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Socialist Voice #191, August 6, 2007

**Review: *Build It Now***

Michael A. Lebowitz. *Build It Now: Socialism for the Twenty-First Century*. Monthly Review Press. New York, 2006. 127 pages

**Reviewed by James Haywood**

This book consists of several talks and essays written by Michael Lebowitz during 2004 and 2005, years in which he participated first-hand in the Bolivarian movement in Venezuela. Since its release, his new book has had a significant impact in Venezuela, and was recently featured by President Hugo Chavez in his regular television show "Alo Presidente!"

Lebowitz's book aims to flesh out the concept of 21st Century socialism – made famous by Chavez and the Bolivarians –counterposing it to both Stalinism and social democracy.

This book should have a place in every socialist's collection. It relates basic conceptions of Marxism to the Venezuelan process today. However, a failure to look at the experience of Soviet Russia in Lenin's time and the Cuban revolution make this book, at times, somewhat abstract.

### **Marxism is a political act**

The book starts with an outstanding introduction to basic Marxist theory. Lebowitz stresses that Marx "wrote *Capital* as a political act, as part of his revolutionary project." (page 29) In other words Marxism does not view the world through a set agenda of formulas. Marxism is about using and developing theories *in response* to reality.

Lebowitz goes on to explore the main ideologies justifying capitalism, specifically neoclassical economics and theories associated with the British economist J.M. Keynes. His discussion of Keynesianism is of greater interest because of its influence in the workers' movement. In brief, its basic concept is that "workers could gain without capital losing." (page 35) Both approaches are essentially alike, Lebowitz says: they propose different mechanisms for the government to "support capital's requirements" in order to "make capital happy to invest." (page 37) The labour movement needs a true alternative, Lebowitz says, based on stimulating "the solidarity that comes from an emphasis upon the interests of the community rather than self-interest." (page 42)

Lebowitz convincingly describes how such a policy, carried out by a government with mass support, could create "non-capitalist sectors" in the economy (e.g. state-run enterprises) which could defend such a government against a "capital strike" by the bosses — a clear reference to the Venezuelan experience.

In Lebowitz's view, Third World countries like Venezuela can achieve "endogenous development" — which serves the interests of the population, not imperialism — "but only if a government is prepared to break ideologically and politically with capital, only if it is prepared to make social movements actors in the realization of an economic theory based upon the concept of human capacities." (page 42)

### **Alternatives?**

Lebowitz claims that the biggest obstacle to socialism is "TINA" (There Is No Alternative), i.e. the idea pounded into the mentality of workers and exploited in Latin America is there is nothing worth fighting for. But surely Cuba is on their doorstep as a living example? Unfortunately there is no mention of Cuba at all.

Lebowitz does well to refute the anti-statist conception that all governments are necessarily repressive, using Venezuela as an example.

He also attacks the Stalinist model, represented above all by the Soviet Union. Interestingly, rather than attack the undemocratic political system, he criticizes the Soviet Union from a different angle:

"The Soviet Union took the form of immense factories, mills and collective farms.... We must acknowledge that small enterprises may both permit greater democratic control

from below (thus developing the capacities of the producers) and might better preserve an environment that can serve the needs of the people.” (page 71-72)

More fundamentally, he warns, “socialism cannot be achieved from above through the efforts and tutelage of a vanguard that seizes all initiatives and distrusts the self-development of the masses.” (page 72) Surely this bold statement is aimed against not only Stalinism but elements within Chavez’s own movement who consider themselves above and beyond the masses.

### **The Yugoslav Experience**

Another section of the book, entitled “Seven Difficult Questions,” poses tasks for the Venezuelan movement for workers’ control by discussing the Yugoslav experience of “self-management.” Lebowitz provides detailed information on an experience not often discussed within the left, taking up problems such as factory competition, managerial responsibilities, and the politicization of workers.

Among his fresh and challenging questions: “What responsibility do workers in self-managed enterprises have for the unemployed and the excluded? Who is responsible for creating jobs?” (page 79)

Still, he appears to evade the central problem: Yugoslavia was ruled by a privileged bureaucracy, in the Stalinist mode, which depoliticized its working class.

Lebowitz does well to point to the fact that self-management in and of itself is not socialist. The final question, which takes this up, is called, “How can solidarity between worker-managed enterprises and society as a whole be incorporated directly into those enterprises?” (page 83) Small worker-managed factories can and have existed under capitalism, he points out. What makes the character of this socialist is how *production* is intertwined with the *needs* of society: is the enterprise running to make a profit or as part of a planned economy to meet people’s needs?

In Yugoslavia, he says, the “focus was on self-interest rather than the interests of the working class as a whole.” (page 84)

### **Venezuela Today**

Lebowitz’s book comes alive when he takes up the Venezuelan revolution today. He provides a brief but effective account of how the Bolivarian movement led by Hugo Chávez evolved – from his early days in power as a champion of a capitalist “third way,” through the right-wing lock-out and coup attempts, where he saw the power of independent mobilizations by working people.

The insights are fresh and compelling, reflecting Lebowitz’s experience as a socialist living in Venezuela, deeply imbedded in its revolutionary process.

He stresses that “the traditional organized working class [has been] less of an actor in this revolution” than the poor in the neighbourhoods. (page 102) But this changed — to some extent — after the lockout and the formation of a militant union federation (the UNT). Examples are given of workers taking over abandoned or capital-starved factories and managing the workplaces themselves.

Lebowitz warns that “there is nothing inevitable about whether the Bolivarian Revolution will succeed in building that new society or whether it will lapse into a new variety of capitalism with populist characteristics. Only struggle will determine this.” (page 116)

And the greatest barrier in this struggle comes, he says, from “people wearing the red shirt who are opposed to the revolution.” The greatest threat comes “from within the Bolivarian Revolution itself.” (page 115)

Lebowitz also argues that “the Bolivarian Revolution has also put Marxism back on the agenda.” This is certainly true, but the book would have been strengthened by considering the relationship of the Venezuelan movement to Cuba, which boldly put Marxism on the agenda 46 years ago. This relationship has found expression both on the plane of ideas and materially, through the tens of thousands of Cuban medical and other experts serving in Venezuela.

The book closes by touching on Che Guevara, For Che recognized “that it is necessary to act vigorously to eliminate the categories of the old society, particularly the lever of material interest, and to build the new human being.” Lebowitz says that “Che’s Marxism is embodied in the Bolivarian revolution.” (pages 117-18)

Lebowitz’s book is far from clear on how this is to be done. Paraphrasing Marx, he says “the idea of human society is sufficient to defeat the idea of barbarism.” (page 52) and calls for “governments who “reject the logic of capital.” He avoids reflection on previous revolutionary experiences in Russia, Cuba, and elsewhere. If this sounds a bit vague, it may reflect the evolution of the Venezuelan process itself. Recent speeches by Chávez have been more specific on the need to build a new state apparatus based on the masses.

But the book has an overriding merit. It explains why we are fighting capitalism. Do we just want an end to war and better wages? Lebowitz argues that our goal is nothing less than the full development of human potential, something capitalism just cannot achieve. Lebowitz’s socialism is one that rejects social democracy and Stalinism; it is a socialism based on workers’ democracy. The task now is to build parties and movements that can make this idea a realit

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## **Rough Waters for Canada's War in Afghanistan**

*On August 19-21, demonstrators across Canada will protest the conference of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, U.S. president George Bush, and Mexican president Felipe Calderon in Montebello, Quebec. The conference aims to promote the three countries' integration in a world-wide drive for profiteering, repression, and war, in which Canada's special assignment is to wage war on the people of Afghanistan. For information on the protests, contact the Canadian Peace Alliance.*

**By Roger Annis**

Canada's political and military rulers are scrambling to salvage their part in the NATO-led war in Afghanistan. The stated goal of NATO and Canada — to destroy the resistance of Afghan fighters to foreign occupation — is proving very difficult to achieve. Popular support in Afghanistan for the resistance is on the rise, and the resistance is proving capable of shifting its battle tactics while remaining an effective fighting force.

Meanwhile, unease is growing at home as more and more media reports detail terrible suffering of the Afghan people under the regime of foreign occupation, and as the number of dead Canadian soldiers rises.

A slim but stubborn majority of Canadians refuses to support the war. Opposition is even higher in Quebec. There is mounting pressure on the federal government to stick to the previous government's vague promise to "end the mission" by February 2009. On June 22 hundreds of protesters marched in Quebec City to the site of a public sendoff of a new contingent of 2,500 Canadian soldiers to the war theatre. Protesters appealed to soldiers to refuse to serve. One brother of a female soldier went public with his appeals to her.

### **News all bad**

Not much is going well for the Canadian warmakers on the ground. Sixty-six Canadian soldiers have died in Afghanistan since 2002; 22 since the beginning of 2007. Contrary to repeated boasts that Afghan resistance fighters are being killed in large numbers and driven out of action, resistance attacks are on the rise. Canadian troops are increasingly restricted to fortified compounds, able to travel only in heavily-armed convoys.

Even convoys are at risk. On July 26, the vehicle of the head of the Canadian armed forces in Afghanistan, Brigadier-General Tim Grant, narrowly missed being hit by a roadside bomb only a short distance from the main Canadian base in Kandahar city. The vehicle in front of him was blown off the road.

In most of Panjwai, a region where Canadian forces claimed an overwhelming military victory last year, resistance forces are again operating freely. A July 6 article in the Globe and Mail was headlined, "How Panjwai slipped out of control."

The most stalwart ally in the region of the foreign occupation of Afghanistan is the military dictatorship that rules Pakistan. But that regime is facing widespread and growing internal opposition, and it has proven utterly incapable of suppressing the use of Pakistan territory by Afghan resistance forces. In fact, to the embarrassment of NATO forces that refuse any and all negotiations, it signed a truce agreement with the “Taliban” earlier this year.

### **Torture and abuse**

In late 2005, at the outset of its offensive in Kandahar, Canada announced that, like its U.S. ally, it does not consider itself bound to the Geneva Conventions governing the treatment of prisoners of war.

In April of this year, revelations of torture and abuse of Afghans detained by Canadian soldiers appeared once again in news reports across Canada. But this time the reports did not go away — they ignited several months of public debate on the issue. Canadian policy is to turn detained Afghans over to “Afghan authorities” when torture is required to extract information.

The government first claimed that it had arranged with the International Red Cross to guarantee the proper treatment of prisoners. “Not true”, said the Red Cross in an extraordinary statement denying the Canadian claim.

Then the government said it had received new guarantees from “Afghan authorities” for proper treatment in the future. That, too, was a lie. News reports quickly showed that few facilities and resources exist to verify such guarantees. Abuse of prisoners continues.

Finally the government and military authorities resorted to the tried and true method of occupation forces in a foreign land — they cut off the supply of information. Journalists no longer have access to the reports of prisoner treatment that the government and military receive.

Canadian soldiers themselves are targets of abuse by their own military. For example, the family of killed soldier Mathew Dinning went public in order to shame military authorities into paying the full cost of their son’s funeral. Other reports have detailed inadequate medical services for injured and returned soldiers, and enormous stresses on spouses and children of soldiers sent to the war theatre.

(Mistreatment of Canadian soldiers by the Canadian government is nothing new: 1,700 former military personnel or families have launched a class action lawsuit because they were deliberately sprayed with Agent Orange during chemical weapons testing on Canadian military bases during the 1950’s, 1960’s and 1970’s. The military refuses to accept responsibility for its actions.)

### **Anti-women policies**

Canadian and NATO claims to be fighting to liberate women in Afghanistan have also received a rough ride as reports have detailed the anti-women policies of the Afghan governing regime.

One of the few public voices for women’s rights in Afghanistan is elected member of parliament Malalai Joya. She was expelled from the parliament in May, in part for criticizing the anti-women policies of the regime.

### **Humanitarian disaster continues**

While Canada, the U.S., Britain and other NATO countries press on with a cruel and destructive war, millions of Afghan people suffer horrific conditions. Several million continue to live in refugee camps along Afghanistan's borders. According to the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees, Afghans are the second largest group of refugees in the world, second only to Palestinians.

A glimpse of life in the rural areas of the country was given to readers of the CanWest newspaper chain in Canada on July 28 by correspondent Don Martin. Headlined, "Children starving in Kandahar area," the article describes a daylong tour by Martin and a hired guide on the outskirts of Kandahar city.

"Kids are starving in Kandahar and the surrounding refugee camps," wrote Martin. "And the allegation leveled by the Senlis Council, an international think tank now branching into humanitarian relief, is that the Canadian government won't help and doesn't care." He says he set out on his trip in order to prove or disprove the Senlis accusation.

His conclusion? He saw starving children everywhere he went and witnessed very little medical care and no public education. "The whole day was an unsettling experience."

"Could Canada make a difference? Absolutely. Should it do more? Seems obvious to me."

Martin's report echoes what the Senlis Council has been reporting for several years throughout Afghanistan. Its reports are ignored by mainstream news outlets in Canada and elsewhere.

### **Indifference to shocking conditions**

Former Vancouver paramedic Edward McCormick gave a similarly disturbing report to CanWest on February 17. In January, in a mission sponsored by the Senlis Council, he spent one month examining conditions in hospitals in Kandahar and British-occupied Hellman province. Conditions in the hospitals shocked him.

Kandahar city's main hospital, he reported, "is filthy and there is absolutely no medical equipment to be found anywhere." Patients, including children, are dying needlessly from war wounds.

In a particularly damning comment on the Canadian military, McCormick says, "There is no sign of foreign aid in those hospitals."

"The foreign army doctors have never bothered to go over and say hello." Canada's lavish home base in Kandahar is only a few kilometers up the road from the hospital that McCormick examined.

"There is a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan," he concludes, "and the neglect that continues to be demonstrated in Ottawa is fueling support for the insurgency."

Civilians are regularly killed in large numbers by aerial and artillery bombardments. NATO forces no longer call these "mistakes" —they are now regarded as just an unfortunate price of war.

Reports such as these parallel reports of the ugly reality of Iraq under U.S. and British occupation. A new report by the aid agency OXFAM at the end of July finds eight million people in Iraq in urgent need of food and medical aid. The lack of clean water and reliable electricity for much of the country is having devastating consequences for the population.

### **Government campaign**

The Conservative government of Stephen Harper is undeterred. It says the war will go on until “victory” is achieved, however long that may take. Harper underlined his commitment by visiting the war zone in May. “Terrorism will come home if we don’t confront it,” in Afghanistan, he told assembled journalists.

But there is growing unease even among the war’s supporters. The government and military now say they have a plan to turn fighting over to an “Afghan National Army” under construction. Faced with growing concern over Canadian casualties, they propose to eliminate that problem by putting more Afghans in the line of fire.

“The way to essentially reduce the risk is to have more Afghans doing the work,” said the new head of the Canadian forces in Afghanistan, Brigadier-General Guy Laroche, on July 27.

But the foreign overseers of this “army” do not trust it enough to provide vehicles, advanced weapons, or personal armour. Afghan police and soldiers regularly abuse and steal from the very civilian population whose “hearts and minds” they are supposed to win.

The government’s minister of defense, Gordon O’Connor, has so often lied and contradicted military officials that many war advocates including the country’s leading daily newspaper, the *Globe and Mail*, have called for his resignation.

Meanwhile, important voices are speaking out against the war. James Clancy, national president of the National Union of Public and General Employees, issued a statement in late July saying, “The proud and independent Afghani people oppose the occupation of their land by foreign troops. The insurgency is gaining ground by uniting people around the goal of forcing the foreign soldiers out. The simple fact is that things are not improving in Afghanistan – they are getting worse. It is doubtful that the presence of foreign troops can ever bring the peace and stability the people so desperately desire.”

Even the timid New Democratic Party has stepped up its voice in opposition to the war. Last year, it and the Bloc Québécois party voted in the Canadian parliament to oppose a two-year extension, to 2009, of the Canadian mission.

### **War will go on**

Criticism of the war will continue to mount, but so will the government’s stubborn pursuit of it, because the aims of this war go beyond the borders of Afghanistan. Canada has committed to spending billions of dollars on new military equipment and new fighting capacity — new tanks and helicopters; Canada’s first mobile fighter jet squadron ready for deployment anywhere in the world; new ships; and countless other items.



