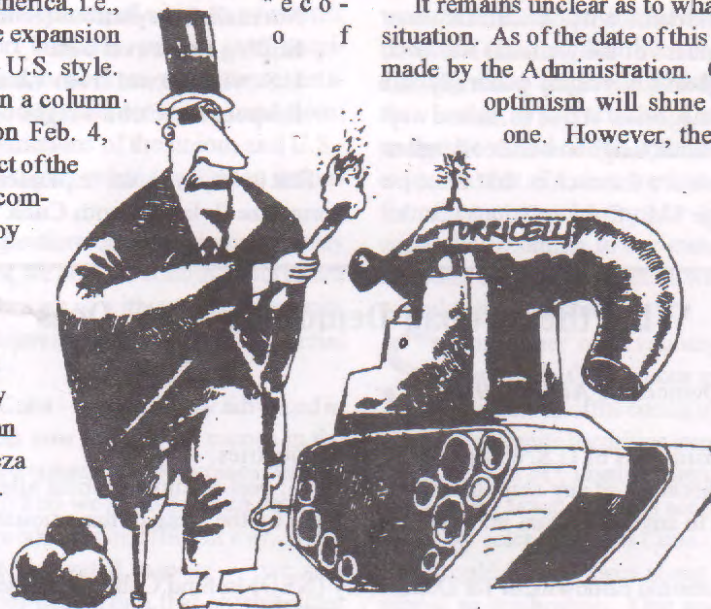
Wayne Smith, former Chief of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, speaking at an event sponsored by the DC "Hands Off Cuba!" Coalition and NNC on Jan. 28, noted that the fallout from the Baeza affair would seriously damage CANF. "Whether it turns out to be Mr. Baeza or not," stated Smith, "it will not be someone indicated by the Foundation...The Cuban-American community in the U.S. has at long last stood up to the Foundation. An issue has galvanized the sensible moderate people — and they are the majority within the Cuban-American community...It is already a defeat for the Foundation."

It remains unclear as to what will happen with the Baeza situation. As of the date of this writing, no decision has been made by the Administration. One would hope that Smith's optimism will shine through and prevail on this one. However, there are others who are not so

sure. "...Clinton," states Cohen, "is thought to have caved in to his implacable foes in Miami's Cuban-American community, Reagan-Bush supporters almost to a man. Worse, he's thought to have lent an ear to people whose anti-democratic bent is as notorious as their alleged methods. One knowledgeable senator put it to me this way: 'Granting Mas Canosa a veto power of the entire hemisphere

is a very dangerous move.' He understated matters. It's repugnant."

The Baeza affair demonstrates that it is possible to create the necessary political space needed by the Administration in order to defy CANF and other reactionaries. We will be





confronted in the future with similar challenges. It is extremely important that we continue to develop this type of work. Bill Clinton — whether he knows it or not right now — will have to make big decisions about U.S.-Cuba relations, sooner or later. We need to be there so he will do the right thing. What is at stake is nothing less than the ultimate and complete reversal of U.S. "policy" toward Cuba.

#### **By Way of Conclusion**

**A**s stated in the last issue of *¡Baraguá!*, we need to engage the Executive in ways that were not possible during the Bush Administration. This is true regardless of what Bill Clinton did during the campaign. Bill Clinton, many promises and pledges later, is now President of us all. He is and must continue to assess everything he said in a new light. His pledge of support for the CDA and his taking of at least \$275,000 from the Free Cuba Political Action Committee (FCPAC) and members of CANF did not get him Florida in the last analysis. It is clear from the Baeza affair that the new administration is also in touch with other sectors who have a different and somewhat more progressive view on U.S.-Cuba relations. In fact, if one stops to think about it, almost everyone has a more progressive view on U.S.-Cuba relations than our CANF Neanderthals. Our job now is to guarantee that the Clinton Administration and Congress hear those other views — **Loud and Clear**.

It is not accidental that the very sources for most of these alternative, democratic, majority views are the very sectors that voted Clinton in. They include women, youth, labor, business, oppressed nationalities, lesbians and gay men, and in general people fed up with the dominant political discourse of the last twelve years. Members of the National Network on Cuba and all friends of Cuban sovereignty generally fall into at least one of the above categories. All of us, in one way or another, can influence our friends, neighbors and colleagues on this important issue. These are the sectors that must be mobilized if we are to change U.S.-Cuba relations for the

better. No amount of posturing or phrasemongering will substitute for our solid work in this developing social mobilization to turn around the dangerous, bipartisan "policy" of hostility toward our island neighbor.

#### **Getting to Know You**

This necessary work to force the U.S. power elite to change its policy toward Cuba will of necessity be broad-based and multi-dimensional in terms of composition (social, racial, and political) and in terms of motive. From the businessman who doesn't give a whit about Cuban socialism, but is interested in trade, to the committed solidarity activist who goes to Cuba every year, to the community person who doesn't know anything about Cuba but would love to go there on his/her vacation, to those who don't like this or that policy of the Revolution but support Cuba's right to self-determination — all of these social types (plus many more) must begin to raise hell about U.S.-Cuba relations in a coordinated way (where possible). NNC must be able to respond positively to this developing, diverse social phenomenon. Our solidarity with and our love for the Cuban people and their revolutionary process is best expressed when positioned inside this growing movement — giving it coherence, helping it get organized and finally, winning with it. In this way we make ourselves politically relevant instead of merely "right" about Cuba. An organized people's movement such as this is a winner and Congress and the Executive will have to listen and respond positively when we call for:

**Ending the criminal blockade.**

**Normalizing relations (economically, diplomatically)**

**Ending the travel ban.**

**U.S. withdrawal from Guantánamo Bay.**

**Respect for Cuba's right to self-determination.**

That is why we must implement the National Campaign to Normalize Relations with Cuba.

### **What the "Cuban Democracy Act" Does**

The so-called "Cuban Democracy Act of 1992":

- ◆ Bans trade by subsidiaries of U.S. companies in third countries.
- ◆ Calls for the confiscation of any ship that docks in a U.S. port within 6 months after docking in Cuba.
- ◆ Reduces U.S. aid to any nation that imports Cuban sugar by the same dollar amount as the value of the sugar imported.
- ◆ Authorizes the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to fund Cuban "dissident" groups.
- ◆ Directs the President to pressure countries that trade with Cuba (Great Britain, France, Canada, Mexico, Japan) to halt their trade with the island.
- ◆ Provides for the imposition of civil penalties of up to \$50,000 "on any person who violates any license, order, rule or regulation" issued under it.

Currently, regulations are being drawn up to enforce the legislation. It remains unclear what the new Clinton Administration will do both in terms of actual enforcement and, more importantly, how it will interpret these regulations.



# Labor Delegation Visits Cuba

by Bill Smith

A group of U.S. trade unionists, including the author, visited Cuba in November. The visit was arranged by the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange, an organization of U.S. trade unionists that seeks to increase contacts between unionists in the two countries to promote mutual understanding. The agenda of the U.S. unionists included seeking answers to such questions as: 1. What are working conditions like in Cuba? 2. What role does the labor movement play in the life of the country? 3. What is the truth about democracy in Cuba.