Why all this new hardware? Earlier this year, the army's head, Lieutenant-General Andrew Leslie, explained that the resources there are not for Afghanistan alone. "Let's not kid ourselves," he said. Too much has been invested.

"It is logical to expect that we will go somewhere fairly similar to Afghanistan and do much the same activity."

Iran? The oil fields of central Asia? Venezuela's troublesome revolution? The list of potential targets is long, but the government and military's hand is not as free as they would have us believe. Determined antiwar campaigning can play a decisive role in blocking Canada's imperial ambitions, and is needed more than ever today.

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## **Iran's Nuclear Energy Progress Sparks New Threats of Aggression**

**By Robert Johnson**

In recent months Iran has made large strides toward mastering nuclear technology. Alarmed by these advances, the Bush administration and its European allies have stepped up their hostile actions and threats, specifically:

- Attempting to prevent the entry into service of Iran's first nuclear power plant at Bushehr. The Bushehr reactor will use nuclear fuel imported from Russia.
- Attempting to prevent Iran from developing the capacity to produce its own nuclear fuel.
- Preparing to impose harsh new economic sanctions on the country.
- Threatening to attack Iran militarily if other means fail to achieve their aims.

The imperialist powers are particularly incensed by their failure to halt Iran's steady progress in learning how to enrich uranium, the key challenge in manufacturing fuel for a nuclear reactor.

The focus of the campaign against Iran is the accusation that it is developing nuclear weapons, something that Iran vehemently denies. The country has been subjected to years of intense scrutiny through intrusive on-site inspections of key nuclear facilities and surveillance by satellite and other means. These have produced not an iota of proof to support the accusation.

In fact, the attempt to deprive Iran of access to nuclear energy is part and parcel of imperialism's effort to restrict Iran's economic progress. This campaign against Iran has gone on ever since the Iranian revolution of 1979.

For many years, Iranians had chafed under the tyrannical dictatorship of the shah, a regime supported by Washington that slavishly applied policies favoring the U.S. and its Western European allies. In 1978 and 1979 millions of Iranians rose up in a massive revolutionary uprising, overthrew the shah, and established a government that is not beholden to Washington. Their example has set a powerful example for all oppressed peoples. The imperialists have never forgiven the Iranians for their "crime," and to this day they continue to display a particular hatred of Iran and its people.

The government that emerged from the 1979 revolution has pursued the narrow interests of Iran's capitalist class, and over the last three decades this has imposed a particularly heavy price on the country's toilers. Workers, students, women's rights advocates, and national minorities have often suffered harsh repression by the regime, as have those whose social and political views differ from those of the rulers.

Nevertheless, the revolution and its aftermath profoundly altered Iranian society, opening new avenues for the participation of the masses in social and political life and the achievement of some major social gains. These advances are reflected in aspects of the Iranian government's

international and domestic policies. For example, Iran stands in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, and it is a key obstacle to imperialism's campaign of military conquest in the Middle East. Above all, imperialism aims to crush the working people of Iran and their ability to continue struggling for their demands, in solidarity with other fighters around the world.

### **A long struggle to harness nuclear energy**

The striking advances in nuclear technology that Iran has made recently are important achievements not only for the Iranian people but also for all those who have an interest in seeing this technology cease to be the exclusive property of a handful of powerful states and their chosen friends.

Iran's attempt to harness nuclear energy predates its 1979 revolution.

During the shah's rule, the U.S. and its Western European allies induced Tehran to embrace nuclear power. An extensive program was begun with the goal of eventually building more than 20 nuclear reactors to generate electricity. Steps were also taken toward developing nuclear weapons. Shortly after the shah was overthrown, the Iranian government halted all of these projects.

Before long, Iran, now an Islamic republic, became the target of U.S.-led economic sanctions; these sanctions have had a particularly crippling effect on Iran's oil industry. Today Iran produces 4.0 million barrels of oil a day, well below the total of 5.5 million produced before 1979. A 1998 study concluded that 57 of Iran's 60 major oil fields need major repairs and upgrading. This will require investments of some \$40 billion over a 15-year period. (1) Moreover, despite its large energy resources, Iran is a net importer of gasoline and other refined petroleum products.

Some 38% of the country's oil output is consumed domestically, primarily to generate electricity. (2) While the country's oil production has declined since 1979, its population has more than doubled, to 70 million today. The need for electrical power is acute; demand is growing by 7% to 8% annually.

According to one expert, if current trends in energy consumption continue, within a few years Iran will become a net importer of oil. He notes that this would be "a gigantic catastrophe for a country which relies on oil for 80% of her foreign currency and 45% of her total annual budget. If that happens, how will Iran be able to feed her population, estimated to reach 100 million by 2025, and also spend on her development and national security? The fact is that, despite considerable efforts over the past 30 years, Iran's industrial output, aside from her oil industry, accounts for only 15% of her gross domestic product." (3)

Nuclear power is not Iran's only option to increase its supply of electricity. The country has the second-largest reserves of natural gas in the world, and gas-fired generation plants can be built relatively quickly and cheaply. But Iranian authorities emphasize that their country needs to diversify its sources of energy and to limit the consumption of hydrocarbons, both for environmental reasons and to conserve these resources for sale on the international market. In the

long term Iran, like other major energy exporters, aims to develop value-added industries that use its oil and gas as feedstock.

Iran's policy of energy diversification through nuclear power is no different from the routine practice of other, more powerful states. Russia and the United States are the world's first and third largest producers of crude oil respectively, yet they use nuclear power to produce between 15 and 20% of their electricity. Canada, another major oil producer, generates 16% of its electricity from nuclear plants (4) (5). By these standards Iran's goal is relatively modest: it aims to produce approximately 10% of its electricity, 7,000 megawatts, through nuclear power by 2020. This would require building six nuclear power plants in addition to the one at Bushehr.

To meet its acute need for more electricity, Iran must choose from the technologies currently available. Nuclear power certainly has its costs and hazards, but so do other large-scale energy sources. As a sovereign country Iran has every right to make its own policy choices in this field. Its right to develop nuclear power is affirmed by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty whose signatories include Iran and the major world powers (among them the very powers that are attempting to block Iran's access to nuclear energy).

Iranian society contains within it a diverse spectrum of opinions on many issues. But there is a broad national consensus on the country's need for nuclear power and on its sovereign right to this technology.

### **The battle for Bushehr**

Iran's first nuclear power plant at Bushehr is nearly ready to go into service. The inauguration of the plant will mark a major step forward for the Iranian people who have invested a great deal of effort and large sums of money over many years to bring it to fruition. Victory is tantalizingly close, yet the outcome still hangs in the balance. In fact, the saga of this plant illustrates the many obstacles that imperialism has erected to prevent Iran's progress.

Work began on the Bushehr complex on the Persian Gulf coast some 30 years ago under the shah. In 1975 Siemens signed a contract to build two nuclear reactors on the site at a cost of US\$4 billion–\$6 billion. But the German firm halted work and withdrew from the project after the 1979 revolution. At that point one reactor was 85% complete; the other was 50% complete. The following year Iraq invaded Iran, sparking a long and bloody war during which Iraq repeatedly bombed the Bushehr plant, destroying much of the key infrastructure. When the war ended in 1988, Iran asked Siemens to complete the project, but it refused because of American pressure. Siemens would not even provide Iran with the blueprints of the work that had been done and paid for. U.S. opposition to Bushehr made it impossible for Iran to induce any other Western company to undertake the project.

Finally, in January 1995 Russia agreed to help Iran build a 915 megawatt light water reactor for the plant. The cost to Iran was an estimated US\$800 million–\$1 billion. The plant was scheduled to begin operating in 2000. A separate contract signed in August 1995 provided for Russia to supply nuclear fuel to the Bushehr reactor for 10 years. To allay fears of proliferation of weapons-grade material, Iran agreed to return the spent reactor fuel to Russia under the

supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency, an agency of the United Nations. (Spent fuel contains the element plutonium which can serve as fuel for an atomic bomb.)

Construction of the plant has been beset with many technical problems and delays, but the work is now nearly complete. Last year Russia agreed to ship uranium reactor fuel to Bushehr by March 2007 and to open the plant in September. Electricity generation was scheduled to begin in November. Russia subsequently announced that the fuel for Bushehr was in storage and could be shipped to Iran within days of a decision by the relevant authorities. Everything seemed to be aligned for a successful launch of the power plant before the end of this year.

### **U.S. threats against Bushehr, Moscow's betrayal**

But in recent months, as work on Bushehr neared completion, the U.S. has pulled out all the stops to prevent its operation. It refuses to accept the assurances from Iran and Russia concerning the spent fuel. The international media have carried many deliberately leaked reports about plans by the U.S. or Israel to bomb the site before the reactor is loaded with nuclear fuel and begins operation. (The consequences of attacking an operating reactor are so extreme that under present circumstances such an operation seems rather unlikely.)

Parallel to these threats, the U.S. and its European allies have worked fiercely behind the scenes to dissuade Russia from collaborating with Iran on Bushehr. For some time Moscow resisted the pressure, while attempting to force Iran to bend to imperialist demands, particularly those related to Iran's production of nuclear fuel. However, as the U.S. escalated its threats and pressure in recent months, the Kremlin changed course. It decided to placate Washington by renegeing on its signed agreements with Iran.

On March 17 the *New York Times* reported that "Russia has informed Iran that it will withhold nuclear fuel for Iran's nearly completed Bushehr power plant unless Iran suspends its uranium enrichment as demanded by the United Nations Security Council. European, American and Iranian officials said. ...

"Russian officials have acknowledged that Russia is delaying the delivery of fuel to the reactor in the port city of Bushehr. The officials attributed the delay to the failure of Iran to pay what it owes, not on nuclear proliferation concerns.

"But last month, Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov informed some European officials that Russia had made a political decision not to deliver the fuel, adding that Russia would state publicly that the sole reason was financial, European officials said." (6)

This report was confirmed on July 25 when a Russian firm working on Bushehr announced that the reactor would not be ready before autumn 2008. The public announcement, made on the day that an Iranian delegation arrived in Moscow for further negotiations over Bushehr, preempted the negotiations. Iranians naturally reacted to the news with shock and anger.

The Russian claim that the delay is due to a dispute over payments is ludicrous. There is no conceivable reason why Iran, having invested so much effort and money in the project, would stop paying its bills just as the plant neared completion. The Iranians flatly deny the claim and

say that they are prepared to publish the record of their payments to the Russian nuclear subcontractors.

The ultimate fate of Bushehr is now unclear. It is already seven years behind schedule. Iran's need for more electric power is urgent and the inability to add new power from Bushehr to the national grid for some time to come is a serious blow to the Iranian economy. Iranian authorities are quoted in some reports as saying that they are prepared to complete the construction of the plant without Russian participation. Even if this is technically feasible, in the short term there appears to be no other source to which Iran can turn to obtain fuel for the reactor.

Iranian commentators have also drawn a link between Russia's decision on Bushehr and an offer that it made to the U.S. a few months earlier. To dissuade Washington from installing antimissile systems in Eastern Europe close to Russia, Russian president Vladimir Putin offered to share information on Iran's missile capabilities with the U.S. The source of the data is a giant Russian-operated radar station in Azerbaijan, a country on Iran's northern border. Iran sharply protested the Russian proposal which would have undermined the country's ability to defend itself. Unwilling to abandon his antimissile plans for Eastern Europe, President George W. Bush declined Putin's offer.

### **The other flash point: Iran's production of nuclear fuel**

The second major point of contention between Iran and the imperialist powers has been Iran's insistence that it has the right to manufacture the fuel for nuclear reactors domestically. Through years of negotiations with many twists and turns, Iran has steadfastly insisted on this right as a matter of principle.

Iran's experience with Russia on the Bushehr project certainly illustrates the risks of depending on outside sources to provide fuel for its reactors. It makes no sense for Iran to build seven Bushehr-type reactors by 2020 without ensuring a reliable source of fuel for them. There is also an economic consideration. The small number of suppliers who control the world market for nuclear fuel charge high prices because of their virtual monopoly. One of Iran's long-term goals is to become an exporter of nuclear fuel.

Iran has all of the prerequisites for producing nuclear fuel: domestic sources of uranium, a highly skilled workforce of engineers and technicians, and an economy large enough to support the necessary investments in plants and equipment.

To manufacture fuel for a reactor like the one at Bushehr, the uranium found in nature must undergo a sequence of complex industrial processing. The key step is enriching the uranium — that is, increasing the proportion of the U-235 isotope in uranium from 0.7%, the amount found in nature, to at least 3.5%. The process poses some extremely difficult technical challenges.

The most common technique for enrichment is to feed a uranium compound in gaseous form into a large number of centrifuges which spin the gas at an extremely high speed. Because of the slight difference in weight of the two uranium isotopes, U-235 and U-238, centrifugal forces tend to separate the gas containing the different isotopes. The proportion of U-235 increases very

slightly in each operation. To attain the desired level of concentration, thousands of centrifuges must be connected together and their operation carefully coordinated.

Not surprisingly, Iran began its uranium enrichment activities in secret. According to various sources, in 1987 it began buying drawings and parts for centrifuges from Abdul Qadeer Khan, the Pakistani nuclear expert. International inspectors say the deals eventually included parts for about 500 primitive used centrifuges.

But Tehran apparently was dissatisfied with their quality, so in 1995 it bought an entire plant of thousands of centrifuges from Russia. Moscow subsequently cancelled the deal, responding to pressure from the Clinton administration. Iran then set out on the more difficult route of developing the technology on its own. It began reproducing and enhancing large numbers of centrifuges based on Khan's designs. It also started building a large uranium enrichment plant at Natanz. The pilot factory there was to house 1,000 centrifuges; the main plant would shelter 50,000 machines. This facility has been built deep under ground to protect it from aerial attack.

Iran still faces many technical hurdles before it can enrich sufficient quantities of uranium to power a reactor. But the speed with which it has overcome obstacles has surprised many observers. This demonstration of scientific and engineering prowess is a source of pride for many Iranians.

On May 15 the *New York Times* reported that "inspectors for the International Atomic Energy Agency have concluded that Iran appears to have solved most of its technological problems and is now beginning to enrich uranium on a far larger scale than before, according to the agency's top officials. The findings may change the calculus of diplomacy in Europe and in Washington, which has aimed to force a suspension of Iran's enrichment activities in large part to prevent it from learning how to produce weapons-grade material."

The *Times* quoted the director general of the international energy agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, as saying, "We believe they pretty much have the knowledge about how to enrich. ... From now on, it is simply a question of perfecting that knowledge. People will not like to hear it, but that's a fact." (7)

A subsequent report cited a UN official as saying that by mid-June Iran had 2,000 centrifuges on line and was on pace for 3,000 by July. (8) This would be a giant step toward enriching uranium on the industrial scale necessary to fuel a nuclear reactor. On July 6 ElBaradei reported that the pace of expansion had slowed. There are likely further technical challenges to be overcome, but as ElBaradei noted, the overall direction is clear: Iran is increasingly acquiring the necessary expertise. Time does not favour those who want to deprive Iran of access to nuclear technology.

### **Growing threat of imperialist aggression**

For this very reason, the threat of an imperialist attack on Iran is very real. The July 19 issue of *The Economist*, a magazine that is an influential voice in shaping imperialist policy, expressed its concerns in these terms: "The mild sanctions imposed so far are not working, and now the technological clock in Natanz is outrunning the diplomatic clock at the United Nations. Iran may soon work out how to spin its centrifuges at full speed for long periods; and once it learns how to

do that the odds of stopping it from building a bomb will rapidly lengthen. This suggests that a third sanctions resolution, with sharper teeth, needs to be enacted without delay.” (9)

Harsh new economic sanctions such as a ban on shipments of gasoline to Iran could potentially devastate the country’s economy. But this is not the only threat facing Iranians. Notwithstanding the crisis the U.S. faces over its occupation of Iraq and the widespread antiwar sentiment in the American population, Washington and Tel Aviv are seriously considering a military attack on Iran if that is the only way that they can reverse Iran’s nuclear progress. The consequences of such aggression, whether economic or military — or both — are likely to be far-reaching. But so too, from their perspective, are the consequences of failing to act and allowing Iran to achieve its goals.