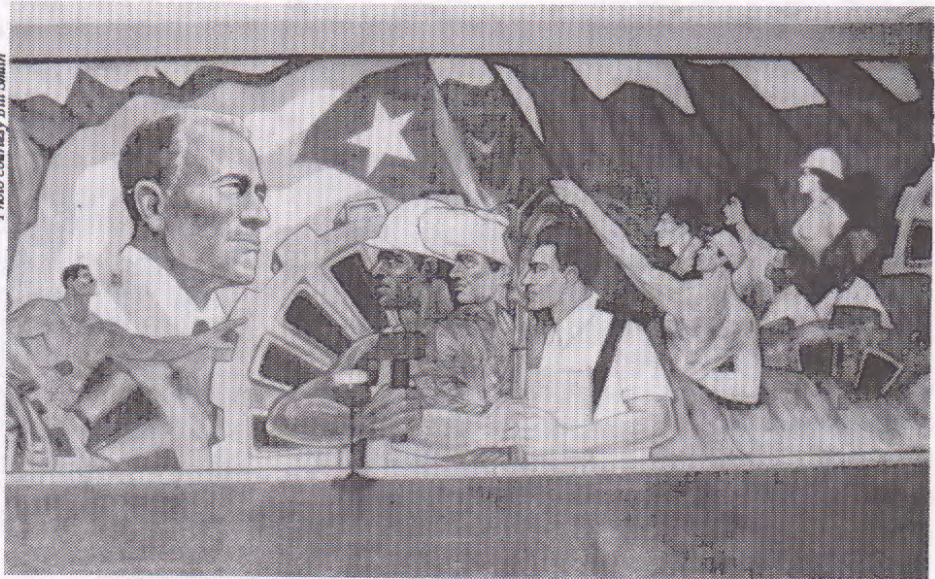
Our host, the Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC), did everything possible to help us accomplish our goals. On our arrival in Havana we were immediately told: "You are free to go anywhere you wish. You can talk to anyone you want to. The streets are safe at any hour. You do not have to worry about crime in Cuba." We quickly learned that these statements were correct. Delegation members were sighted at all hours throughout metropolitan Havana.

In addition to having substantial free time to meet Cuban citizens and workers, the CTC arranged visits to worksites, including factories, transport facilities, schools, and hospitals. On these visits we talked to workers, union representatives, and managers about working and economic conditions; the organization, role, and functions of the union; and U.S.-Cuba relations. Classes on topics related to Cuban unions were also provided.

Answers to many of our questions emerged during our stay in Cuba. Perhaps as important, we became curious about issues that we would not have been aware of without the opportunity to visit Cuba. Some brief observations on some of our initial questions as listed above are:

1. Working conditions in Cuba — Cuba is very advanced in some of the "trendy" concepts now making the rounds in the United States. Worker empowerment and workplace democracy are realities in Cuba. Workers we spoke to had a personal interest in producing quality products in an efficient way. Work progressed in a relaxed but motivated manner — we saw nothing of the manic push for production that characterizes many U.S. shops.

2. Union's role in the life of the country — The union is an important institution in Cuba. Over 95% of the workers are voluntary dues-paying members. The unions provide the workers with representation in disputes with management as in the U.S., but also have a larger role than is the case in the U.S. The unions are consulted about any government actions that



MURAL AT the Lázaro Peña Labor Union Training School.

affect workers, including decisions about appropriate salary levels. Workers have access to benefits such as vacation houses through their unions. Each workplace we visited had a staffed union office to provide services for members.

3. Democracy in Cuba — The Cuban political system is very different from ours. On balance, members of our group felt that workers in Cuba had at least as much effective influence over decisions affecting their lives as U.S. workers. The system for electing union leaders is strictly democratic. Workers elect their leaders by secret ballot. One day our interpreter informed us that he would not be with us the following afternoon. He explained that all Cuban workers would get a half day off to vote for officers of *poder popular* (people's power), a local governing body similar to our municipalities. We observed the balloting the next day and it was spirited and appeared to be completely democratic.

Some other observations widely shared by first-time visitors to Cuba in our group: the high level of industrialization of the economy; the determination of workers to carry on despite hardships imposed by the U.S. blockade; the independence of Cuban women; and the absence of poverty.

The next labor seminars are scheduled to coincide with the May Day celebrations in Cuba. Anyone with trade union ties who would like to learn about Cuba first-hand is invited to submit an application. One and two week seminars will be offered. The cost to participants will be around \$1000 depending on options selected and departure city. For more information, please contact the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange; PO Box 39188; Redford, MI 48239.

*Bill Smith is a member of Local 12 of the American Federation of Government Employees at the U.S. Department of Labor.*



# Youth: Changing style

by Arleen Rodriguez  
*Prisma*, Sep/Oct 1992

Like certain characters in works of García Márquez, Roberto Robaina, the leader of Cuba's Union of Young Communists, UJC, appears blessed with the ability to be everywhere at once. He is spotted on the same day riding a bicycle along Havana's seaside drive, the *Malecón*, hoisting sacks in the port and giving a press conference on T.V. And it's probably true that he was in all those places. Even so the next day's paper will have him 500 or more kilometers from the capital seeing off a group of students who are going to spend their summer vacations in agricultural work.

Like Robaina, another 25 young men and women, most of them professionals in one field or another, — all, since April, leaders of the UJC — have abandoned their offices except for brief moments of "free time" or absolutely unavoidable meetings. The rest of their day is spent among their contemporaries, sharing work and exchanging ideas.

Meanwhile, it's pretty certain that the following Sunday, the weekly youth newspaper, *Juventud Rebelde*, will deal

Five years later, another congress took place in altered circumstances. The "Special Period" had imposed belt-tightening on the nation, but Cubans of all ages mobilized to guarantee the UJC event. From fund raising, to volunteering their homes to house the 1500 delegates, to donating food, the capital and the nation contributed to the holding of the event. Delegates depended solely on bicycles to get around Havana and to the meeting sites where they debated issues of burning interest to Cubans of all ages.

## Join Up. Join What?

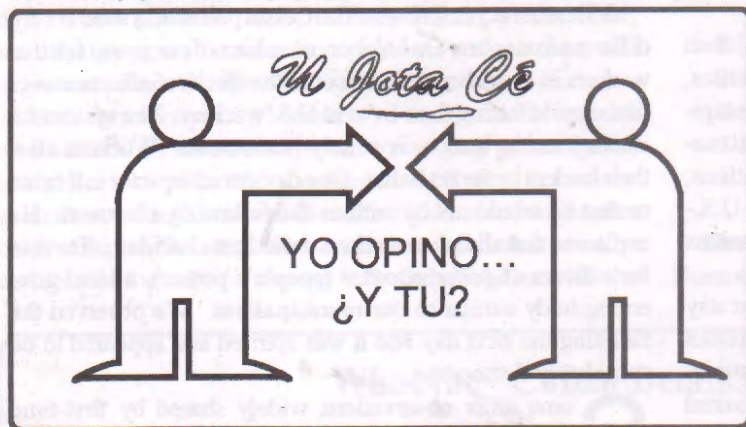
It's hard to remember exactly when the slogan *Súmate*, or "Join Up," first appeared and was identified with the UJC. It seems to have emerged with the launching of the call to the UJC's sixth congress and was particularly associated with the principles of that meeting. "Joining up" was equivalent to supporting the declaration of those principles read one night in 1991 in Revolution Square.