The stakes are equally large for working people. We must vigorously defend Iran’s right to nuclear energy. We must also be vigilant and ready to mobilize against the threat of new measures against Iran, whatever their form.

*(A forthcoming article will discuss the claim that Iran is attempting to develop nuclear weapons.)*

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Socialist Voice #194, August 15, 2007

## **The Epic Struggle of Indigenous Andean-Amazonian Culture**

**By Hugo Blanco**

*The following is the text of a presentation that the Peruvian socialist leader Hugo Blanco will make to the Latin American Studies Association Conference in Montreal, September 5-8. For more about the author see "About Hugo Blanco" at the end of article.*

(July 2007) Over the course of more than 10,000 years, the rich biodiversity of the Andes-Amazon region has created a culture that is closely interlocked with Pachamama (Mother Nature). This culture is marked by deep knowledge of nature and is highly agricultural. Ours is one of the seven zones of the world to have originated agriculture. It has yielded the greatest variety of domesticated species. This has given rise to a cosmic vision different from the Western outlook that views the creator as a superior immaterial spirit who created man in his image and likeness and created nature to serve him. For the indigenous cosmic vision, humanity is a daughter of and part of Mother Earth. We must live in her bosom in harmony with her. Each hill or peak, each river, each vegetable or animal species has a spirit.

Indigenous, collectivist mentality is strong enough to have endured solidly through 500 years of invasion and the dictatorship of individualism.

The Quechua and Aymara name for the campesino community is ayllu. It is bound by strong ties, many expressed in work (ayni, mink'a, faena)[1] and in all aspects of life. The community is not restricted to persons. It entails a close communal relationship with cultivated species, with medicinal species, with animals and plants that tell cultivators about seasonal variations,[2] and, more broadly, with all animal and vegetable species, with rain, and with the land.

The development of agriculture and tending of livestock, which in other latitudes led to slavery and feudalism, led in Abya Yala (the Americas) to new forms of collectivism. In the Andes zone it led to a state that extended over the territories of six present-day countries – Tawantinsuyo (called "empire" by the invaders out of the same ignorance that led them to call the llama "big sheep.")

It's true that the new forms of collectivism gave rise to privileged castes and wars of conquest. But in no part of the continent was production based on slave labor or the feudal system.

- For more than 10,000 years our culture domesticated 182 plant species, including around 3,500 potato varieties.
- Our people know 4,500 medicinal plants.
- Tawantinsuyos planned agriculture based on a system of watersheds and micro watersheds or basins.
- They built long aqueducts, taking care to avoid land erosion.

- Terracing was practiced on the slopes and “waru-waru”[3] in the altiplano (highlands).[4]
- Special technologies were used from zone to zone.

Across the entire Tawantinsuyo territory they created storage buildings (qolqa) to supply food to the population whenever some climatic shift undermined agriculture.

Although there were privileged castes, hunger and misery did not exist. Orphans, persons with disabilities, and the elderly were cared for by the community.

### **The invasion**

The backbone of this social organization, of the agricultural infrastructure and food reserves, was crushed by the invasion.

Europe was then passing from feudalism to capitalism. The invasion was a capitalist action. They came looking for spices, believing they had reached India. They found none, but did find gold and silver.

Mining had existed as a marginal activity, but it now became the center of the economy. To exploit the mines they used a system worse than slavery. The slave owner is concerned about the health of his slave just as he’s interested in the health of his donkey. The mine owner in Peru received annually a certain quantity of indigenous people in order to “indoctrinate” them. Regardless of how many of them died, the next year he would receive the same number. Hence, youth and adults were sent into the mines and never left until they died. Because of this, young indigenous people committed suicide and mothers killed their children to free them from torment. This practice diminished following the Tupac Amaru rebellion.

Agricultural work took place through a feudal system. The Europeans took the best lands from the community and converted them into latifundios (huge estates or latifundia). Community inhabitants became serfs on their own lands. They had to work freely for the feudal lord in exchange for permission to cultivate a small plot for their own needs.

For many reasons a huge decline in agriculture took place:

- Canals, terracing, and waru-warus were destroyed because of ignorance and lack of care.
- Until this day no planning in terms of watersheds and micro watersheds has been carried out. Chaos took hold and persists.
- With the importation of foreign domestic animals to the zone, the environment deteriorated. The auquenidos (camelid)[5] cut pasture grass with their teeth, but cows, horses, and sheep uproot it.

The invaders vented their superstitions on our crops. Our agricultural mentality didn’t suit their cultured ways. So the “exterminators of idolaters” went after plants like the papa, also known as Santa Padre (Holy Father). They renamed it patata, the word used in Spain. This passed into English and other languages as “potato.” They also damned kiwicha or amaranto (amaranth). The coca plant, which the famous doctor Hipólito Unanue called the “supertonic of the vegetable

kingdom,” is to this day the target of superstition and excessively harmful prejudice in “refined” circles.

The invaders pillaged the food stockpiles located across the territory to cope with times of hunger brought on by climatic irregularities.

Taking their behavior as a whole, we find that European imposition of hunger and misery — their cultural contribution — was even more deadly than their massacres and the smallpox they spread among us.

### **Rebellions and republic**

From the beginning, our people rebelled against the invaders. Numerous insurrections took place, beginning with Tupac Amaru II's rebellion. It spread all the way to Bolivia and lasted even after his cruel torture and assassination.

Later the so-called Revolución de la Independencia took place. It did not signify any noticeable change for the indigenous population.

The generals of “independence” were awarded “haciendas” (the new name for the feudal latifundia), “Indians” and all.

The hacienda system consisted basically of the free labor of the colono (serf) for the hacienda. There were other aspects to this serfdom.

The colono had to turn over some of his animals that grazed on natural pastures to the master. He made long treks with pack mules burdened with hacienda produce. They lasted days and he had to sleep out in the open. The owner mistreated him physically and morally. He could jail him and rape the women. The serf's children did not go to school either because they had to work, or there were no schools, or the master forbade it.

### **Our land struggle in the 1960s**

The hacienda feudal system lasted until the second half of the last century.

The spread of capitalism to the countryside weakened it in many ways:

- New large-scale mining absorbed labor from the haciendas.
- New mechanized latifundia expelled the serfs and employed an agricultural proletariat.
- New high-priced crops required more labor time, pressing the hacienda owner to demand more work from his serfs and to expel them in order to take over their plots. The serfs, on the other hand, needed more time for their own labors and resisted the theft of their plots.

We organized ourselves to struggle against the new outrages. Given the intransigence of the landlords, the struggle became a fight for possession of the land.

Our defensive action not only set us against the landlords but also against the government which defended the feudal system.

In over 100 haciendas we refused to work for the landlords. But we continued to work our own plots. This was in practice an agrarian reform. The government repressed us with arms and we

defended ourselves with arms. The military government of the day crushed the armed self-defense; but it took note that it would be impossible to re-implant feudal serfdom. It opted to pass an agrarian reform law — only in this zone — legalizing campesino possession of the land. But indigenous campesinos in other zones of the country rebelled and took over haciendas. This was violently repressed, but could not be effectively contained. Hence, a subsequent reformist military government felt obliged to decree an agrarian reform at the national level.

In this way, we took advantage of capitalism's weakening of the feudal system to take over the land. In this same epoch the Brazilian campesino movement was shattered. Capitalism triumphed there. Its victims are now struggling courageously in the "Landless Workers' Movement."

For this reason Peru is, with the likely exception of Cuba, the country of the continent with the greatest proportion of landowners, either of communal or private plots.

Some campesinos from the epoch of struggle for the land feel the qualitative change. "Now we are free," they say. They consider that breaking down feudal servitude also broke them free from the yoke that had gripped them.

Following the rupture they worked for education, building schools and paying men and women teachers. Later they fought to get the state to pay them. They built health centres and fought to get the state to pay for health services.

They got the vote and elected their own mayors. They fought against mining pollution. They struggled to assume in a collective manner police and judicial functions, to replace corrupt cops and judges. They fought against corrupt authorities of any stripe — and for many other things.

They feel that breaking from feudal servitude freed them to spread wings and carry the struggle forward.

### **Current struggles**

Most current struggles of indigenous campesinos are against the killing of Pachamama, Mother Earth; against depredations by the large companies, mainly mining, but also petroleum and gas. Previous Peruvian governments were servants of feudal lords; today they serve the great multinationals. They act against the Peruvian people and against nature.

Living conditions are another cause of struggle. There is more and more unemployment, and the standard of living is falling. In the countryside this is due to excessively low prices for farm products. This is linked to the struggle against the Free Trade Agreement with the United States that will demolish our agriculture for the benefit of large, subsidized imperial firms.

The indigenous movement, together with the rest of the Peruvian population, is fighting against corruption and to get their own representatives into local governments. People often suffer betrayals because there is no system for authentic democratic control.

### **Our allies**

The indigenous movement is not alone. Although it is the most vigorous and persevering, it is not unique. The rest of the people are struggling together with us.

Intellectuals called indigenistas, whether indigenous or not, merit special mention. Ever since the oppression of the original peoples of our continent began there have been individuals who have struggled against it and to defend our culture.

The work of Father Bartolomé de las Casas is known.

In Peru there were notable political figures like González Prada and Mariátegui. Writers like Clorinda Matto, Ciro Alegría, José María Arguedas. Painters like José Sabogal. Musicians like Alomía Robles, Baltasar Zegarra, Roberto Ojeda, Leandro Alviña, and so on.

The meaning of our struggle We are defending our culture in its diverse aspects: our cosmic vision, social organization, our rituals and agricultural know-how, medicine, music, language, and many others.

We do not claim that our culture is superior to others. We are struggling to stop it from being considered inferior.

We want to be respected as equals.

We have been educated to harmonize equality and diversity. Peru is a mega-diverse country, both geographically and demographically. We have 82% of the world's 103 natural life zones. Our inhabitants speak 45 different languages. The great Inca Sun God celebration was not exclusive. It had a procession of different peoples with diverse gods. The notion of "one God" did not exist. We are for the equality of the diverse; we are against homogenization (igualitarismo).

On the one hand we respect diverse individualities and particularities. On the other, we oppose individualism. Ours is a culture of solidarity.

We don't seek a return to the past. We know we must make the best in general of advances in human culture.

That does not contradict our resolve to go back to our own roots. Our past will be vividly present in our future.

We love and care for Pachamama. We fervently yearn to return to basing our economy on our rich biodiversity, through agriculture and natural medicine, along with any modern advances that do no harm.

We don't want our social system to be based on the deep-seated, antisocial individualism that the invaders brought here. We intend to recover and strengthen at all levels the vigorous, collectivist solidarity and fraternity of the ayllu, making use, as well, of universal knowledge that is not harmful.

We dream that the past 500 years of crushing blows are just a passing nightmare in the ten thousand years of building our culture.

**About Hugo Blanco.** This essay was first published in Spanish (under the title Nuestra Cultura) in the magazine *Sin Permiso* in its June 2007 edition. *Sin Permiso* is a Spanish-language

quarterly socialist magazine and a monthly e-zine edited by a multinational team that includes the author.

Hugo Blanco was leader of the Quechua peasant uprising in the Cuzco region of Peru in the early 1960s. He was captured by the military and sentenced to 25 years in El Fronton Island prison for his activities. While in prison, he wrote *Land or Death: The Peasant Struggle in Peru*. It was published in English by Pathfinder Press in 1972 and is must-reading for anyone who wishes to understand the liberation struggles of peasants and indigenous people in that region.

An international defence campaign that gained the support of such figures as Ernesto Che Guevara, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Bertrand Russell succeeded in winning his freedom. After a period in exile in Mexico, Chile, and Sweden, Blanco returned to Peru where he won election to the national parliament on a united left slate. He has continued to play an active role in Peru's indigenous, campesino, and environmental movements, and writes on Peruvian, indigenous, and Latin American issues.

The article was translated Phil Cournoyer. In the 1960s Cournoyer participated in the worldwide defence campaign to win Blanco's freedom and a decade later coordinated a cross-Canada speaking tour of the Peruvian indigenous leader.

#### **Reference Notes**

[1]. These terms from a collectivist language are not translatable to an individualist. Ayni means the mutual lending of work, as collective activity for the benefit of an individual. Faena is collective work for collective benefit. Mink'a is asking for a service with profuse and warm urgings.[2]. There are "signs" that tell indigenous campesinos how climate or weather conditions may change or how a given crop may fare. Abundant or poor blossoming of a forest plant, the coloration of snakes, the height of bird nests, the greater or lesser brilliance of a constellation, etc.

[3]. Waru-waru is the practice of alternating belts of elevated fields and ditches (or swales); planting is done on the elevated belts. This has the function of avoiding floods in rainy years. In dry years water held in the ditches is used for irrigation. Heat absorbed by ditch water during the day helps to counteract cold nights at frost time.

[4]. [Translator's Note] A good description of this agricultural technology can be found at <http://carbon.hampshire.edu/~hms/Articles%20for%20Maja/EnvNatAndes.doc> Here is an excerpt from the essay *Environment and Nature in South America: the Central Andes*:

"The local agro-pastoralists constructed raised fields systems or waru-waru and sunken smaller garden patches or qochas to address these problems. Construction of raised, ridged fields, with swales or canals between the ridges, resulted in ridge-top areas above the waterlogged soils in the rainy season, eliminating rot among the tubers. Both the qocha system and the intervening canals among the raised fields trapped rainwater, which was curated through the dry season to provide a continuing water supply.

"In addition to managing moisture, these systems also ameliorated temperature extremes. Thus the raised field patterns, and furrows in the qochas, were constructed either parallel to, or perpendicular to, the path of the sun, an orientation which permitted maximum solar energy capture by the water. This water kept the fields slightly warmer at night, and often radiated enough heat to prevent frost damage while the surrounding unmodified grasslands suffered heavy freezes."

[5]. Auquenidos (camelid) are animals found in the Andes mountains, relatives of the camels. They are also called camelidos in Spanish. In Peru there are four different auquenidos: llamas, alpacas, vicuñas and guanacos. Llamas and guanacos are beasts of burden, while alpacas and vicuñas are used for their wool.

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## **The Empire and the Independent Island**

**by Fidel Castro Ruz**

**August 14, 2007**

The history of Cuba during the last 140 years is one of struggle to preserve national identity and independence, and the history of the evolution of the American empire, its constant craving to appropriate Cuba and of the horrendous methods that it uses today to hold on to world domination.

Prominent Cuban historians have dealt in depth with these subjects in different periods and in various excellent books which deserve to be readily available to our compatriots. These reflections are addressed especially to the new generations with the aim of helping them learn about very important and decisive events in the destiny of our homeland.

### **Part I: The Imposition of the Platt Amendment as an appendix to the Neocolonial Cuban Constitution of 1901.**

The “ripe fruit doctrine” was formulated in 1823 by Secretary of State and later President John Quincy Adams. The United States would inevitably achieve taking over our country, by the law of political influence, once colonial subordination to Spain had ended.

Under the pretext of blowing up the “Maine” –a still unraveled event of which it took advantage to wage war against Spain, like the Gulf of Tonkin incident, an event which was demonstrably prefabricated in order to attack North Vietnam –President William McKinley signed the Joint Resolution of April 20, 1898, stating “...that the people on the island of Cuba are and by right ought to be free and independent”, “... that the United States herewith declare that they have no desire or intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction or control over said island, except for pacification thereof, and they affirm their determination, after this has been accomplished, to leave the government and control of the island to its people.” The Joint Resolution entitled the President to use force to remove the Spanish government from Cuba.

Colonel Leonard Wood, chief commander of the Rough Riders, and Theodore Roosevelt, second in command of the expansionist volunteers who landed in our country on the beaches close to Santiago de Cuba, after the brave but poorly utilized Spanish squadron and their Marine infantry on board had been destroyed by the American battleships, requested the support of Cuban insurrectionists who had weakened and defeated the Spanish Colonial Army after enormous sacrifices. The Rough Riders had landed without horses.