There are no lack of critics however. And there are those who have taken the slogan out of context. For them, it's nothing more than a propaganda ploy, not at all representative of the real feelings of Cuba's young people.

Neither Robaina nor any of the other UJC leaders have been in any hurry to respond to the critics of *Súmate*. They seem to feel it's enough to have sent out clear signals so that every young person can freely choose their own direction. For the rest, it will depend on actions to demonstrate the validity of the phrase.

Prior to the last congress the media published the ideas of the youth leaders on issues to be discussed. Readers were invited to send in their opinions by mail. The congress debate that finally took place dealt not only with the country's economic priorities (the food production program, tourism and science) but also with issues of import to special interest groups within the under-30 sector of the population (long-haired rock fans, religious believers, artists, women). All the debates were led by a youth leader with a good grasp of the topic under discussion and an ability to lead the discussion so as to get maximum participation and input from delegates.

Personal experiences were offered to enrich the exchange. Delegates described their close cooperation with religious youth in revolutionary tasks. A rock music enthusiast told listeners about what he described as a memorable stint in one



polemically with the reality of AIDS in Cuba, or the problems of teaching history, or the debate around the compatibility of materialism and religion.

The communist youth organization, questioned constantly by its more than half-a-million members, celebrated its 30th anniversary amidst a process of change that is transforming its structures, approach and work style. They are changes which have been in the works over the past 10 years but which took a decisive turn in the UJC's last two congresses.

The fifth congress held in 1987 coincided with the country's process of rectification of errors and negative trends. That event revealed to observers a youth with high standards and a commitment to self-critically examine the problems of the country.



of the new agricultural camps set up as part of the nation's priority food production program. Young women aired their views on pregnancy. All was reflected in the media and it could be seen that while there was a wide range of opinions and criteria, disagreements did not imply a lack of respect for the diverging views.

### Change for Change's Sake

Simplified statutes, flexible rules, and a leadership structure blown to pieces... People with long years of experience in leadership have nothing but praise for the changes. Comments such as the following are common: "The youth organization has made a tremendous contribution to political practice by eliminating the traditional National Committee with its hundreds of members — representative and attractive as they might be — but which was pure fiction; non-functioning formalism for an organization like the UJC."

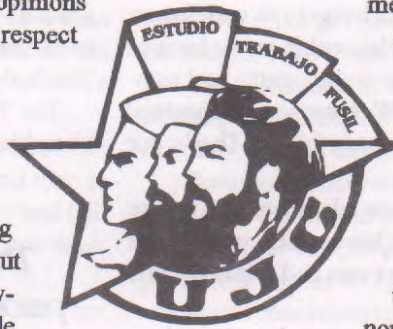
"Only with real autonomy, earned by an authentic leadership, can such bold changes meet success," according to others

who have verified the viability of these changes in practice — changes which other organizations have not dared to propose.

When you talk to any of the 26 present members of the UJC's national leadership they take a more direct approach: "We are increasingly obliged to rise to our times."

And what "our times" demand is that young people be prepared technically and culturally, as well as deeply critical of the world around them — a society subjected to the rigors of an exceptional economic situation and the need to survive without renouncing development.

Last summer, the 26 UJC leaders went every morning to factories, ports, construction sites, and fields to work shoulder to shoulder under the sun with other young men and women. They are putting into daily practice the words of José Martí which became a slogan of the last youth congress: "I come from everywhere and to everywhere I'll go."



## Pastors for Peace returns to Havana

An 19-person delegation, with participants from 8 states, organized by Pastors for Peace arrived in Cuba on Jan. 30 with \$20,000 in medical aid which was donated to Havana's Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Center. The delegation followed the enormously successful U.S.-Cuba Friendshipment sent by Pastors for Peace last November.

"I think we have the possibility within the next two years of seeing a turn in the policies and in the relationships between the two countries," commented Rev. Lucius Walker, who led the delegation. "I am very much committed to continuing to work diligently toward that end. And that's why we have mounted an aggressive program for this year with seven delegations and one caravan to demonstrate for more people in the U.S. and for the new administration the way in which we think our government ought to be relating to Cuba. There will be one caravan in 1993, which will leave the U.S. on July 16. We anticipate bringing as many as 100 tons of material aid." Pastors for Peace organizer Tom Hansen said that this second caravan is due to arrive in Havana on July 31st. The first

friendshipment collected 15 tons of donations in 90 U.S. cities. On February 2, Cuban President Fidel Castro met with Rev. Walker and the delegation. Before returning to the U.S., Hansen told *Prensa Latina* new agency that two Pastors for Peace delegations will travel to Havana in April, another in May, and two others in June and August. (*Radio Havana Cuba*)



MEMBERS OF the DC "Hands Off Cuba!" Coalition and supporters demonstrated in front of the Treasury Building in Washington, DC on Nov. 21 in support of the Pastors for Peace U.S.-Cuba Friendshipment.



(Fraga, cont. from p. 1)

at least review its policy toward Cuba. As we have said on many occasions, we are prepared as always to sit and discuss the differences in the Cuban-U.S. relationship on the basis of respect for our independence, our sovereignty, and non-interference in our internal affairs. We have no preconceived agenda. We will sit and discuss everything. That's our position.

Perhaps it's not so easy for this new administration to take steps toward normalization. But we have patience. We have been patient during these last thirty years and if it is not this administration, others will come.

¡Baraguá!: You've survived eight administrations since Eisenhower...

AF: Yes. As I told you, we don't expect anything, but after thirty years of a failed policy, I think the U.S. has to review its policy according more to your own interests, your national interests, and not to the interests of a minority in this country who have been pushing aggressions and hostility against our country.

¡Baraguá!: There seems to be some change in the Cuban-American community. More and more are speaking out against the blockade and saying that Jorge Mas Canosa doesn't speak for them.

AF: A large part of the Cuban community is for the family, for communication, and that's important. We feel that a normalization of U.S.-Cuban relations would be good for this large part of the community. There could be travel, easier communications...

¡Baraguá!: What is the present status of telephone communications between the U.S. and Cuba?

AF: Well, we haven't any direct communication for the time being. Our position concerning this is quite clear. There is more than \$80 million in a so-called frozen account that is owed Cuba for previous telephone service. We feel that they have to release that amount and we have to negotiate a fair agreement for communication between our two countries to resume.

¡Baraguá!: The Torricelli Act claims it wants to establish better communications though it actually does the opposite.

AF: Well, we have to look at what this Torricelli Act really wants. What they want first of all is to destroy our government, to destroy our Revolution. They look at the issue of communications as a way to destroy our government, as a way to create subversion inside our country. That's the reality.

The Torricelli Act has become one of the biggest stumbling blocks to any possibility of normalization of relations

*The Cuban Revolution, the Cuban people, will survive, even if we have to face more difficult moments. We will survive because our people are working and making sacrifices to push our process ahead.*

between Cuba and the United States. This bill is criminal. If we are going to talk about human rights violations, we have to say that this law, this economic blockade against Cuba, is the first, the most flagrant violation of the human rights of the Cuban people. This law which tries to destroy our thirty years of achievements has become a tightening rope around the necks of our people, tightening the blockade and making life more difficult. If somebody is well known in Cuba, it's Mr. Torricelli. He's on the lips of every Cuban because of what he's doing to our country. Those who are concerned about human rights should ask the U.S. government to lift the blockade. That's the real violation of human rights in Cuba.

¡Baraguá!: What impact will the Torricelli Act have on the Cuban people? Most of the trade with foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies that the bill bans was in food and medicine.

AF: That's true. It will create a more difficult situation in medicines and in our public health policy. In our country, health care is free and we have made a great effort to develop preventive health care. This Act will have a very negative impact. Secondly, by banning ships from U.S. ports that engage in trade with Cuba, it will create additional problems for us. What do they want to do? They want to put the Cuban people on their knees.

¡Baraguá!: Will they succeed?

AF: Of course not. This law is one of the big mistakes of the U.S. policy toward Cuba. The United Nations, in November, overwhelmingly adopted Cuba's resolution condemning the U.S. blockade. The majority of the governments in Latin America have also condemned the Torricelli Act. The extra-territorial aspects of this law affect even the

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closest allies of the U.S., and they have rejected it.

The U.S. embassies around the world very strongly pressure any business that wants to invest in or do business with Cuba. They pressure them openly. I don't know what kind of diplomacy that is. For example, I have a letter from the U.S. embassy in Switzerland pressuring an enterprise there not to do business with Cuba.

**¡Baraguá!** The *New York Times* once referred to the Chief of the Cuban Interests Section as the loneliest man in Washington because of the refusal of the U.S. to sit and talk with him. What do you see as your role here? Do you think they'll talk to you?

**AF:** I don't know. I will meet with all those who are prepared to receive me and I will transfer the views of my government, of the Cuban Revolution, to any people who receive me in this country. I think that at the governmental level, it's difficult to get a meeting here. But I can assure you that I'm ready to meet with any official who wants to talk and I will put forward my position. I think it's only fair to give me the opportunity to put forward my position and to defend it.

You know the press here is very unfair in its coverage of Cuba. They are keeping people misinformed. I laugh every day when I read the articles in the Miami press talking about the post-Castro era, and saying that they will return and buy this and invest in that. That's nonsense. That's propaganda. They are trying to create the image that our Revolution will fall. I think that's miserable. It's making fools out of the people in Miami. It's quite cynical, really. They're telling lies everyday.

**¡Baraguá!** The U.S. travel ban lets them get away with that since so few can go to Cuba and see for themselves.

**AF:** You are receiving a lot of information that has been manipulated and I think it's quite dangerous that this propaganda is the only thing that is reaching the U.S. people. Even people in the U.S. government believe what they read in the press about Cuba and that's the most dangerous thing of all. That's why I try to explain the Cuban position to everyone who wants to listen here in this country. It's only fair. It's not easy, but I try to clearly explain how this information is distorted. If we have the opportunity to talk with people here, I think we can clarify the situation.

**T**here was, for instance, absolutely no coverage in this country of the concert in the Plaza of the Revolution on Dec. 30, where many thousands of Cuban young people came and asked Fidel to talk. They were dancing and full of enthusiasm, full of life. They want to live and to go ahead. There wasn't a single story in the U.S. press about that. And what about the Cuban electoral process? I don't say that our democracy is perfect, but I do think that it's better than the democracy in this country, frankly speaking.

**¡Baraguá!** Do you want to say something about the Cuban elections that are underway?

**AF:** I think it's one of the best examples of our democracy. Our's is a government, as Lincoln said, of, by, and for the people, a government from the people. We have already had the first round of the elections and the newly-elected Municipal Assemblies have already been sworn in. In February, we will elect our provincial and national delegates.

**¡Baraguá!** Can you explain the new nominating process for the provincial and national delegates?

**AF:** In our case, no party proposes any candidates. There is no money spent on election campaigns. We have created a national commission to propose candidates for the provincial and national assemblies.

This commission is made up of representatives of different mass organizations in Cuba. That means the CDR's [Committees for the Defense of the Revolution], the student federation [FEU], the women's federation [FMC], the trade unions [CTC], the farmers' organization [ANAP], and

so on. This creates a broad base for the proposal of candidates. Once these candidates are proposed, they have to be nominated by the elected Municipal Assemblies in order to run. To be elected, they must receive 50% plus one vote in direct and secret balloting. Where can you find a process that is more democratic? In other countries, you see soldiers with rifles and bayonets waiting for people to vote.

*This is a crucial moment...and  
in this moment we are preparing  
all the conditions for the future;  
all the conditions for victory.*

**¡Baraguá!** In Cuba you have two children, two Pioneers [a children's organization], stationed at every ballot box.

**AF:** Yes, we have two Pioneers. I also think that the great level of participation in the voting shows the amount of interest our people have in the process. For us it is a challenge, because we are passing through a very difficult economic period in our country. The impact is very great on our people. We have to ration all our food. We have to distribute everything in our country on a basis of equality. I think that's also an example of real democracy. It is a democracy where we have no rich. In fact, we can't understand a "democracy" where you have rich people who have everything and poor people who have nothing at all. What kind of democracy is that? Why does the U.S. pressure us to learn that kind of democracy? That's not our democracy.





*¡Baraguá!*: Turning to your years in Africa, you were in Zimbabwe during a very crucial period for Southern Africa...

AF: That was one of the great experiences I have had in my life, especially because Zimbabwe was a newborn state that had suffered from a policy of apartheid during Ian Smith's regime. The way that the new Zimbabwean state managed the situation in that country was an important example that has been taken into consideration by our South African friends, by the ANC [African National Congress], as well as by the liberation movement in Namibia. I think that Zimbabwe has played a very important role in the destruction of the machinery of apartheid. The government of [Robert] Mugabe has been very uncompromising in its opposition to apartheid and in its support for a real solution to the southern African situation.

During my stay in Zimbabwe, I had the chance to meet a lot of people from the ANC, all friends of Cuba, and to exchange points of view with them. South Africa now has come to a very complex situation where the progressive forces inside South Africa, headed by the ANC, will have to play the main role. The time has come where the South African apartheid regime can not destroy what the ANC has already done and the future will be a brighter one for the South African people, for the black majority, which has been constantly under the boot of apartheid. And the future will be bright for the ANC, which is the most powerful revolutionary organization in South Africa.

*¡Baraguá!*: During your years in Zimbabwe, Cuba was offering a great amount of material assistance to that newborn nation.

AF: During my stay there, Cuba signed an agreement of cooperation with Zimbabwe. By this agreement, we sent a group of twenty professors of the Spanish language to Zimbabwe in order to create the conditions for a group of Zimbabwean students to come to our country on scholarship and to study teaching in our universities. This was really a success. Every year, a new group of 300 Zimbabwean students comes to Cuba to study for four years. There were 1200 Zimbabwean students studying in Cuba in 1989 and this project continues now, despite the "special period." Today, many of these students have returned to Zimbabwe and are professors of pedagogy who are themselves training teachers. It's very important because there is a shortage of teachers in that country. This is a beautiful project.

We also sent medicine and more than 20 doctors and they have played an important role in the development of health care in Zimbabwe.



*¡Baraguá!*'s Nancy Schwalb interviews Ambassador Fraga.

*¡Baraguá!*: They're still there now?