Following the defeat of Spain, representatives of the Queen Regent of Spain and of the President of the United States signed the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898 and, without consulting of the Cuban people, agreed that Spain should relinquish all claim of sovereignty over and title to the island and would evacuate it. Cuba would then be occupied by the United States on a temporary basis.

Already appointed U.S. military governor, Army Major General Leonard Wood, issued Military Order 301 of July 25, 1900, which called for a general election to choose delegates to a Constitutional Assembly that would be held in the city of Havana at twelve noon on the first Monday of November in 1900, with the purpose of drafting and adopting a Constitution for the people of Cuba.

On September 15, 1900, elections took place and 31 delegates from the National, Republican and Democratic Union parties were elected. On November 5, 1900, the Constitutional Convention held its opening session at the Irijoa Theatre of Havana which on that occasion received the name of Martí Theatre.

General Wood, representing the President of the United States, declared the Assembly officially installed. Wood advanced the intention of the United States government: "After you have drawn up the relations which, in your opinion, ought to exist between Cuba and the United States, the government of the United States will undoubtedly adopt the measures conducive to a final and authorized treaty between the peoples of both nations, aimed at promoting the growth of their common interests."

The 1901 Constitution provided in its Article 2 that "the territory of the Republic is composed of the Island of Cuba, as well as the islands and neighboring keys which together were under Spanish sovereignty until the ratification of the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898".

Once the Constitution was drafted, the time had come to define political relations between Cuba and the United States. To that end, on February 12, 1901, a committee of five members was appointed and charged with studying and proposing a procedure that would lead to the stated goal.

On February 15, Governor Wood invited the members of the committee to go fishing and hosted a banquet in Batabanó, the main access route to the Isle of Pines, as it was known then, also occupied at that time by the U.S. troops which had intervened in the Cuban War of Independence. It was there in Batabanó that he revealed to them a letter from the Secretary of War, Elihu Root, containing the basic aspects of the future Platt Amendment. According to instructions from Washington, relations between Cuba and the United States were to abide by several aspects. The fifth of these was that, in order to make it easier for the United States to fulfill such tasks as were placed under its responsibility by the above mentioned provisions, and for its own defense, the United States could acquire title, and preserve it, for lands to be used for naval bases and maintain these in certain specific points.

Upon learning of the conditions demanded by the U.S. government, the Cuban Constitutional Assembly, on February 27, 1901, passed a position that was opposed to that of the U.S. Executive, eliminating therein the establishment of naval bases.

The U.S. government made an agreement with Orville H. Platt, Republican Senator from Connecticut, to present an amendment to the proposed Army Appropriations Bill which would make the establishment of American naval bases on Cuban soil a fait accompli.



In the Amendment, passed by the U.S. Senate on February 27, 1901 and by the House of Representatives on March 1, and sanctioned by President McKinley the following day, as a rider attached to the “Bill granting credit to the Army for the fiscal year ending on June 30, 1902,” the article mentioning the naval bases was drafted as follows:

“Art. VII.- That to enable the United States to maintain the independence of Cuba, and to protect the people thereof, as well as for its own defense, the government of Cuba will sell or lease to the United States lands necessary for coaling or naval stations at certain specified points to be agreed upon with the President of the United States.”

Article VIII adds: “...the government of Cuba will embody the foregoing provisions in a permanent treaty with the United States.”

The speedy passage of the Amendment by the U.S. Congress was due to the circumstance of it coming close to the conclusion of the legislative term and to the fact that President McKinley had a clear majority in both Houses so that the Amendment could be passed without any problem. It became a United States Law when, on March 4, McKinley was sworn in for his second presidential term in office.

Some members of the Constitutional Convention maintained the view that they were not empowered to adopt the Amendment requested by the United States since this implied limitations on the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Cuba. Thus, the military governor Leonard Wood hastened to issue a new Military Order on March 12, 1901 where it was declared that the Convention was empowered to adopt the measures whose constitutionality was in question.

Other Convention members, such as Manuel Sanguily, held the opinion that the Assembly should be dissolved rather than adopt measures that so drastically offended the dignity and sovereignty of the people of Cuba. But during the session of March 7, 1901, a committee was appointed yet again in order to draft an answer to Governor Wood; the presentation of this was entrusted to Juan Gualberto Gómez who recommended, among other things, rejecting the clause concerning the leasing of coaling or naval stations.

Juan Gualberto Gómez maintained the most severe criticism of the Platt Amendment. On April 1, he tabled a debate of the presentation where he challenged the document on the grounds that it contravened the principles of the Treaty of Paris and of the Joint Resolution. But the Convention suspended the debate on Juan Gualberto Gómez’s presentation and decided to send another committee “to ascertain the motives and intentions of the government of the United States about any and all details referring to the establishment of a definitive order to relations, both political and economic, between Cuba and the United States, and to negotiate with the government itself, the bases for agreement on those extremes that would be proposed to the Convention for a final solution.”

Subsequently, a committee was elected that would travel to Washington, made up of Domingo Méndez Capote, Diego Tamayo, Pedro González Llorente, Rafael Portuondo Tamayo and Pedro Betancourt; they arrived in the United States on April 24, 1901. The next day, they met with Root and Wood who had earlier traveled back to his country for this purpose.

The American government hastened to publicly declare that the committee would be visiting Washington on their own initiative, with no invitation or official status.

Root, Secretary of War, met with the committee on April 25 and 26, 1901 and categorically informed them that “the United States’ right to impose the much debated clauses had been proclaimed for three-quarters of a century in the face of the American and European world and they were not willing to give it up to the point of putting their own safety in jeopardy.”

United States officials reiterated that none of the Platt Amendment clauses undermined the sovereignty and independence of Cuba; on the contrary, they would preserve them, and it was clarified that intervention would only occur in the case of severe disturbances, and only with the objective of maintaining order and internal peace.

The committee presented its report in a secret session on May 7, 1901. Within the committee there were severe discrepancies about the Platt Amendment.

On May 28, a paper drafted by Villuendas, Tamayo and Quesada was tabled for debate; it accepted the Amendment with some clarifications and recommended the signing of a treaty on trade reciprocity.

This paper was approved by a vote of 15 to 14, but the United States government didn’t accept that solution. It informed through Governor Wood that it would only accept the Amendment without qualifiers, and warned the Convention with an ultimatum that, since the Platt Amendment was “a statute passed by the Legislature of the United States, the President is obliged to carry it out as it is. He cannot change or alter it, add or take anything out. The executive action demanded by the statute is the withdrawal of the American Army from Cuba, and the statute authorizes this action when, and only when, a Constitutional government has been established which contains, either in its body or in appendices, certain categorical provisions, specified in the statute (...) Then if these provisions are found in the Constitution, the President will be authorized to withdraw the Army; if he does not find them there, then he will not be authorized to withdraw the Army...”

The United States Secretary of War sent a letter to the Cuban Constitutional Assembly where he stated that the Platt Amendment should be passed in its entirety with no clarifications, because in that way it would appear as a rider to the Army Appropriations Bill; he indicated that, otherwise, his country’s military forces would not be pulled out of Cuba.

On June 12, 1901, during another secret session of the Constitutional Assembly, the incorporation of the Platt Amendment as an appendix to the Constitution of the Republic passed on February 21 was put to the vote: 16 delegates voted aye and 11 voted nay. Bravo Correoso, Robau, Gener and Rius Rivera were absent from the session, abstaining from voting in favor of such a monstrosity.

The worst thing about the Amendment was the hypocrisy, the deceit, the Machiavellianism and the cynicism with which they concocted the plan to take over Cuba, to the lengths of publicly proclaiming the same arguments made by John Quincy Adams in 1823, about the apple which would fall because of gravity. This apple finally did fall, but it was rotten, just as many Cuban

intellectuals had foreseen for almost half a century, from José Martí in the 1880's right up to Julio Antonio Mella, assassinated in January of 1929.

Nobody better than Leonard Wood himself to describe what the Platt Amendment would mean for Cuba in two sections of a confidential letter to his fellow in the adventure, Theodore Roosevelt, dated on October 28, 1901:

“There is, of course, little or no independence left Cuba under the Platt Amendment. (...) the only consistent thing to do now is to seek annexation. This, however, will take some time, and during the period which Cuba maintains her own government, it is most desirable that she should be able to maintain such a one as will tend to her advancement and betterment. She cannot make certain treaties without our consent (...) and must maintain certain sanitary conditions (...), from all of which it is quite apparent that she is absolutely in our hands, and I believe that no European government for a moment considers that she is otherwise than a practical dependency of the United States, and as such is certainly entitled to our consideration. (...) With the control which we have over Cuba, a control which will soon undoubtedly become possession, (...) we shall soon practically control the sugar trade of the world. (...) the island will (...) gradually become Americanized and we shall have in time one of the richest and most desirable possessions in the world.”

## **Part II: The Application of the Platt Amendment and the Establishing of the Guantanamo Naval Base as a Framework for Relations between Cuba and the United States.**

By the end of 1901, the electoral process which resulted in the triumph of Tomás Estrada Palma, without opposition and with the support of 47 percent of the electorate, had begun. On April 17, 1902, the President-elect in absentia left the United States for Cuba where he arrived three days later. The inauguration of the new President took place on May 20, 1902 at 12 noon. The Congress of the Republic had already been constituted. Leonard Wood set sail for his country in the battleship “Brooklyn”.

In 1902, shortly before the proclamation of the Republic, the United States government informed the newly elected President of the Island about the four sites selected for the establishing of naval bases -Cienfuegos, Bahía Honda, Guantanamo and Nipe – as provided by the Platt Amendment. Not even the Port of Havana escaped consideration since it was contemplated as “the most favorable for the fourth naval base”.

From the beginning, despite its spurious origins, the Government of Cuba, in which many of those who fought for independence participated, was opposed to the concession of four naval bases since it considered two to be more than enough. The situation grew tenser when the Cuban government toughened its stand and demanded the final drafting of the Permanent Agreement on Relations, with the goal of “determining at the same time and not in parts, all the details that were the object of the Platt Amendment and setting the range of their precepts”.

President McKinley had died in September 14, 1901 as a result of gunshot wounds he had sustained on the 6th of that month. Theodore Roosevelt had advanced to such a degree in his political career that he was already Vice President of the United States and so he had assumed

the presidency after the shooting of his predecessor. Roosevelt, at that time did not deem it to be convenient to specify the scope of the Platt Amendment, so as not to delay the military installation of the Guantanamo Base, given what that would mean for the defense of the Canal whose construction France had begun and later abandoned in the Central American Isthmus, and which the voracious government of the empire intended to complete at all costs. Nor was he interested in defining the legal status of the Isle of Pines. Therefore, he abruptly reduced the number of naval bases under discussion, removed the Port of Havana suggestion and finally agreed to the concession of two bases: Guantanamo and Bahía Honda.

Subsequently, in compliance with Article VII of the constitutional appendix imposed on the Constitutional Convention, the Agreement was signed by the Presidents of Cuba and the United States on February 16 and 23, 1903, respectively:

“Article I. – The Republic of Cuba hereby leases to the United States, for the time required for the purposes of coaling and naval stations, the following described areas of land and water situated in the Island of Cuba:

“1st. In Guantanamo”...(A complete description of the bay and neighboring territory is made.)

“2nd. In Bahia Honda...” (Another similar description is made.)

This Agreement establishes:

“Article III. –While on the one hand the United States recognizes the continuance of the ultimate sovereignty of the Republic of Cuba over the above described areas of land and water, on the other hand the Republic of Cuba consents that during the period of the occupation by the United States of said areas under the terms of this agreement the United States shall exercise complete jurisdiction and control over and within said areas with the right to acquire for the public purposes of the United States any land or other property therein by purchase or by exercise of eminent domain with full compensation to the owners thereof.”

On May 28, 1903, surveying began to establish the boundaries of the Guantanamo Naval Station.

In the Agreement of July 2, 1903, dealing with the same subject, the “Regulations for the Lease of Naval and Coaling Stations” was passed:

“Article I.- The United States of America agrees and covenants to pay the Republic of Cuba the annual sum of two thousand dollars, in gold coin of the United States, as long as the former shall occupy and use said areas of land by virtue of said agreement.”

“All private lands and other real property within said areas shall be acquired forthwith by the Republic of Cuba.”

“The United States of America agrees to furnish to the Republic of Cuba the sums necessary for the purchase of said private lands and properties and such sums shall be accepted by the Republic of Cuba as advance payment on account of rental due by virtue of said Agreement.”

The Agreement which governed this lease, signed in Havana by representatives of the Presidents of Cuba and the United States respectively, was passed by the Cuban Senate on July 16, 1903, ratified by the President of Cuba a month later on August 16, and by the President of the United States on October 2, and after exchanging ratifications in Washington on October 6, it was published in the Gazette of Cuba on the 12th of the same month and year.

Dated on December 14, 1903, it was informed that four days earlier on the 10th of the same month, the United States had been given possession of the areas of water and land for the establishing of a naval station in Guantanamo.

For the United States Government and Navy, the transfer of part of the territory of the largest island in the Antilles was a source of great rejoicing and they intended to celebrate the event. Vessels belonging to the Caribbean Squadron and some battleships from the North Atlantic Fleet converged on Guantanamo.

The Cuban government appointed the Head of Public Works of Santiago de Cuba to deliver that part of the territory over which it technically exercised sovereignty on December 10, 1903, the date chosen by the United States. He would be the only Cuban present at the ceremony and just for a brief time since, once his mission was accomplished, without any toasts or handshakes, he left for the neighboring town of Caimanera.

The Head of Public Works had boarded the battleship “Kearsage”, which was the U.S. flagship, where he met Rear Admiral Barker. At 12:00 hours a 21-gun-salute was given and along with the notes of the Cuban National Anthem, the Cuban flag which had been flying on board that vessel was lowered, and immediately the United States flag was hoisted on land, at the point called Playa del Este, with an equal number of salvos, thus concluding the ceremony.

According to the articles of the Agreement, the United States was to dedicate the leased lands exclusively for public use, not being able to establish any type of business or industry.

The U.S. authorities in said territories and the Cuban authorities mutually agreed to surrender fugitives from justice charged with crimes or misdemeanors subject to the laws of each party, as long as it was required by the authorities who would be judging them.

Materials imported into the areas belonging to said naval stations for their own use and consumption would be exempt from customs duties, or any other kind of fees, to the Republic of Cuba.

The lease of these naval stations included the right to use and occupy the waters adjacent to said areas of land and water, to improve and deepen the entrances to them and their anchorages and for anything else that would be necessary for the exclusive use to which they were dedicated.

Even though the United States acknowledged the continuation of Cuba’s definitive sovereignty over those areas of water and land, it would exercise, with Cuba’s consent, “complete jurisdiction and domain” over said areas while they occupied them according to the other already quoted stipulations.

In the so-called Permanent Treaty of May 22, 1903, signed by the governments of the Republic of Cuba and the United States, future relations between both nations were detailed: in other words, what Manuel Márquez Sterling would call “the intolerable yoke of the Platt Amendment” was thus put firmly in place.

The Permanent Treaty, signed by both countries, was approved by the United States Senate on March 22, 1904 and by the Cuban Senate on June 8 of that year, and the ratifications were exchanged in Washington on June 1st, 1904. Therefore, the Platt Amendment is an amendment to an American law, an appendix to the Cuban Constitution of 1901 and a permanent treaty between both countries.

The experiences acquired with the Guantanamo Naval Base were useful to apply measures in Panama that were equal or worse, in the case of the Canal.

In the United States Congress, it is customary to introduce amendments, whenever a law which is of urgent necessity for its content and importance is being debated. This frequently obliges legislators to put aside or sacrifice any conflicting criteria. Such amendments have more than once affected the sovereignty for which our people tirelessly struggle.

In 1912, the Cuban Secretary of State, Manuel Sanguily, negotiated a new treaty with the U.S. State Department whereby the United States would relinquish its rights over Bahia Honda in exchange for enlarging the boundaries of the Guantanamo station.

That same year, when the uprising of the Partido de los Independientes de Color (Independent Colored Party) took place, which the Liberal Party government of President José Miguel Gómez brutally repressed, American troops came out of the Guantanamo Naval Base and occupied several towns in the former Oriente Province, near the cities of Guantanamo and Santiago de Cuba, with the pretext of “protecting the lives and properties of U.S. citizens”.