AF: Yes, we still have 20 doctors or so. And the important thing is that they are working not only in the capital but in the countryside as well; in hospitals and polyclinics with very good results. So this has been a collaboration that is a great success and we hope to maintain this special relationship that we have with the people of Zimbabwe.

Today I was reading in the newspaper that the Foreign Minister of Zimbabwe recently praised the Cuban efforts for the liberation of Africa. He said it very beautifully when he said that it was not possible to write about the liberation of Africa without mentioning the sacrifice of the Cuban people.

*¡Baraguá!*: We were talking about the level of propaganda against Cuba that exists in this country. Our movement, of course, is trying to counter this by doing educational work and by getting real information about Cuba to the U.S.

people. What role do you think the solidarity movement can play in normalizing relations and helping to end the blockade?

AF: I think you can play a very important role. You're trying to transfer the reality of our country to the U.S. people. That's a very beautiful gesture on your part. It's very important to show the people of this

country how the Cuban Revolution is working for the benefit of our people. The people of this country are receiving very manipulated information and they don't know what is going on in Cuba. We have to congratulate our friends in the solidarity movement for taking up this work of correcting the disinformation.

I also want to say that our friends need to know how difficult our situation is at present. The solidarity with Cuba at this point must be a militant solidarity which concretely works for the removal of the U.S. blockade. I'm very happy

*We can't understand a "democracy" where you have rich people who have everything and poor people who have nothing at all. What kind of democracy is that?... That's not our democracy.*



to have this chance to talk with the solidarity activists, with the people of the Hands Off Cuba and the National Network.

**¡Baraguá!** Sometimes even the solidarity activists look at the present situation and ask, "Can Cuba survive?"

**AF:** As I've often said, the Cuban Revolution, the Cuban people will survive, even if we have to face more difficult moments. We will survive because our people are working and making sacrifices to push our process ahead. I recently told a U.S. journalist that he can be sure that the Cuban people will survive and win. It is clear to us that we will win. We know thousands of ways to survive, thousands of ways to win.

We are working very hard with our Food Plan and our people are working in the fields with enthusiasm. Tourism is also a priority and in 1992 we had a revenue of about \$400 million from tourism. By 1995 we expect to receive a million

tourists a year. We're increasing the number of tourists as well as the amount of revenue. Thirdly, we are working very hard in biotechnology and pharmaceutical production. We have a very strong base in this area that we have built in the last thirty years. We have educated our people, trained scientists and researchers, and developed health care. This is part of the success of the Cuban Revolution.

**¡Baraguá!** Will 1993 be the crucial year in terms of the "special period?"

**AF:** We feel that we have already touched the bottom. From now on, the situation will remain very difficult, but step by step, we will find ourselves rising up. This is a crucial moment, as you said, and in this moment we are preparing all the conditions for the future; all the conditions for victory.

### Lobby Day in Washington

On Friday, February 26, hundreds of people concerned about U.S.-Cuba relations will converge on Washington, DC for a day of lobbying the Congress and dialog with the White House. Buses are being chartered from Miami with members of the Antonio Maceo Brigade and the Alliance of Workers of the Cuban Community. Plans are afoot for buses to leave from Chicago, New York and Detroit as well. For more information, call: (305) 757-3113 or (212) 227-3422.

### "Discover Cuba for Yourself..."

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Photo courtesy Brian Adams



**RADIO HAVANA'S**  
*Jorge Ruiz Miyares.*



# Cuban Health Notes

## Cuban drug fights cholesterol

Intense scientific research has proven that the new Cuban wonder drug PPG significantly lowers dangerous cholesterol levels. But it's the medication's unofficial side-effects that have caught the imagination of many Cubans and foreigners alike. Apart from a general feeling of well being, the new drug is rumored to produce renewed sexual vigor in middle-aged and elderly men. While Cuba is currently working hard to market PPG outside the country, the new drug is available in all the island's tourist shops, and Cubans can buy the medicine in local pharmacies for pesos.

Just what is PPG and what can it offer? The drug is a mixture of isolated and purified aliphatic sugar cane alcohols. Its primary effect on the human body is the reduction of cholesterol, especially those carried by lipo proteins which are known to place people at high risk of coronary disease and arterial sclerosis. Though there are many drugs on the market which boast the same results, PPG appears to be the only such medication that has so far been free of harmful side effects. Other anti-cholesterols can irritate the digestive system, and cause muscle pain, impotence, or a reduction of libido. Keeping in mind that these drugs must be taken for prolonged periods of time, Cuba's side-effects-free PPG becomes all the more ideal.

Cuba began testing PPG some five years ago on volunteer patients whose lipo protein and cholesterol counts were high despite rigorous anti-cholesterol diets. The patients ranged in age from 25 to 60 and there was a special study done with patients over sixty five years of age. In most cases, the results were positive.

Medical doctor and biochemist José Illnait of Cuba's National Center for Scientific Research says the Center has received thousands of reports from individuals who claim that the drug has changed their lives. "I've never felt better," says a 59 year old woman. "I now go out and visit my friends and I'm full of energy." A retired communications worker says she had intense pains in her legs and she felt weak and listless. "Now I feel great," she explains. "My mother-in-law bends down to touch her toes and says she could never do that before." And there are the stories of renewed sexual prowess in older men.

These and other tales have forced health officials to carefully regulate who is being proscribed the medicine, which many call the drug of the century. But, notes Dr. Illnait, "We can't speak scientifically of these fabled side effects until they are proven." However, if you have a problem with cholesterol, the Cuban wonder drug PPG may be in your future. (*Radio Havana Cuba*)

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## Cuba's Infant Mortality Rate Drops to 10.2

Sixty seven more Cuban children survived birth in 1992 as Cuba recorded a record low infant mortality rate of 10.2 deaths/1000 live births, down from 10.7/1000 in 1991. The central province of Villa Clara, which has registered the lowest rates in the nation for the last three years, had a rate of 6.6/1000, followed by three other provinces with rates below 10.0: Cienfuegos (8.1), Holguín (8.5), and City of Havana (9.8). There are only three countries in the world with lower infant mortality rates than Villa Clara: Finland, Sweden, and Japan.

Dr. Luis Cordoba, Director of the Ministry of Public Health's National Program of Child Maternity Attention, said the ongoing development of a program of pre-natal diagnosis of malformations and an enhanced cardio-pediatric network nationwide are mainly responsible for Cuba's continually lower rates of infant mortality.

In 1992, Cuba reported 157,065 births and 1604 deaths of children under the age of one. If that same number of births had occurred in 1959, when Cuba's infant mortality rate exceeded 60/1000, 8000 children would not have survived.

## AIDS in Cuba

As of Jan. 25, a total of 886 Cubans have been infected with the HIV virus since it was first detected on the island in April, 1986. According to Dr. Hector Terry, Deputy Minister of Public Health, to date 105 people have died of AIDS and AIDS-related causes.

Dr. Terry says that the mortality rate is considered low, since it has reached only 12% of those infected by the virus, as compared with other countries where the rate reaches as high as 40% of HIV-positive persons. Experts credit the quality of care received by patients in Cuba and the fact that the island has made extraordinary efforts to guarantee costly medications to AIDS patients, despite the U.S. blockade.