In 1917, because of the uprising known as “La Chambelona” carried out by the elements of the Liberal Party in Oriente who were opposed to the electoral fraud that had re-elected President Mario García Menocal of the Conservative Party, Yankee regiments from the Base headed for various points in that province of Cuba, under the pretext of “protecting the Base water supply”.

### **Part III: The Formal Repeal of the Platt Amendment and Continued Presence of the Guantanamo Naval Base.**

The advent of the Democratic administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the United States in 1933 opened the way to a necessary accommodation of the relationship of domination that the U.S. exercised over Cuba. The fall of the Gerardo Machado’s tyranny under the pressure of a powerful popular movement, and the subsequent installation of a provisional government headed by the university professor of physiology, Ramón Grau San Martín, were a serious obstacle to the achievement of the program demanded by the people.

On November 24, 1933, U.S. President Roosevelt issued an official statement encouraging the intrigues of Batista and Sumner Welles, the Ambassador to Havana, against Grau’s government. These included the offer to sign a new commercial treaty and repeal the Platt Amendment. Roosevelt explained that “...any Provisional Government in Cuba in which the Cuban people

show their confidence would be welcome". The impatience of the U.S, administration to get rid of Grau was growing, as from mid-November the influence of a young anti-imperialist, Antonio Guiteras, was increasing in the government, which would take many of its more radical steps in the weeks to come. It was necessary to swiftly overthrow that government.

On December 13, 1933, Ambassador Sumner Welles returned definitively to Washington and was substituted five days later by Jefferson Caffery.

On January 13-14, 1934, Batista convened and presided over a military meeting at Columbia, where he proposed to oust Grau and appoint Colonel Carlos Mendieta y Montefur, which was agreed to by the so-called Columbia Military Junta. Grau San Martin presented his resignation at dawn on January 15, 1934 and left for exile in Mexico on the 20th of the same month. Thus, on January 18, 1934, Mendieta was installed as President after the coup d'état. Although the Mendieta administration had been recognized by the United States on January 23rd of that year, actually the fate of the country was in the hands of Ambassador Caffery and Batista.

The overthrow of the Grau San Martin provisional government in January 1934, as a result of internal contradictions and a whole series of pressures, maneuvers and aggressions wielded against it by imperialism and its local allies, meant a first and indispensable step towards the imposition of an oligarchic-imperialistic alternative to solve the Cuban national crisis.

The government headed by Mendieta would take on the task of adjusting the bonds of the country's neo-colonial dependency.

Neither the oligarchy reinstated in power, nor the Washington government, were in position to ignore the feelings of the Cuban people towards neocolonialism and its instruments. Nor was the United States unaware of the importance of the support of Latin American governments –Cuba among them– in the already foreseeable confrontation with other emerging imperialist powers such as Germany and Japan.

The new process would include formulae to ensure the renewed functioning of the neocolonial system. The "Good Neighbor" policy was very mindful of Latin American opposition to Washington's open interventionism in the hemisphere. The aim of Roosevelt's policy was to portray a new image in its hemispheric relations through the "good neighbor" diplomatic formula.

As one of the adjustment measures, on May 29, 1934 a new U.S.-Cuba Relations Treaty, modifying the one of May 22, 1903, was signed by the other Roosevelt, perhaps a distant relative of he who had landed in Cuba with the Rough Riders.

Two days earlier, on May 27, at 10:30 a.m., when United States Ambassador Jefferson Caffery was getting ready, as was his custom, to leave his residence in the Alturas de Almendares, he was the target of an assassination attempt; three shots were fired by several unidentified individuals from a car. The next day, May 28th, at noon, as it was driving along Quinta Avenida in the Miramar district, the car assigned to the First Secretary of the United States Embassy, H. Freeman Matthews, after having dropped off the diplomat at the Embassy, was attacked by several individuals traveling in a car and armed with machine guns. One of them approached the

chauffeur and told him that he should let Matthews know that he was giving him one week to get out of Cuba: then he smashed the windshield of the car and sped off.

These acts that revealed a general climate of anti-United States hostility could have precipitated the signing of the new Relations Treaty that proposed the alleged end of the unpopular Platt Amendment.

The new Relations Treaty provided for the suppression of the right of the United States to intervene in Cuba and that:

“The United States of America and the Republic of Cuba, being animated by the desire to fortify the relations of friendship between the two countries and to modify, with this purpose, the relations established between them by the Treaty of Relations signed in Havana, May 22, 1903, (...) have agreed upon the following articles: ...

“Article 3.- Until the two contracting parties agree to the modifications or abrogation of the stipulations of the agreement in regard to the lease to the United States of America of lands in Cuba for coaling and naval stations signed by the President of the Republic of Cuba on February 16, 1903, and by the President of the United States of America on the 23rd day of the same month and year, the stipulations of that agreement with regard to the naval stations of Guantanamo shall continue in effect in the same form and conditions with respect to the naval station at Guantanamo. So long as the United States of America shall not abandon the said naval station of Guantanamo or the two Governments shall not agree to a modification of its present limits, the station shall continue to have territorial area that it now has, with the limits that it has on the date of the signature of the present Treaty.”

The United States Senate ratified the new Relations Treaty on June 1, 1934, and Cuba on June 4. Five days later, on June 9, ratifications of the Relations Treaty of May 29th of the same year were exchanged, and with that *the Platt Amendment was formally repealed, but the Guantanamo Naval Base remained.*

The new Treaty legalized the de facto situation of the Guantanamo naval station, thus rescinding the part of the agreements of February 16 and 23 and July 2 of 1903 between the two countries relating to the lands and waters in Bahia Honda, and the part that referred to the waters and lands of the Guantanamo station was amended, in the sense that they were enlarged.

The United States maintained its naval station in Guantanamo as a strategic surveillance and control site, in order to ensure its political and economic predominance in the Caribbean and Central America and to defend the Panama Canal.

#### **Part IV: The Guantanamo Naval Base from the formal end of the Platt Amendment until the Triumph of the Revolution.**

After the signing of the Treaty of Relations of 1934, the territory of the “naval station” underwent a gradual fortifying and equipping process until, in the spring of 1941, the Base became established as an operational naval station with the following structure: naval station, air naval station and Marines Corps Base and warehouse facilities.



On June 6, 1934 the United States Senate had passed a bill which would authorize the Secretary of the Navy to sign a long-term contract with a company that would undertake to supply adequate water to the Naval Base in Guantanamo; however, prior to this, American plans already existed for the construction of an aqueduct which would bring in water from the Yateras River.

Expansion continued, and by 1943 other facilities were constructed by contracting the Frederick Snare Company. This hired 9,000 civilian workers, many of them Cubans.

Another year of tremendous expansion of the military and civilian facilities on the Base was 1951. In 1952, the United States Secretary of the Navy decided to change the name of the U.S. Naval Operating Base to "U.S. Naval Base"; by that time its structure already included a Training Center.

### **The Constitution of 1940, the Revolutionary Struggle and Guantanamo Naval Base until December 1958.**

The period between the end of 1937 and 1940 was characterized, from a political point of view, by the adoption of measures that allowed for elections for the Constitutional Assembly to be called and for them to take place. The reason why Batista agreed to these democratizing measures was that it was in his interest to move towards the establishment of formulae that would allow him to remain at the center of political decisions, and thus ensure the continuity of his power within the new order arising under the formulae that he had implemented. At the beginning of 1938 the agreement between Batista and Grau to install a Constitutional Assembly was made public. The Constitutional Convention, inaugurated on February 9, 1940, concluded its sessions on June 8 of that same year.

The Constitution was signed on July 1st, 1940 and promulgated on July 5 that same year. The new Law of Laws established that "the territory of the Republic consists of the Island of Cuba, the Isle of Pines and other adjacent islands and keys, which were under the sovereignty of Spain until the ratification of the Treaty of Paris on December 10, 1898. The Republic of Cuba shall not conclude or ratify pacts or treaties that in any form limit or undermine national sovereignty or the integrity of the territory".

The oligarchy would strive to prevent the materialization of the more advanced principles in this Constitution or at least to restrict their application to a maximum.

### **Part V: The Guantanamo Naval Base since the Triumph of the Revolution.**

Since the triumph of the Revolution, the Revolutionary Government has denounced the illegal occupation of that portion of our territory.

On the other hand, since January 1st, 1959, the United States turned the usurped territory of the Guantanamo Naval Base into a permanent source of threats, provocation and violation of Cuba's sovereignty, with the aim of creating trouble for the victorious revolutionary process. Said Base has always been present in the plans and operations conceived by Washington to overthrow the Revolutionary Government.

All kinds of aggressions have come from the Naval Base:

- Dropping of inflammable materials over free territory from planes flying out of the Base.
- Provocations by American soldiers, including insults, the throwing of stones and cans filled with inflammable materials and the firing of pistols and automatic weapons.
- Violations of Cuban jurisdictional waters and Cuban territory by American military vessels and aircraft from the Base.
- Plans for self-aggression on the Base that would provoke a large-scale armed struggle between Cuba and the United States.
- Registering the radio frequencies used at the Base in the International Frequency Registry in the space corresponding to Cuba.

On January 12, 1961, the worker Manuel Prieto Gómez who had been employed at the Base for more than 3 years was savagely tortured by Yankee soldiers on the Guantanamo Naval Base, for the “crime” of being a revolutionary.

On October 15 of that same year, the Cuban worker Rubén López Sabariego was tortured and subsequently murdered.

On June 24, 1962, Rodolfo Rosell Salas, a fisherman from Caimanera, was murdered by soldiers at the Base.

Likewise, the devious intent of fabricating a self-provocation and deploying American troops in a “justified” punitive invasion of Cuba has always been a volatile element at Guantanamo Base. We can find an example of this in one of the actions included in the so-called “Operation Mongoose”, when on September 3, 1962 American soldiers stationed in Guantanamo would shoot at Cuban sentries.

During the Missile Crisis, the Base was reinforced in terms of military technology and troops; manpower grew to more than 16,000 Marines. Given the decision of Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev to withdraw the nuclear missiles stationed in Cuba without previously either consulting or informing the Revolutionary Government, Cuba defined the unshakeable position of the Revolution in what came to be known as the “Five Points”. The fifth point demanded withdrawal from the Guantanamo Naval Base. We were on the brink of a thermonuclear war, where we would be the prime target as a consequence of the imperial policy of taking over Cuba.

On February 11, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson reduced the number of Cuban personnel working at the Base by approximately 700 workers. They also confiscated the accumulated retirement funds of hundreds of Cuban workers who had been employed on the Base and illegally suspended payments of pensions to retired Cuban workers.

On July 19, 1964, in a blatant provocation made by American border guards against the Cuban border patrol sentries, Ramón López Peña, a young 17-year-old soldier, was murdered at close range while he was on guard in the sentry-box.

On May 21, 1966, and in similar circumstances, soldier Luis Ramírez was murdered by shots from the Base.

**In hardly three weeks of the month of May in 1980, more than 80,000 men, 24 vessels and some 350 combat aircraft took part in Solid Shield-80 exercises; as part of its dynamic, this included the landing of 2,000 Marines at the Naval Base and the reinforcement of the facility with an additional 1200 troops.**

In October 1991, during the 4th Communist Party Congress in Santiago de Cuba, planes and helicopters from the Base violated Cuban air space over the city.

In 1994, the Base served as a support station for the invasion of Haiti: American air force planes used Base airports for this. More than 45,000 Haitian emigrants were kept on the Base until mid-1995.

**Also in 1994, the well-known migration crisis was produced as a result of the tightening up of the blockade and the tough years of the Special Period, the non-compliance with the Migratory Agreement of 1984 signed with the Reagan Administration, the considerable reduction in the number of visas granted and the encouragement of illegal emigration, including the Cuban Adjustment Act signed by President Johnson more than four decades ago.**

**As a result of the crisis created,** a declaration made by President Clinton on August 19, 1994 transformed the Base into a migratory concentration camp for the Cuban rafters, in numbers close to 30,000.

Finally, on September 9, 1994 a Joint Communiqué was signed by the Clinton administration and the Cuban government. **This saw the United States committing to prevent the entry into its territory of intercepted illegal emigrants and to issue a minimum of 20,000 annual visas for safety travel to the United States.**

On May 2, 1995, as part of the migratory negotiations, the governments of Cuba and the United States also agreed what on this occasion was called a Joint Declaration establishing the procedure for returning to Cuba all those who continued trying to illegally migrate to the United States and were intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Notice the specific reference to the illegal emigrants intercepted by the Coast Guards. Thus the basis had been laid of a sinister business: the traffic of persons. The Murderous Act was maintained, thus turning Cuba into the only country in the world subjected to such harassment. While approximately 250 thousand people have safely traveled to that country, an incalculable number of women, children and people of all ages have lost their lives as a result of the prosperous traffic of emigrants.

Following an agreement by the two governments, as from the migratory crisis of 1994, regular meetings between the military commands of each side were initiated. A strip of mined territory would sometimes be flooded by tropical rainstorms and overflowing rivers. On many occasions our sappers had put their lives in danger to save persons **who were crossing the restricted military zone** in that area, even with children.

**The Guantanamo Naval Base since the enactment of the Helms-Burton Act.**

This Act, signed by President William Clinton on March 12, 1996, in its Title II about “Assistance to a Free and Independent Cuba”, Section 201 related to the “policy toward a transition government and a democratically elected government in Cuba”, establishes in its Point 12 that the United States must “be prepared to enter into negotiations with a democratically elected government in Cuba either to return the United States Naval Base at Guantanamo to Cuba or to renegotiate the present agreement under mutually agreeable terms”. Something worse than what was planned by military governor Leonard Wood, who had landed on foot along with Theodore Roosevelt in the proximity of Santiago de Cuba: the idea of having an annexationist of Cuban descent administrating our country.

The War in Kosovo in 1999 resulted in a great number of Kosovar refugees. The Clinton government, embroiled in that NATO war against Serbia, made the decision to use the Base to accommodate a number of them, and on this occasion, for the first time, with no previous consultation whatsoever as usual, it informed Cuba of the decision made. Our answer was constructive. Even though we were opposed to the unjust and illegal conflict, we had no grounds on which to oppose the humanitarian aid needed by the Kosovar refugees. We even offered our country’s cooperation, if it should be needed, in terms of medical care or any other service they might need. Finally, the Kosovar refugees were never sent to the Guantanamo Naval Base.

The manifesto called “The Oath of Baraguá” of February 19, 2000 expressed that “in due time, since it no longer constitutes a prioritized objective at this moment even though the right of our people is very just and cannot be waived; the illegally occupied territory of Guantanamo must be returned to Cuba.” At that time, we were involved in the struggle for the return of the kidnapped boy and the economic consequences of the brutal blockade.

### **The Guantanamo Naval Base since September 11.**

On September 18, 2001, President Bush signed United States Congress legislation authorizing the use of force as a response to the September 11 attacks. Bush used this legislation as a basis to sign a Military Order on November 13 of that same year which would establish the legal bases for arrests and trials by military tribunals of individuals who didn’t hold U.S. citizenship, as part of the “war on terrorism”.

On January 8, 2002 the United States officially informed Cuba that they would be using the Guantanamo Naval Base as a detention center for Afghan war prisoners.

Three days later, on January 11, 2002, the first 20 detainees arrived, and the figure reached the number of 776 prisoners coming from 48 countries. Of course none of these data were mentioned. We assumed they were Afghan war prisoners. The first planes were landing full of prisoners, and many more guards than prisoners. On the same day, the government of Cuba issued a public declaration indicating its willingness to cooperate with medical assistance services as required, clean-up programs and a fight against mosquitoes and pests in the area surrounding the base which is under our control, or any other useful, constructive and humane measure that might come up. I remember the data because I was personally involved in details concerning the Note presented by the MINREX in response to the United States Note. We were

very far from imagining at that moment that the U.S. government was getting ready to create a horrendous torture center at that base.