Of the Cuban sero-positives, 629 are men and 257 are women. Most have been infected through sexual intercourse. As a result of the island-wide blood screening program, the risk of contracting AIDS from donations and transfusions is virtually nil. In addition, some 13,400,000 AIDS tests have been performed throughout the country. (*Radio Havana Cuba*)



## Dr. Spock Delivers \$82,000 in Medical Aid to Cuba

**R**enowned pediatrician and peace activist Dr. Benjamin Spock brought \$82,000 worth of antibiotics and dental supplies to the Cuban Red Cross destined for the children of Cuba. He arrived in Havana on Jan. 30. The shipment, which received a Treasury Dept. license, was organized by the U.S.+Cuba Medical Project with funds contributed from around the U.S. The medical aid was donated to a Havana dental clinic and the William Soler Pediatric Hospital in the capital.

Speaking to the press in Havana about the U.S. blockade of Cuba, which prohibits the island from purchasing medicines and food from the U.S., Dr. Spock said, "I think it's not only illegal and contrary to our promises to the United Nations, but

criminal for one country to try to strangle another country... I have always admired what's been accomplished here since Batista was thrown out, so when I had the opportunity to bring medicines — and you know I'm a children's specialist — I was delighted to have the invitation."

"We who oppose the U.S. blockade of Cuba have to make more noise," Dr. Spock continued. He said he plans to speak out to the Clinton Administration when he returns home. A note he prepared for the President reads in part: "Dear Bill, I hope you will respond to the U.N. rebuke for our illegal 30-year embargo on Cuba by at least promising to investigate its history. It is injuring hundreds of thousands of children. Benjamin Spock, M.D."

## MediCuba aid shipments top \$25,000

**A**s of mid-February, MediCuba has sent more than \$25,000 in medicines and medical aid to Cuba since the inception of the project a year ago. In December, MediCuba contributed \$4000 worth of medicines to a shipment organized by Church World Service which has a license from the U.S. Treasury Dept. to deliver humanitarian assistance to Cuba. The shipment was donated to the Cuban Ecumenical Council.

In January, MediCuba provided more than \$3000 in medicines and medical supplies to a delegation organized by the Cuba Information Project in NY. MediCuba's aid was divided into gift parcels which were carried by each member of the 35-person delegation and donated to Havana's Gonzalo Coro Maternity Hospital. The next issue of *¡Baraguá!* will include a more detailed account of the aid delivery by a member of this delegation.

While MediCuba, Church World Service, Pastors for Peace, the U.S.+Cuba Medical Project and other groups have stepped up their efforts to deliver medical aid to Cuba, the present "special period" of economic difficulties, combined with the strengthened U.S. blockade of the island, are putting

enormous strains on Cuba's renowned medical care system. Havana-based United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) official Luis Zuniga recently remarked, "The Cuban government and people are doing their best...but they are under pressure. We are now seeing the first results: a rise in low birth weights, a scarcity of iron, nutritional levels at risk. The country needs additional resources."

MediCuba is now receiving more requests from persons and delegations travelling to Cuba that wish to deliver medical supplies and medicines than we can fulfill. We appeal to all those who oppose the U.S. blockade of Cuba, which prevents food and medicine from reaching the people of Cuba, to help us collect additional medical aid and raise more funds to purchase and ship such aid. MediCuba wishes to specially thank the Charlottesville (Virginia) Latin America Solidarity Committee (CLASC), which donated \$100 to our project, and the New Jersey Hands Off Cuba Committee, which recently donated a box of urostomy supplies. **When we all work together, the U.S. blockade doesn't have to make Cubans sick!**

Here's my contribution of: ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$15 ☐ \$\_\_\_\_\_ other  
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## Why Washington's "Cold War" against Cuba doesn't end

Book Review: *To Speak The Truth* by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara

by Aaron Ruby

Why has Cuba been a constant target of the U.S. government? What motivates the 30-year effort to cripple Cuba's economy through a trade embargo unparalleled in modern history, one tightened even further with the recent passage of the so-called Cuban Democracy Act or Torricelli Bill?

The answers are provided in *To Speak the Truth*, a new collection of the speeches given before the United Nations by Fidel Castro and Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, the two most authoritative leaders of the Cuban Revolution.

When Castro first mounted the UN rostrum in September, 1960, Cuba had just given land to farmers, outlawed racial discrimination, and mobilized working people by the thousands to nationalize U.S.-owned banks and industries.

This set an example for the peoples of the world, Castro stated. For Washington it meant "the Cuban Revolution had to be punished."

What Washington feared, Guevara stated in 1964, was that Cuba had "shown by our actions, by our daily example, that in the present conditions of humanity the peoples can liberate themselves and keep themselves free."

In using the forum of the United Nations, Castro and Guevara speak not to the rich, powerful and cynical of the world, but for and to the immense majority of toiling humanity.

"The time to speak the truth has come," Castro stated in 1960. "The government of the United States cannot be on the side of the peasants because it is an ally of the landowners. It cannot be on the side of workers anywhere in the world because it is an ally of the monopolies. It cannot be on the side of colonies because it is an ally of colonizing powers."

Speaking to the General Assembly in 1960, Fidel Castro notes with alarm U.S. president Eisenhower's proposal that United Nations "observers" and emergency "forces" be ready

"to promote peaceful change as well as to assist economic and social progress" in the "developing areas." "We wish to state here," Castro says, "that the Cuban delegation does not agree with such an emergency force until all peoples of the world can feel sure that these forces will not be put at the disposal of colonialism and imperialism. [Applause] This especially so inasmuch as our countries can at any moment become the victim of the use of such forces against the rights of our peoples." In the face of the ongoing assault against the people of Iraq, the current imperialist military intervention in Somalia, and the increasing military intervention in Yugoslavia, all under the UN flag, the Cuban position remains unaltered, providing a scientific basis for understanding the nature of imperialism and the role of the United Nations.

"No matter what happens," Guevara repeated in 1964, "we will continue to be a small headache when we come to this assembly in order to call things by their right name, and to brand the United States as the instrument of repression throughout the world."

During Castro's 1960 visit, the Cuban delegation stayed at the Hotel Theresa in Harlem in solidarity with the struggle for Black rights. Each day, thousands of Harlem residents gathered outside the hotel to show their solidarity. One of those who welcomed the Cubans was Malcolm X. Included in *To Speak the Truth* is a little-known account of the meeting in Harlem between Malcolm X and Fidel Castro.

*To Speak the Truth: Why Washington's Cold War Against Cuba Doesn't End* is available for \$16.95 at bookstores or directly from Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. When ordering by mail include \$3 to cover postage and handling.

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**Cuba in brief • Cuba in brief • Cuba in brief • Cuba in brief • Cuba in brief**

**Cuban Youth Celebrate at New Year's Rally**

More than 100,000 Cuban young people gathered in Havana's Plaza of the Revolution on Dec. 30 to celebrate the 34th Anniversary of the Revolution and the new year. Under the slogan *Si Por Cuba*, the day's events began at noon with a festival of food, games, and exhibits. The main rally got underway at 9 PM with an address by Roberto Robaina, leader of the Union of Young Communists.

"No one has lost their capacity to smile, their optimism despite a year of belt tightening," Robaina said. "It's been tough. We've had a lot of problems and scarcities, but people have shown their commitment to Cuba and the Revolution. Despite the U.S. decision to squeeze Cuba economically with this Torricelli Law, our scientists and technicians have used all their ingenuity to produce the required products or medicines that because of the blockade are sometimes impossible to buy on the international market. Under the same circumstances, our key cadres have carried out an exceptional 1992 sugar harvest and our athletes and artists have obtained major recognition abroad. Each of us has contributed a grain of sand to make things less difficult, to make it possible for us to say tonight, *Si Por Cuba!*"

President Castro was asked to take the microphone by a chanting crowd, but he waved the invitation off saying, "I would rather like to see you spending the rest of the night dancing and celebrating with your favorite performers. You deserve to have some fun, especially after a long year of hard work, sacrifices, and struggle. So I say, *Si Por Cuba*, and on with the music!"

Some of Cuba's top dance bands and such legendary musical performers as Pablo Milanés and Silvio Rodríguez then took the stage for a concert that lasted into the morning hours of Dec. 31.

**Fidel: "Have Faith that We Shall Overcome"**

Speaking at a press conference following the rally and concert, President Castro called 1992 a heroic year for a small island besieged as never before by the U.S. blockade and facing unprecedented shortages. What is extraordinary is that while the country is running on less than 50% of its usual oil imports, not a single school, hospital, or health clinic has closed its doors, he said. One of the most striking achievements of 1992 was the reduction of Cuba's infant mortality rate once more despite the economic difficulties. "I just didn't think such a reduction possible," said the Cuban leader.

Looking ahead to 1993 and the new administration in Washington, Fidel asserted that it's better not to have any illusions about improvements in U.S. policies in general or towards Cuba. However, he said worse policies than those currently pursued would be impossible. On the domestic front, he told the nation to expect enormous difficulties in 1993,

especially in the areas of food, fuel, and medicines. He asked Cubans to draw as never before on their spirit of patriotism, dignity, and sacrifice, and to have faith that "we shall overcome."

**Cuba Te Espera**

Cuba received a record 480,000 tourists in 1992 and took in more than \$300 million in tourism income, up 37% from 1991. The average tourist also spent more money in 1992 than in previous years. The island added 4000 new hotel rooms during the year, bringing the total number of rooms available to foreign tourists to 20,000. Cuba's goal is to receive a million visitors a year by 1995.

The largest number of tourists comes from Canada, followed by Spain, Germany, Italy, and Mexico. U.S. citizens are barred from visiting Cuba by the U.S. blockade but an increasing number are defying the travel ban and coming as tourists to the island via third countries.

**Meetings on Oil Prospecting in Cuba to be Held**

The French experience in oil prospecting on the island and domestic geological studies are credentials Cuba will present at two international business meetings with foreign companies interested in doing business with the island. Representing Cuba will be the First Deputy Minister of Basic Industry, Jesús Pérez, who told the press that the island has been divided into 11 zones considered to be of great interest to investors. The meetings, set for Canada and Britain on February 10th and 17th, are part of the island's new investment policy in the petroleum industry. Companies interested in doing business with Cuba, said Pérez, will receive the necessary geological and legal information concerning risk oil prospecting. Cuba has signed risk contracts with several foreign firms during the past 3 years: the French consortium Total, Taurus from Sweden, and Canada's North-west Energy.

The island has the capacity to refine 77 million barrels of oil annually, and counts with 21,000 oil workers. According to geologist Manuel Marrero, Cuba extracts some 20,000 barrels of crude oil a day and 1.5 million cubic feet of natural gas. Marrero added that the best oil deposits are located on the northern coast, including the Varadero area where reserves are estimated at some 1 billion barrels.

The British company Simon Petroleum Technology helped organize these meetings, said Marrero. Cuban experts say they expect at least some 30 to 40 foreign firms to be present at both the Calgary and London meetings. According to Cuba's *Bohemia* weekly magazine, there are a number of foreign oil companies about to begin drilling on the mainland and at sea after several years of research and exploration. Cuba's crude is too heavy and contains high levels of sulphur. However, the country's hopes are set on Ciego de Avila province where a much lighter oil has been discovered. (*Radio Havana Cuba*)



### **Nobel Peace Prize Winner Denounces Blockade**

Guatemalan Indigenous leader and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Rigoberta Menchú called the Torricelli Act, "an intolerable interference in Latin American affairs." Speaking from the Mexican-Guatemalan border in late December, she called on President-elect Clinton to stop Washington's interventionist policies in the region.

### **Solidarity from Every Corner of the Globe**

The freighter *Caribbean Princess* arrived in Havana on Dec. 29 carrying 10,105 tons of wheat from India donated by solidarity organizations in that country. The wheat was purchased after a successful nationwide fund raising campaign which involved more than 1 million Indians. The estimated value of the cargo is \$1,400,000 and it includes enough wheat to bake 800,000 loaves of bread.

### **Solidarity by the Busload**

Sergio Corrieri, President of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), announced in Havana that 13% of the city's daily bus journeys are now on buses donated by the international solidarity movement. Most recently, the Spanish city of Puerto Real sent 36 buses. "For us, who have given so much solidarity even though we are poor and who still give solidarity, in spite of our problems, it is very encouraging to get on a bus that says, 'from the Canary Islands bus drivers to the Cuban people,'" Corrieri said.

### **Details of Cuban-Russian Trade Pact**

Additional details of the trade deal concluded by Cuba and Russia in November have been published. Under the terms of the agreement, Russia will ship 2 million tons of crude oil and 1.2 million tons of refined petroleum in 1993 in exchange for 1.5 million tons of Cuban sugar as well as nickel, citrus, and medicines. In 1992, Cuba received only about 1.8 million tons of crude and no refined products from Russia. The barter agreement based on world market prices also stipulates that Russia will supply the island with metals, wood pulp, sulphur, tires, and spare parts in addition to oil. Cuba now has negotiated trade agreements with nine former Soviet republics and accords with three additional republics are in the making.

### **Fascist Birds of a Feather**

Felipe Rivero, a prominent figure in Miami's counter-revolutionary Cuban community and host of a talk program on a local Spanish language radio station, has repeatedly denounced the Holocaust as a historical lie. "If the Germans wanted to eliminate the Jews, how is it that in Miami Beach there are thousands of Jews who have spent up to five years in concentration camps?" he asks. Rivero is a veteran of the CIA's failed Bay of Pigs invasion and leader of a group calling itself the Cuban National Alliance. He complained to the *Miami Herald*,

"In this country you can say you don't believe in God, but you can't say you don't believe in the Holocaust."

### **CANF Exposed in Men's Magazine**

The January, 1993 issue of *Esquire* magazine contains an important exposé of the right-wing Cuban-American National Foundation and its most infamous leader Jorge Mas Canosa. Written by investigative journalist and former House of Representatives staffer Gaeton Fonzi, *Who is Jorge Mas Canosa?* is a major contribution to the available literature on the Cuban Contras and their ongoing negative effect on U.S. policy toward Cuba. *¡Baraguá!* urges all Cuba activists to obtain this devastating article. It will be of great use in our ongoing educational work to improve U.S.-Cuba relations.