The Socialist Constitution proclaimed on February 24, 1976 had set forth in its Article 11, section c) that “the Republic of Cuba repudiates and considers as null and illegal those treaties, pacts or concessions concerted under conditions of inequality or which disregard or diminish her sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

On June 10, 2002, the people of Cuba, in an unprecedented process of popular referendum, ratified the socialist content of that Constitution of 1976 as a response to the meddling and offensive expressions of the President of the United States. Likewise, it mandated the National People’s Power Assembly to amend it so that it would expressly state, inter alia, the irrevocable principle which must govern the economic, diplomatic and political relations of our country with other states, by adding to the same Article 11, section c): “Economic, diplomatic and political relations with any other State may never be negotiated under aggression, threat or coercion by a foreign power.”

After the *Proclamation to the People of Cuba* was made public on July 31, 2006, the U.S. authorities have declared that they do not hope for a migration crisis but that they are pre-emptively preparing to face one, with the use of the Guantanamo Naval Base as a concentration camp for illegal migrants intercepted in the high seas being a consideration. In public declarations, information reveals that the United States is expanding its civilian buildings on the Base with the aim of increasing their capacity to receive the illegal emigrants.

Cuba, for her part, has taken all possible measures to avoid incidents between the armed forces of both countries, and has declared that she is abiding by the commitments contained in the Joint Declaration on migratory issues signed with the Clinton administration. Why is there so much talking, threats and brouhaha?

The symbolic annual payment of \$3,386.25 for the lease of the territory occupied by the Guantanamo Naval Base was maintained until 1972 when the Americans adjusted it themselves to \$3,676. In 1973, a new adjustment was made for the value of the old U.S. Gold dollar, and for that reason the cheque issued by the Treasury Department was since then increased to \$4,085.00 each year. That cheque is charged to the United States Navy, the party responsible for operations at the Naval Base.

The cheques issued by the government of the United States, as payment for the lease, are in the name of the “Treasurer General of the Republic of Cuba”, an institution and official who, many years ago, have ceased to function within the structure of the Government of Cuba. This cheque is sent on a yearly basis, through diplomatic channels. The one for 1959, due to a mere confusion, was entered into the national budget. Since 1960 until today these cheques have not been cashed and they are proof of the lease that has been imposed for more than 107 years. I would imagine, conservatively, that this is ten times less than what the United States government spends on the salary of a schoolteacher each year.

Both the Platt Amendment and the Guantanamo Naval Base were unnecessary. History has shown that in a great number of countries in this hemisphere where there has not been a

revolution, their entire territory, governed by the multinationals and the oligarchies, needs neither one nor the other. Advertising took care of their mostly ill-trained and poverty-stricken populations by creating reflexes.

From the military point of view, a nuclear aircraft carrier, with so many fast fighter-bombers and escort ships supported by technology and satellites, is several times more powerful and can move to any point on the globe, wherever the empire needs it the most.

The Base is needed to humiliate and to carry out the filthy deeds that take place there. If we must await the downfall of the system, we shall wait. The suffering and danger for all humanity shall be great, like today's stock market crisis, and a growing number of people forecast it. Cuba shall always be waiting in a state of combat readiness.

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## **1907: The Birth of Socialism's Great Divide**

**By John Riddell**

For socialists, this month marks a significant anniversary.

One hundred years ago, a congress of the Second — or Socialist — International took a bold stand in the struggle against capitalist war. The congress pointed the way toward the Russian revolution of 1917 and provided an enduring guide for socialists' anti-war activity.

Founded in 1889, the Second International united mass socialist and labour parties, mostly in Europe.

The 1907 congress, which met in Stuttgart, Germany, on August 18-24, revealed a divide in the International between those aiming for capitalism's overthrow and the "opportunists" — those who sought to adapt to the existing order.

The congress took place at the dawn of the epoch of modern imperialism. Europe was teetering on the edge of war between rival great-power alliances. A revolutionary upsurge in Russia in 1905 had inspired mass strikes and demonstrations across Europe. In such conditions, how was the International's longstanding opposition to militarism and colonialism to be applied?

As the 884 congress delegates from 25 countries began their work, the International's principles were challenged from within. A majority of the congress's Commission on Colonialism asked the congress not to "reject in principle every colonial policy" as colonization "could be a force for civilization."

Defenders of this resolution claimed that Europe needed colonial possessions for prosperity. When German Marxist Karl Kautsky proposed that "backward peoples" be approached in a "friendly manner", with an offer of tools and assistance, he was mocked by Netherlands delegate Hendrick Van Kol, speaking for the commission majority.

"They will kill us or even eat us," Van Kol said. "Therefore we must go there with weapons in hand, even if Kautsky calls that imperialism."

After heated debate, the congress rejected this racist position, resolving instead that "the civilizing mission that capitalist society claims to serve is no more than a veil for its lust for conquest and exploitation." But the close vote (127 to 108) showed that imperialism was, in Lenin's words, "infecting the proletariat with colonial chauvinism."

There was a similar debate on immigration. Some US delegates wanted the International to endorse bans against immigration of workers from China and Japan, who were, they said, acting as "unconscious strikebreakers." US delegate Morris Hillquit said that Chinese and other workers of the "yellow race" have "lagged too far behind to be organized [in unions]."

Kato Tokijiro of Japan commented acidly that US delegates were "clearly being influenced by the so-called Yellow Peril"—the racist fear of Asian domination.

US socialist Julius Hammer noted that Japanese and Chinese workers were learning fast how to fight capitalism and “could be very effectively organised.” He argued, “All legal restrictions on immigration must be rejected.”

The congress made no concessions to Hillquit’s racism, but neither did it adopt Hammer’s call for open borders.

Similar debates cropped up regarding women’s oppression. In the women’s suffrage commission, an influential current favoured giving priority to winning the right to vote for men. Rejecting this view, the congress insisted that the right-to-vote campaign must be “simultaneous” (for both genders) and “universal.”

On the decisive question of the great powers’ drive to war, a tense debate extended through six days.

All agreed to condemn war as “part of the very nature of capitalism”, oppose “naval and land armaments”, and, if war seems imminent, exert “every effort in order to prevent its outbreak.”

But what did “every effort” mean, concretely? Delegates from France, led by Jean Jaurès, pressed the congress to commit to mass strikes and insurrections against a threatened war. German socialists, led by August Bebel, said such a stand would endanger their party’s legal status, and, anyway, tactics could not be dictated in advance.

An acrimonious deadlock was broken thanks to an initiative of a small group of revolutionary socialists, led by Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin.

Luxemburg called on delegates to learn from the lesson of the 1905 Russian revolution. This upsurge “did not merely result from the Russo-Japanese war, it has also served to put an end to it.” The anti-war resolution must project a struggle not merely to prevent war but to utilize the war crisis to promote revolution, she said.

Luxemburg’s proposal projected radical action, pleasing Jaurès, while obeying Bebel’s injunction not to decree tactics. And a wording was found that did not endanger the German party’s legality.

“In case war should break out,” the unanimously adopted resolution read, it is socialists’ duty “to intervene for its speedy termination and to strive with all their power to utilize the economic and political crisis created by the war to rouse the masses and thereby hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule.”

Yet as the Bolsheviks later noted, the International’s stand was “ambiguous and contradictory” on a key point. Both Bebel and Jaurès were pledged to loyalty to the homeland in “defensive” wars — a valid position in countries fighting for national liberation, but not for the imperialist powers like France and Germany. The resolution neither supported nor condemned this concept. The “defensive war” excuse was used by socialist leaderships, in 1914, to rally support behind the war efforts of their respective capitalist rulers—with disastrous results.



Lenin hailed the resolution for its “firm determination to fight to the end.” But he also warned that the congress as a whole “brought into sharp contrast the opportunist and revolutionary wings within the International.”

Over the following decade, war and revolution led to a decisive break between these the two wings, whose divergent courses still represent alternative roads for progressive struggles today.

The revolutionary wing led by Luxemburg, Lenin, and their co-thinkers held to the anti-war policy of Stuttgart until revolutions in Russia in 1917 and Germany in 1918 brought the First World War to an abrupt end.

A century after the 1907 congress, the socialist positions voiced there on war, colonialism, and oppression retain their importance, and provide a basis for building many fronts of resistance around the world.

*The quotations from the congress in this article are from “Lenin’s Struggle for a Revolutionary International,” ed. John Riddell, published by Pathfinder Press. Another version of this article is being published this month by the UK newspaper Socialist Worker. Related reading: V.I. Lenin: The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart.*

Socialist Voice #197, August 24, 2007

## **Venezuela: Chavez Calls for a New Party**

**by Paul Kellogg**

(From *Socialist Worker* (Canada) August 13, 2007. Posted with permission.)

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is a mid-sized country with a population of about 26 million. An incredible 5.7 million of those people – almost 25 per cent – have signed up to join the new United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), called into being by the country's president Hugo Chavez.

To get a sense of the scale of this process, it is the equivalent of a new left party in the United States, signing up between 60 and 70 million people!

The first phase of founding the new party ended with the meeting in Caracas at the end of June, of officials and party militants in the National Meeting of Candidates for PSUV Militants. Vice-president Jorge Rodriguez said that the second phase would be “the formation across national territory of more than 20,000 socialist battalions, made up of 300 (party) candidates each.”

Who is in this new party? According to *venezuelanalysis.com*, the 5.7 million represent 80 percent of the 7.3 million people who voted for Chavez in last December's presidential elections. Of those signed up, 2.88 million are men and 2.78 million – almost half – are women.

The formation of the party is an enormous step forward in the advancement of the Bolivarian process in Venezuela.

Activists in the Global North should not judge this new formation on the basis of whether it lives up to an abstract model of a socialist party.

The fundamental dynamic of the Bolivarian process is not in the first instance about socialism, but rather about political sovereignty and national control over an economy, plundered for generations by the forces of imperialism.

All past experience indicates that a challenge to imperialism, and the establishment of independence and sovereignty in a poor and oppressed nation cannot advance without deep and permanent mobilizations of the masses of the poor and the oppressed. A challenge to imperialism is so difficult, that again and again masses of the poor need to throw their bodies into the balance to prevent counter-revolution.

That is why the language of socialism always emerges, because repeated entries of the masses onto the stage of history is the basic building block of the socialist movement.

We saw one million take to the streets April 2002, to defeat the right-wing coup against Chavez.

We saw the rank and file of the working class re-open closed factories during the bosses' strike of 2002 and 2003, restarting the economy in spite of the wishes of Venezuelan and international capital.

We saw incredible mobilizations in the referendum campaign to defeat the attempt to have Chavez recalled. and again in the campaign during last year's presidential elections.

The formation of the party is the latest in a series of initiatives, reaching back to the formation of Bolivarian Circles, to give a permanent structure to this mass involvement in the revolution.

It is true that the call for the party was made by Chavez as an individual, reaching over the heads of the leadership of his own party – the Fifth Republic Movement. As a result. some have called it a “top-down” party.

This led to sharp fights inside the many pro-Chavista left parties in Venezuela. some of whom split over the question. But in party after party, regardless of the analysis of the leadership, the members voted with their feet moving into the new party. The instincts of the best in the left in Venezuela are that no meaningful left activism will be possible while staying on the sidelines of this new party.

The first job of socialists in an oppressed country is to be with the mass struggle against imperialism and for sovereignty. Clearly the new vehicle which will express this struggle will be the PSUV.

In fact, the stronger the left wing is inside the PSUV, the more the movement will be well placed to deal with the inevitable careerism and opportunism that will accompany an initiative on this scale.

The second – and equally difficult job – is to make the links, in theory and in practice, between the fight against imperialism and for sovereignty with the need for a complete break from capitalism, and a new state of democratic socialism.

A left current with that perspective that enthusiastically joins the PSUV will be able to begin that work.

The job of the left in Canada and the Global North is to publicize this process Inside our social movements, and to be prepared to move quickly to oppose any attempt by imperialist governments to intervene and crush the mass movement in Venezuela and elsewhere in Latin America.

Socialist Voice #198, August 24, 2007

## **Declaration of Kumarakapay**

### **1st International Congress of Anti-imperialist Indigenous Peoples of America — Abya Yala “Constructing Indoamerican Socialism”**

*(Translated by Federico Fuentes)*

Meeting in the ancestral territories of Kumarakapay; which our indigenous brothers and sisters of the Pemón People inhabit; within the framework of the 1st International Congress of Anti-imperialist Indigenous Peoples of Abya Yala; held in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, over the days 7, 8 and 9 of August, 2007; conscious of our existence as peoples since millenarian times and with the full conviction of continuing to act in defense of life and the planet, the people united here, from 21 different countries of our continent, from Alaska to the Patagonia, have agreed to emit the following declaration:

We are youth, women, men, grandmothers and grandfathers of the originario [first] peoples, who since time immemorial have live in Abya Yala; descendents from our aboriginal guerilla forefathers, defenders, precursors and founders of a free and sovereign homeland, of great liberators, such as Bolívar, Artigas, Morazan, Sandino etc.

Today we are living proof of ancestral struggles, meeting again as a anti-imperialist front, with delegations coming from Alaska, Argentina, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Uruguay, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Canada, Honduras, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Surinam, United States and Venezuela.

We recognize that our struggle as indigenous originario peoples has been millenary and which has had key moments in modern times, amongst those being transcendental continental encounters; the result of the diverse efforts by many peoples, communities and indigenous organizations and communities carried out over a long of dialogue and having reached the point of putting forward conclusions and strategies that have strengthen the unity of the indigenous peoples of Abya Yala, expressed in diverse declarations such as those of:

The First Continental Encounter of Indian Peoples held in Quito in 1990; the Continental Campaign of 500 years of Indigenous, Black and Popular Resistance, which involved mobilizations across all of our continent on October 12, 1992; the Declaration of Temoaya of 1993; the 1st Indigenous Summit in Teotihuacan, Mexico, in 2000; the 2nd Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Abya Yala, which was held in Quito in 2004; the Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Organisations, realized in Mar de Plata, Argentina, in 2005; the Continental Encounter of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Abya Yala, in La Paz, Bolivia, in 2006; and the 3rd Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Abya Yala realized in Guatemala, in March of this year, 2007, out of which came the Declaration of Iximche, whose anti-imperialist positions we support.

We have decided to give continuity to these efforts, in the search for unionist processes; conscious that the Abya Yala, from Alaska to the Patagonia, is a continent ancestrally

indigenous, committed to the struggles against domination since the era of colonialism up until current times; where the threat and aggression by the US empire against the peoples of Abya Yala have been continuous and is taking us towards the imminent extinction of our cultures.

It is essential for the indigenous peoples of Abya Yala to constitute and give body, life and movement to a space with continental character to allow us to integrate and unite, based on our spiritual, moral, and combative wealth and resistance, with the fundamental objective of defending ourselves and defending our peoples and the entire planet from attacks, principally led by the US empire.

We see imperialism as the highest phase of capitalism, through its distinct expressions, such as consumerism; the wastage of natural resources, which is taking us towards the destruction of biodiversity; the transculturalisation of the people which implies wiping out our essence; the loss of our ancestral values and the negation of our existence as people, converting itself into the most terrible threat encroaching over the lives and existence of our planet.

Conscious that an alternative to save the planet from voracious capitalism is the construction, execution and putting into march of the socialism of the 21st century on the basis of Indoamerican socialism, based on the principals of communality, solidarity, reciprocity, social justice, equality, complementarity and harmony with nature.

We recognize that the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), as a viable and just proposal to integrate the people of Latin America and the Caribbean in one single economic, political, cultural and social bloc where complementation and the respect of our identity will be the principal rectores, values that coincide with our ancestral practices.

We Declare:

The urgent necessity to initiate a collective process of construction of ancestral thought, born out of and generated by our realities, our forms of construction of knowledge and our languages.

Due to this, we have decided to constitute ourselves into the Continental Council of the Great Nation of Anti-imperialist Indigenous Peoples, whose temporary headquarters will be in Venezuela, and which will have as its primordial objectives:

To be a space for the participation, articulation and integration of the diverse indigenous peoples of Abya Yala, and act as a single body in defense against the attacks, aggressions and threats of the empire, in all its forms.

Constitute a platform of discussion of anti-imperialist policies and organizations, emerging from each one of the indigenous communities, via their own organizations or communal councils.