### **U.S. Shelters Air Pirates**

The U.S. has granted political asylum to a Cuban pilot who, with help from collaborators on board, hijacked an Aero Caribbean plane to Miami on Dec. 29. The hijackers lured the flight's co-pilot to the back of the plane where he was overcome and tied up, and drugged a security officer on board. Rafael Dausa of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington told the press that the hijacking was "a very irresponsible act carried out by a small group of traitors, stimulated by the U.S. government which receives these kind of people with open arms."

Cuba's Civil Aeronautics Institute decried the hijacking as an act of terrorism since violence was used against members of the crew. Cuban authorities said the incident violated international civil aviation regulations by putting in danger air navigation and human lives. Cuba also charged that the U.S. encourages this kind of terrorism by giving automatic asylum to illegal Cuban immigrants while stalling on Cubans' applications for legal emigration to the U.S. The U.S. Interests Section in Havana admits that it grants only a fraction of the 20,000 visas annually permitted by U.S. law for Cubans legally seeking U.S. residency. Under international law and a bilateral U.S.-Cuba agreement, the U.S. is required to prosecute or extradite hijackers.

Co-pilot Rolando Vila, his wife Maria Luisa Correa and their 18-month-old daughter, security officer Marion Ledesma, and stewardess Marilyn Cuesta, returned to Cuba. A Cuban flight crew flew to Miami to retrieve the plane.

### **Charges Dropped Against Miami Terrorists**

A U.S. district judge dropped charges on Jan. 6 against Tony Bryant, a member of the Miami-based terrorist group *Comandos L*. Bryant had been arrested in November and charged with possession and transportation of weapons by a convicted felon. The charges stemmed from his participation in a July 4, 1992 weekend raid against Cuba by a *Comandos L* speedboat. Bryant and other participants in the raid were rescued by a U.S. Coast Guard vessel in Cuban waters after exchanging gunfire with a Cuban patrol boat. In court, Bryant claimed that he didn't know that there were guns on the speedboat.



At a news conference on January 7, Bryant said, "From this point on we're at war. The U.S. Neutrality Act doesn't exist." According to Bryant, *Comandos L* will target economic sites in Cuba for attack including hotels. He warned tourists not to go to Cuba. In November, a judge in the Bahamas acquitted three Miami terrorists who had been charged with conspiracy to invade Cuba. The three had been caught with a cache of weapons on a Bahamian beach.

#### Five Cuban Emigres Arrested with Weapons

Law officials in Miami, Florida, said on February 2 that five U.S. citizens born in Cuba have been accused of illegal weapons possession after having been found heading for Cuba in a boat loaded with .30 and .50 calibre machine guns, four automatic rifles, three grenade launchers, automatic pistols and ammunition. The five are militant anti-Castro activists. The boat was intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard on February 5 along the Florida coast and the weapons found during a search for drugs. One of those arrested said the weapons were going to be turned over to unidentified persons in Camaguey, Cuba. According to the *Miami Herald*, the five are linked to the Cuban Liberation Army, which has been involved in past incursions into Cuba to overthrow Fidel Castro's government. (*el diario/La Prensa*)

#### Fidel Speaks Out Against U.S. Somalia Intervention

Speaking on Dec. 16, Cuban President Fidel Castro said: "In some places [the U.S.] uses hunger as a pretext — hunger that is caused by imperialism, hunger that is a consequence of colonialism and neocolonialism, hunger that is a consequence of the exploitation of people. And now they want to solve hunger through gunfire.

...In the United Nations, all 15 members of the Security Council without exception voted for the intervention in Somalia, since it was a solid pretext — the pictures of emaciated people, of people starving to death. And so the aircraft carriers arrived, along with the battleships, helicopters, tanks, all kinds of things, and the boots, which in some pictures could be seen on the backs of Somalia citizens.

In other words, they went in to take food there through gunfire. And in another part of the world, they have a blockade against a country like Cuba, trying to make Cuba die of starvation and disease. That's the logic, those are the morals of the empire.

...It was capitalism that brought the world colonialism, slavery, underdevelopment, poverty, hunger, lack of minimal economic resources, even a lack of natural resources — because capitalism is destroying the planet's natural resources, it's destroying them through its consumer society, its incredible waste. And we ask ourselves if it's capitalism that can solve these problems."

#### Listen to Women for a Change

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) invites all ¡Baraguá! readers to attend a public press conference between 2 and 4 PM on International Women's Day, March 8, at the Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, Gold Room (Independence and South Capitol Streets, SW) to which it has invited two members of the Federation of Cuban Women — Maria Isabel Acivedo and Rebecca Cutié have been named to go — as honored guests and keynote speakers. A host of other progressive organizations will also give brief addresses. At least one celebrity speaker is planned but unconfirmed at present.

The press conference is followed by a public reception and we encourage you to come — the mood will be festive, celebrating women's shared struggle and successes, yet confrontative of the barriers imposed on our sisterhood, like the so-called "Cuban Democracy Act" voted in by a majority of male legislators (and naysaid by many female ones) that hurts women's sovereignty, Cuban sovereignty, and will hurt Cuban women and children the most. International Women's Day is a nearly century-old holiday that began in the U.S. labor women's movement.

To RSVP for the reception or for more information, call WILPF at (202) 547-7093, or write 605 K St. NE, Washington, DC 20002-3529. Endorsements of WILPF's Women's Peace and Justice Treaty of the Americas as well as participation in the press conference are still welcome. (WILPF)

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## *¡Baraguá!*

*¡Baraguá!*, publication of the National Network on Cuba (NNC), is named for Cuban revolutionary leader Antonio Maceo's immortal *Protest of Baraguá*, issued in 1878. At Baraguá, Maceo refused to halt the struggle against Spain until Cuba was free and independent and slavery had been abolished. Today, on billboards and walls across the island, the slogan, "The future of our country will be an eternal Baraguá!" expresses Cuba's determination to resist.



Antonio Maceo

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## National Network on Cuba

The National Network on Cuba (NNC) is a broad-based federation of Cuba-specific coalitions and projects that exist in numerous parts of the U.S., as well as organizations with Cuba programs or committees. The fundamental goals of NNC are to end the U.S. government blockade of Cuba and to support that country's right to self-determination. NNC also stands for full normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba. For more information and to contact NNC affiliates in your area, call: (212) 601-4751 (East); (510) 531-1169 (West); or (313) 838-6667 (Midwest).

Current affiliates of NNC include: Casa de las Americas (NY); Venceremos Brigade (National); Antonio Maceo Brigade (National); Cuba Information Project; International Appeal for Peace with Cuba; Friends of Cuba (Denver); Colorado Hands Off Cuba Coalition; Justice for Cuba Coalition (Detroit); Hands Off Cuba Coalition (Cleveland); DC "Hands Off Cuba!" Coalition; U.S. Hands Off Cuba Coalition (NY); July 26 Coalition (Cambridge); New Jersey Hands Off Cuba Committee; Coalition Against U.S. Intervention in Cuba (Chicago); Hands Off Cuba Committee (Portland); Hands Off Cuba Coalition (San Francisco); Committee to Normalize Relations with Cuba (Boston); U.S.-Cuba Friendship Assoc. (San Diego); Coalition in Solidarity with Cuba (Los Angeles); Cuba Educational Project (Santa Cruz); US+CUBA Medical Project; Caribbean Action Movement; Pastors for Peace — IFCO.

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