To be the collective voice of the indigenous peoples and communities of America in support of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), with the aim of reclaiming the originario rights of indigenous people, through the policies of the member governments of ALBA.

Push forward the construction of socialism of the 21st century through the contributions that Indoamerican socialism offers.

Plan of Continental Struggle:

Promote the creation of the University of the Indigenous Peoples of Abya Yala, which seeks to consolidate spaces of formation that preserve our identity, culture, language and traditional medical practices, according to the necessities of each people, with multiple installations in all the continent.

We raise our voices, as anti-imperialist indigenous peoples, constituted in the Continental Council, against the governments of the empire, principally the United States; against the transnational corporations that promote the privatization of natural resources, destroyers of our biodiversity, language and culture; against the organizations, mass media, press, radio networks and television at the service of the empire; and against all those that promote savage neoliberalism in all its expressions. We demand that they:

Stop the depraved exploitation of our natural resources that exist in our space, soil and subsoil; monocultures, the utilization of chemical fertilizers, insecticides, the risks with flugosato, transgenetics, and the genetic manipulation of all living beings – contrary to the principals of life; the poisoning of our peoples that is carried out via the distribution and sale of dangerous canned and bottled chemical products.

Stop the violation of the intellectual property rights; the theft and extraction of medicinal plants; the persecution and harassment of community, alternative media and indigenous communications and journalists; the acts of violation of the right to information, which forms part of our original law.

Stop the installation of imperialist military bases in our countries and immediately withdraw existing ones.

We say no to US or imperialist intervention in the revolutionary processes of the countries of Latin America, principally the Bolivarian revolution being headed by the president and commandante Hugo Chavez, and commandante Fidel Castro.

We pronounce ourselves against the genocide that is being committed against Iraq and Afghanistan and the people who make up those countries, as well as against the threat hanging over the brother country of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

We reject with our all strength any attempts at invasion or bellicose intervention against any nation of this free and sovereign world. We demand the unrestricted respect for the sovereignty of all Indo-Latin America countries. Whenever our nations are attacked by imperialism, the indigenous people will be ready to defend them from all points of view, and in diverse manners.

We support brother Evo Morales Ayma for the Nobel Peace Prize, for having achieved a space for participation in Bolivia in favour of the majority, and having avoided a social confrontation, led by the people in search of their liberation, which today they have found constitutionally.

We are against the state terrorism carried out by the empire; the criminalisation of the social movements; the repression which goes against truly legal and real freedom of expression; the

impunity which surrounds the disrespectful freedom of expression that promotes hate, egoism, anger and resistance to changes in favour of the majority, the people.

We oppose in its entirety any international declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples that does not respond to the revolutionary processes, and that, on the contrary aims to grab media attention, and control and fragment communities. Likewise with the multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank, Inter American Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund, that have indebted governments, and with that, the peoples.

We pronounce ourselves against the Zionist movements, which are one form of expression of this imperialism.

We back the efforts and struggles of the indigenous peoples carried out daily across the whole continent of Abya Yala, principally the current indigenous movements of Panama, El Salvador, Honduras, Uruguay, Argentina, Guatemala, where, not only are they not inexistent as they were believed to be, rather, the indigenous peoples are present, and each day are impeding the empire from continuing to destroy lives and communities in these important territories.

We salute the anti-imperialist governments of the continent, with the presence of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador, where the indigenous struggle has found backing and recognition for their demands.

Our fraternal support goes to the struggle of the indigenous peoples of Oaxaca and Chiapas in Mexico, expressed via the Popular Assembly of the Indigenous Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO) and the Zapatista Movement.

We back the policy of humanitarian and solidarity-based aid that is being carried out via the internationalization of the Missions of the Bolivarian Revolution, as a clear demonstration of what is Socialism of the 21st Century.

We call on all the peoples of Abya Yala to become part of this Continental Council of the Great Nation of Anti-imperialist Indigenous Peoples, as one more space of struggle against the empire, capitalism and neoliberal globalisation that wants to impose itself; which does not substitute any other effort but rather complements our historic, local and regional struggles, so that we continue walking united, as one single body, as one single voice, towards the construction of the great homeland.

We invite everyone to participate in the 2nd International Congress of Anti-imperialist Indigenous Peoples, to be held next year, 2008.

To continue writing the history of our Indoamerican indigenous peoples, death to imperialism!  
Homeland, Socialism or Death!

We will win!

*On the ancestral territory of Kumarakapay, Gran Sabana, Venezuela, on the 9th day of the month of August of 2007.*

Socialist Voice #199, August 24, 2007

## **Review: *A People's History Of Science***

Clifford D. Conner: *A People's History Of Science: Miners, Midwives, and "Low Mechanics."*  
Nation Books, New York. 544 Pages.

**reviewed by James Haywood**

"The scholars' role will receive less attention here because traditional histories of science have done a more-than-adequate job of explicating it; the purpose of a people's history of science is to direct the spotlight toward the generally under-appreciated artisans, for a change." (p281)

Clifford Conner reclaims science for the working people. Chapter by chapter he analyzes and refutes myths, lies and distortions about science. From ancient nomads in Asia to clock makers in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Europe, Conner describes the role of working people as true creators and advancers of science, and demonstrates that the so-called "Great Men" and thinkers of science, so acclaimed in bourgeois circles, built on the empirical work of artisans, sailors and simple peasants.

Conner was a member of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States, and was heavily involved in the anti-Vietnam War movement. A strong trade unionist with a long list of jobs from all different industries, in fact on his website he admits, "career stability was not my strong suit." He has since retired from formal employment and writes about history full-time.

Throughout the book, accepted theories and assumptions about great scientific advances are dismantled and exposed. For example, the racist theory of the "Greek Miracle" of the sixth Century B.C.E. is looked at in detail, and the likes of Plato and Aristotle are exposed as scientific *reactionaries* whose approach to nature was thoroughly anti-materialist.

Similarly chapters on the "Scientific Revolution" expose the ways in which sexist male scientific elites suppressed the work of 'old women' apothecaries, whose medical practices were vastly superior to their own.

Conner argues that the "Great Men of Science" owed most, if not all, their fame and theories to ordinary workers, artisans and farmers whose constant use of nature in their work that created the understanding of the environment, seas, forces, chemicals and space that created what we today consider as science. Some of the famed 'Great Men' borrowed this knowledge and created great formulae and theorems, others out-and-out robbed workers and artisans of their creations. But Conner also pays homage to the many inventor artisans whom are lost in history due to their illiteracy and/or the snobbishness of literate scholars.

The book's strength is undoubtedly rooted in an enormous amount of research. There are pages of footnotes and references for every chapter. One need only look at the 25-odd pages of the bibliography to understand the extent of the work that Connor has put into this book.



But another great strength of this book is that, in the last few chapters, it moves from being a well researched history of science into a handbook that workers and Marxists can use to understand the world around them.

Conner shows that science will not by itself solve problems imminent in the capitalist system such as poverty and starvation. He points to the “Green Revolution” as a major example of this in practice. Between 1970-1990, “...while per capita food supplies rose almost 8 percent, the number of hungry people also went up, by 19 percent. ....[It was not] increased population that made for more hungry people. The total food available per person actually increased.”

I recommend this book to all those who wish to advance the interests of the working class. It does more than correct history. Conner eloquently shows that, as Goethe wrote, “in the beginning was the deed.” It is the act of doing, of action, that creates and tests theories and ideas. The many (mainly women) herbalists in small ‘backward’ tribes who knew more cures for illnesses than the ‘advanced’ colonialists did not necessarily know more theory than the European elites, but by their actions they were creating real science.

For me personally, *A People’s History of Science* confirms that Marxism is also a science, that you can have the best theory in the world, but revolution is an act, not a formula. As Che Guevara said, “To be a revolutionary doctor... there must first be a revolution.”

Socialist Voice #200, August 27, 2007

## **Haiti: Unions Call for General Strike; Mayors Appeal for Urgent Aid**

**By Roger Annis**

*Roger Annis is a member of Haiti Solidarity BC and the Canada Haiti Action Network. He visited Haiti from August 5 to 20 as a participant in the Fondasyon Mapou/Haiti Priorities Project human rights delegation. The following are two of the first-hand reports he has posted on a blogsite hosted by the Toronto Haiti Action Committee..*

*The delegation's visit was marred by the kidnapping on August 12 of a well-known and respected Haitian political rights fighter, Lovinsky Pierre Antoine. He had participated in many of the delegation's activities. Its members are working hard with others to win his safe release.*

*Roger will speak about his visit in cities across Canada in September, beginning September 4 in Halifax. It is expected that other recent visitors to Haiti will also speak at these events. Dates and locations will be posted on his blog..*

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### **Unions Call for General Strike in Haiti**

Port Au Prince, Haiti: At a press conference here on August 17, one of Haiti's transport unions, the Association des propriétaires et chauffeurs d'Haïti (APCH—Association of Owners and Drivers of Haiti), launched an appeal for unions and popular organizations to hold a two-day, country-wide general strike to protest the disastrous economic situation facing working people in this country.

In an interview following the press conference, the communications director of the union, Fortuné Patrice, explained that the initial appeal is supported by many trade unions, student organizations and other popular movements. The union will hold discussions with more unions and popular organizations in the coming week to broaden support for the strike, set for August 27 and 28.

“The government of René Préval is aligning itself more and more with the interests of the foreign powers in Haiti, to the detriment of the Haitian people. Conditions of life for ordinary people are deteriorating all around us and we cannot sit back and let this happen,” he said.

Fortuné says the strike will encompass the demands of transport workers, but also of the general population. Demands include:

- A reduction in the price of fuel.
- A compromise in the government's demand that transport workers and owner/operators pay up for vehicle license fees that went unpaid during the three and a half years of chaos that followed the February 29, 2004 coup d'état in Haiti. The union says the de facto government provided no services during that time, so drivers or anyone else being asked

to pay up should not have to pay. The APCH has offered a compromise payment from its members of half the fees owed.

- Revision of the May 26, 2006 law that hiked various licensing and traffic fines by as much as 50 times.
- An end to layoffs and privatisation plans for state-owned companies such as Teleco (telecommunications) and EDH (electricity).
- Programs to improve the conditions of life for the poorest people in Haiti, such as reductions in the price of basic foods and more funding for health care and education.

The working age population in Haiti numbers 4.5 million. Of those, only 200,000 have salaried jobs, including 35,000 in government services and state-owned enterprises. There is deep and growing dissatisfaction here with the failure of the foreign occupation powers and the Préval government elected in early 2006 to make any dent in the crushing burden of unemployment and absence of public services.

The APCH organizes workers and owner/operators that run inter-city buses and transport trucks. It numbers 2,000 members. It is working hard to expand its membership, including among the 70,000 public transport (“tap tap”) drivers in Port au Prince.

The union also supports programs that provide health care and other services to its members or the general population. One such program is a mobile health service, recently launched by the 35-member Syndicat haïtien des professionnels(elles) de santé (Haitian Union of Health Professionals). (Please see this writer’s article on the exemplary work of this group of health care workers, at [www.thac.ca/blog/9](http://www.thac.ca/blog/9)).

Like everyone in Haiti, members of the APCH suffer from the dysfunction of government services in Haiti and violations of basic rights at the hands of police. Fortuné Patrice told this writer of a recent case of a truck driver who spent more than two months in jail after he came upon an apparent road accident in which the driver of a single vehicle had died. Police held the driver in jail as a preventive measure, they said, because they had no one else who might have been responsible for the death. It took more than two months before the driver could appear before a judge and win a release.

In describing the social calamity facing the Haitian people, Fortuné commented on the absence of foreign aid programs needed to deliver much needed services to the Haitian people. “Haiti is the second-largest recipient of foreign aid by the government of Canada. But the population here does not see this money nor receive any services that it might provide.

“Is there any way,” he pleaded, “that aid money from Canada could be directed to the organizations that are delivering services on the ground and not get wasted by a bureaucracy that never seems to reach the people?”

President René Préval is himself voicing discontent with the foreign presence in Haiti. On August 1, during a 24-hour visit to Haiti by the UN’s new secretary general, Ban Ki-Moon, Préval told reporters, “I invite the UN to reinvent MINUSTAH (the French acronym for the UN

occupation force in Haiti) and make it an instrument of help to the justice system and improvement of our basic infrastructure.”

But the President also declared in June, following a two-day strike by APCH and other transport unions, that he will not yield to protests for improvements in social programs nor to other criticisms of his government.

At the press conference that called for a general strike, APCH also expressed its concern about the recent kidnapping of political rights figure Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine. The union called for the kidnappers to release Lovinsky unharmed, and for the authorities to put all necessary resources into ensuring his safe release.

Another rally by Lovinsky’s supporters will take place today (August 20) in Port au Prince in front of the presidential palace, calling for a maximum effort by government and police authorities to win his safe release. This rally is in place of one yesterday that had to be cancelled due to rains precipitated by Hurricane Dean. Port au Prince escaped heavy winds and rains from the hurricane.

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### **Mayors Appeal for Help to Avert Humanitarian Disaster in Haiti**

Port de Paix, Haiti: “We are one hour of heavy rainfall away from a humanitarian catastrophe here in Port de Paix,” said one of this city’s deputy mayors, Eluscane Elusme, to members of a human rights fact-finding delegation organized by the U.S.-based Fondasyon Mapou and Haiti Priorities Project. The delegation is spending four days touring northern Haiti.

Elusme and another deputy mayor, Wilter Eugene, gave a wide-ranging interview to the delegation yesterday morning. At times, it was difficult to hear each other over the clamour of the street traffic passing by on the adjacent main street.

The two mayors painted a picture of a city of 200,000 living on the edge of human survival. They consider the city uninhabitable in its present condition. There is no running water, and electricity service is provided at late night only, for four to six hours. The city lies at sea level; heavy rainfall would flood tens of thousands out of their precarious homes and overwhelm any rescue effort. The consequences of a hurricane strike is unthinkable. There would not be enough transport available to get people out of the way.

The city’s airport is getting crowded out by market vendors. People continue to migrate into the city from the surrounding countryside, but there is no room to house them. Street vending is a part of the struggle for survival—there is no work here and everyone is in the streets all day long trying to earn a few gourdes, the Haitian currency, by selling items or services.

Elusme and Eugene are part of a new city administration that took office in March. Their first act in office was to purchase eight wheelbarrows and shovels in order to remove the garbage and sewage that lines the city’s streets. The city has no motorized vehicles to do the job. They hope to double the salaries of those who work cleaning the streets. Those workers earn less than two

dollars per day to shovel garbage and human waste from the street gutters in the extreme heat of Haiti's summer. They have no protective equipment.

The newly-elected officials inherited a municipal administration that was shattered by the February 2004 coup d'état that destroyed Haiti's elected government. They say that matters have improved slightly since the national elections in 2006. But the city's budget for the upcoming year is only 127,000 Haitian gourdes (US\$4200), roughly the same amount at the time of the Duvalier dictatorship in 1986. This budget is insufficient and cannot meet the increasing demands of the city's population which has grown exponentially since then.

One of the great challenges hindering infrastructure in Haiti is the lack of resources to set up tax collecting administration. The mayors are critical of the central government in Port au Prince for failing to respond to their urgent appeals for financial help and other resources.

Currently, the only health care services in the city are those provided by a Cuban medical contingent that has been in the region since before 2004.

The mayors are calling for two emergency measures. They want more delegations to come to Port de Paix to see the situation first hand and appeal for international aid. And they want the national government and the countries of the foreign occupation to immediately provide money and equipment to clean the city and get services such as water, electricity and health care running. Schools are supposed to open next week, but this will not be possible in the present conditions.

The mayors are also calling for all political parties in Haiti to unite in order to tackle the country's social crisis.

### **Penal system a disgrace**

Our delegation got a first-hand look at what passes for a justice system in Haiti when we visited a local courtroom and the office of the commissioner of the Northwest Department in Port de Paix. Haiti has ten departments (equivalent to states or provinces). Each one has a commissioner appointed by the national president.

The civil judge and his two assistant judges in Port de Paix have not been paid for more than two years. Their work is conducted in a small, noisy area sectioned off on the top floor of the municipal building.

Commissioner Michenet Balthazar granted us an interview and gave a graphic description of the lack of funding and other resources in the justice system. These problems are compounded by rampant nepotism and corruption, and bribery is an all-too common protocol.

The local prison holds slightly more than 200 prisoners in six cells. Each cell measures approximately 20 feet square. One of them held 13 women at the time of our visit. They are held in the same block as the men. Five other cells hold the men prisoners. Prisoners are given two 15 minute breaks per day in a cement courtyard with no shade for exercise, bathing and toilet. The bathrooms function poorly and there is no recreational equipment. (Our delegation bought and donated several footballs and basketballs, hoping that prison guards would not confiscate them

for their own pleasure.) Several prisoners reported physical abuse from the guards. Prisoners are rationed one gallon of untreated water per day to serve drinking and washing needs.

There is a nurse in the prison who provides the only medical service. His office has a desk, a filing cabinet and a small bed. Rain floods the office through the cinderblock window. The nurse has received basic medical training but his equipment is sorely lacking. He can provide aspirin for ailments as diverse as hernias (a common condition due to physical labour and malnutrition), skin parasites, infections or chest pain. The prisoners know that this is all the medication he has. They often use the aspirin for chalk.

If a prisoner's condition requires additional aid, he has to ask the prison director's permission to refer the patient to a local hospital. Recent legislation requires local hospitals to treat prison inmates but relations between prisons and hospital staff are tense and uneasy.

Our brief visit to the jail discovered four prisoners being held in violation of Haiti's constitution—a 13 year old girl, and three men held for alleged unpaid debts. When we met again with the commissioner to report our findings, he agreed to the release of the girl and one of the men. We were promised by other officials that the two other men would be released within one week. The girl's story and the work of the delegation made national news that same day.

*(Another delegation participant, Tiffany Gilmore, contributed to this report.)*

Socialist Voice #201, August 29, 2007

## **The Bears Are Mounting the Silver Eagle to Meet the Condor**

**Mohawks Attend International Congress of Indigenous People in Venezuela**

**By Kahentinetha Horn**

*Kahentinetha Horn of Mohawk Nation News was among the indigenous activists from Canada who went to Venezuela this month to attend the 1st International Congress of Anti-imperialist Indigenous Peoples of America—Abya Yala (See the [Declaration of Kumarakapay](#), on the Socialist Voice website.) The following article and greetings to the congress are reprinted with permission from Mohawk Nation News. A biographical note on the author follows the article.*

The Indigenous people and President Hugo Chavez are bringing together 40 Indigenous nations of Venezuela from August 7 to 9, 2007. The Mohawk delegation is made up of two women, Kahentinetha, an elder, and Karenhahes, Bear Clan Mother.

This congress is setting up a broad international movement of indigenous people to reject colonial oppression. During the 20th century, the European states that generated the colonial movement began to understand that they would destroy each other if they kept up the land and resources grab and the ensuing killing of Indigenous peoples. Colonialism was declared illegal. Canada continued to define a “person” as any individual other than an Indian until 1951. Canada still does not respect our sovereignty and presumes that their colonial law is the only law north of the 49th parallel. The U.S. usurps the Indigenous lands, resources and jurisdiction south of the 49th parallel.

Canada refuses to sign the Declaration of Indigenous rights at the United Nations, even though that declaration is a profoundly colonial instrument. International law recognizes that no state can absorb another without the free and fully informed consent of the people concerned in a free vote. The Indigenous peoples and nations never agreed to become part of Canada. Canada is addicted to old destructive models of social and economic relations and medieval ruling class credos. It thinks that social order is based on command and obedience, not agreement between equals, and that there can't be wealth without poverty. Such nonsense.

The meeting in Venezuela will take place in Mapiricure, an indigenous community in the south. On August 9th President Hugo Chavez will be presented with the Indigenous Feather known as the “Penacho” and a headdress. This will be followed by a ceremony invoking the powers of the natural world. On that day 11 land titles will be turned over to the Indigenous Communal Councils by President Chavez.

The shamen carrying out the ceremony will be joined by shamen from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Mexico, Panama and the U.S.

Here is a draft of the words that the Mohawk delegation will be delivering to the International Congress of Indigenous People "In Defence of the Planet," outlining a new paradigm for human existence.

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Nia:wen for your invitation to witness this historic event. From our women, we bring greetings to the women of your country.

From the "Rotiyaner" who are the men of our nation, we bring greetings from our men to your men.

From our elders, those who are the grandmothers and grandfathers, we bring our greetings to you who are the grandmothers and grandfathers of this nation.

From the fathers and mothers of our nation we bring greetings to you who are the mothers and fathers to your nation.

From our young people we bring greetings to your young people of this nation.

From the children of our nation we bring greetings to the children of your nation.

From those who still crawl upon the earth and those who are still on the cradle board, we bring greetings to your children who crawl on the earth and those who are on the cradle board.

From those faces of our future who are still beneath the earth, we bring the greetings to those of your people whose faces are yet beneath the earth.

Now that we have said this, we may begin.

We would like to have had a larger delegation here to day. Due to our struggle to preserve our sovereignty we are oppressed and ignored on our own homeland we call Onowarekeh, also known also as "Turtle Island." The foreign colonial governments of Canada and the United States limit our movements on our own land. They fail to teach their people about our existence, our philosophy, our laws.

Mr. Chavez, thank you for giving our people an opportunity to establish relations between our governments under our philosophy known as the "Kaianereh'ko:wa", the Great Law of Peace. We are not under the colonial laws. We continue to adhere to our laws and traditions. We continue to ensure a future for our people as the Kanion'ke:haka/Mohawk.

We are the eyes and ears that will witness this event. This is the beginning of a message to other nations to work towards bringing people back together to form an alliance. We wish to develop a sane and healthy way of life that assures that all people are decently cared for.

We need to renew the solemn blood covenants that have bound all Indigenous Peoples of South America and Onowarekeh, our name for Turtle Island, for thousands of years. We are one blood. When one family member is oppressed the other must aid their covenant partners. Everyone is there to uplift each other. No one goes without.



Our perception is that the material world is to be shared and distributed equally. Our ancestors knew that when a hunter went into the woods and brought back a deer, the entire community shared in that bounty. This is common to all Indigenous peoples of the world. Those who have fallen away from these simple concepts and now practice colonialism must be brought back into the human family and saved from themselves.

We present you with a copy of the Great Law, our constitution, in both Mohawk and English, our Confederacy flag, the Unity flag and several books about us that will be of interest to you.

We, the Onkwehonweh [the original people], are the guardians of Onowarekeh. Recently South America was visited by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Canada. They both avoided Venezuela because they can't understand what's happening here and it frightens them. These are emotionally disturbed people. They don't know how to exist on a level of equality with their fellow human beings.

They do not represent us or even the people of their countries. They follow habits of thought that have been proven to be ineffective and destructive to the continuation of human life on earth. They represent foreigners who have usurped our resources and deny us any rights to our ancestral heritage.

Our words as the true representatives are binding on Turtle Island. We have always been here. We belong to the land on which we were formed. Mr. Chavez is here with the true owners of the lands of Onowarekeh and South America. What we say between us is binding.

Under natural law and international law everyone has a right to our own government, nationality and land.

As elders of our nation, we are dedicated to work in the best interests of our people. Each of us has power in our lives. We have a duty to spread the Kaianerehkowa throughout the world. The white roots from the Tree of Peace go in the four directions. Those who wish to find shelter may trace its roots to the source. My nation and Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy are in need of this alliance at this time.

Mr. Chavez holds the same political positions as the Mohawk Nation. We are here to help fan the flames so that the fire grows larger to make a place for all humans to share its warmth and benefits.

No one needs anyone's permission to promote alliances, unification of our peoples and to spread the peace as prescribed in the Kaianereh'ko:wa. We refuse to live under a dictatorship.

An opportunity came to us to come here. We seized it. Last September some of our people went to New York City, which is on Iroquois land, to hear Mr. Chavez speak. He was inspiring. They told us that they agreed with every word he said.

Our message of peace came to us from our ancestors, Dekanawida and Jigosaseh. They told our people to bring everyone into a covenant of peace, to link arms with all the other peoples of the world. We are continuing the work of our ancestors to bring the message of peace to you today.

South America has the same colonial past as Onowarekeh, Turtle Island. We have occupied our territories since time immemorial. This land is who we are. It is our identity. Mr. Chavez is one of us. His roots go deep into the soil, the jungles, the mountains and fields of Venezuela. From the earth he gets sustenance, vitality and ability to help his people. The people feel safe. His first instinct is to protect the Indigenous people and the visitors who are here.

Venezuela is a beautiful wealthy part of the world. Your resources are now being skillfully used to enhance the best interests of the land and the people who live upon it. You are tapping into the wellspring of ancestral memories that are hidden in the minds of every person living here.

Now all other Indigenous people are seeing that it is possible to take our lives under our own control, not be dominated by foreign forces and to do good.

We feel secure with the Venezuelans. You are competent and sure of who you are. Initially the multinational corporations felt intimidated by the turn of events. They are finding they can work with the original people in the best interests of all. Everyone is benefiting. The only way to achieve harmony and prosperity among us is to bring all our talents and innate abilities together.

Mr. Chavez has found a way to bring this out in all of his people. He represents the forces of a people who are on the move. He has offered a new paradigm. He is showing Indigenous peoples and others that we can take over our own lives and run our own affairs. We can do it so that no one feels intimidated or threatened. It is becoming the natural way to do things.

Dekanawaida and Jigosaseh, the man and woman who helped develop the Great Law of Peace, understood this. They realized that the strength of the Confederation was based on no nation dominating the others. Each, no matter how large or small, had a right to exist and remain who they are.

There was no stifling of the innate abilities of the Onondagas, Senecas, Oneidas, Cayugas, Mohawks or Tuscaroras. Larger nations did not overpower the smaller ones. We were equal. Diverse peoples were brought together to work in harmony for the benefit of everyone. No one could assert themselves over others.

This is the reason why the indigenous government in Venezuela is successful. Mr. Chavez has tapped into the same knowledge that exists in all Indigenous people. The renaissance in Venezuela is going to spread all over the world.

People always feel threatened by a new paradigm. We can expect many attacks from the colonial powers. We do not use guns but they point theirs at us. They don't know what else to do. The young, the poor and even the middle class in the colonized countries are all suffering from the same insecurity and dislocation that has been imposed on us. They will join us once they understand.

If everyone doesn't relearn how to look after the earth and each other, there will be nothing left for anyone to eat; no clean water to drink; and no clean air to breathe. The colonial commercial exploitation of the environment has been taken to such extremes that human life itself is in peril. We can work together to clean up the mess we have created as human beings and make the earth healthy again.

The greedy grasping power hungry people who are trying to gain control over all of humanity have lost touch with reality. Just when they think that they have achieved their goal of absolute control and domination, the pyramid of delusion will collapse beneath their feet. Life itself will be gone.

Nobody wants to suffer the consequences of a collapse of this order. Venezuela has a model that is working. People are free and work together to develop everyone to their full potential in whatever area of life they have chosen.

When somebody wants to go from one place to another through forests, jungles, swamps, deserts or mountains, somebody always goes ahead and cuts the trail. The others follow the steps of those who went ahead. They all get to their destination safely. It takes a courageous visionary to see far ahead the dangers that are prowling around. Hugo Chavez is a trailblazer in the realm of the world's progressives. He helps whole groups of people move forward together. He is setting in motion an act that others will follow.

We have a chance to see how this model is working to its fullest potential so that the good life and good health is shared by all equally. We feel gratified and honored that we are taking part in the dedication of the land to the original people. We need more people like Hugo Chavez all over the world. We hope for the continued good health of Mr. Chavez, who cares to lead in troubled times. Artificial ways will dissolve themselves because they are not real. Humanity must go back to the natural relationships. We salute you, Venezuela, for showing the world how your humanitarian goals are being achieved and are inspiring others to achieve”.

***About the author:** Kahentinetha Horn is a longtime indigenous rights activist from the Mohawk Nation. She was involved in the 1962 Conference on Indian Poverty in Washington D.C., the blocking of the International Bridge at Akwesasne in 1968, and other indigenous rights campaigns. In the summer of 1990, she was behind the Canadian Army razor wires that surrounded the Mohawk compound in Kanehsatake. This was the historic Mohawk land rights struggle that became known as the “Oka Crisis.” After almost 20 years of service, Kahentinetha was fired by the Department of Indian Affairs for her involvement there.*

*More recently Kahentinetha has been involved with the Kahnawake Elders Council, and was active at the Six Nations Land reclamation near Caledonia, Ontario, publishing and distributing almost daily accounts of the developments there.*

*Kahentinetha Horn is an editor for Mohawk Nation News, a daily news service that she founded during the Oka crisis. Recently, Mohawk Nation News came online. It features articles on Mohawk struggles and other issues affecting indigenous people across turtle island and beyond.*

Socialist Voice #202, August 30, 2007

## **Remembering Chibás, 100 Years After His Birth**

by **Fidel Castro Ruz**

August 25, 2007

*[Socialist Voice Note: Eduardo René Chibás Rivas (1907-1951) was the founder of the Ortodoxos (Orthodox) party, of which Fidel Castro was a member. He aimed to expose government corruption and bring about revolutionary change through constitutional means.]*

When I read Hart's article, published by *Granma* in commemoration of Chibás' birth, and saw it quoted a paragraph of the speech I delivered at the Colón Cemetery on January 16, 1959, eight days after my arrival in Havana following the revolutionary triumph, many memories of fallen, heroic comrades came to me. I thought of Juan Manuel Márquez, a brilliant orator and follower of Martí's ideas and second chief of the Granma expeditionary force. I thought of Abel Santamaría, who was to take command of our forces were I to fall during the attack on the Moncada garrison; of Pedro Marrero, Níco López, José Luis Tasende, Gildo Fleitas, the Gómez brothers, Ciro Redondo, Julio Díaz and practically all the members of the numerous contingent of young people from Artemisa who fell at Moncada or in the Sierra. The list is endless. All of them came from the rank and file of the Orthodox Party.

The first problem we faced was getting Batista out of office. Had Chibás been alive, Batista would not have been able to stage his coup d'état, because the founder of the Cuban (Orthodox) People's Party kept a close eye on him and called him into question publicly and methodically. Following Chibás' death, Batista was sure to lose the elections scheduled for June 1, 1952, two and a half months after the coup. Opinion polls were fairly reliable and Batista's unpopularity was constantly growing, day after day.

I was at the meeting where the new Orthodox candidate was chosen. I was more of a bold intruder than an invitee. I was to enter parliament, to struggle in the name of a radical program. No one could have prevented this. Then, it was rumored that I was a communist, a word which prompted many negative reactions inculcated by the dominant classes. To have spoken of Marxism-Leninism then, or even during the first years of the Revolution, would have been foolish and clumsy. During the speech I delivered before Chibás' grave, I spoke such that the people would understand the objective contradictions which our society faced at the time and which we still must face.

I spoke every day at a local radio station in the capital to deliver messages directly to tens of thousands of voters who had spontaneously joined the Orthodox Party. I also addressed the entire nation through the special supplements of the *Alerta* newspaper on several, nearly consecutive Mondays, publishing the proven accusations of corruption in the Prío government voiced between January 28 and March 4, 1952. Intuitively, I was able to predict and get inside Batista's intentions of staging a coup. I denounced these intentions before the party leadership and asked them permission to use Chibás' Sunday radio time to do so publicly. "We'll look into it", they told me. Two days later, they announced the following: "We have looked into the matter through

our channels and there's no indication of that whatsoever". The coup could have been prevented but nothing was done. Months before, Chibás had already, painstakingly managed to prevent "a pact without ideology", as he would call it, between members of the Orthodox party and the former Cuban (Authentic) Revolutionary Party. Most of the provincial party leadership had supported the pact. The economic system prevailing at the time made it easy for the oligarchy and land-owners to take control of the party leadership in nearly all of the country's provinces. Only one party leadership remained loyal, the one in the capital, which was heavily influenced by radical intellectuals. Following the coup and at a time when unity was most dearly needed, what the oligarchy did was abandon the vast majority of the people at the mercy of the imperialist tempest. I continued to adhere to my revolutionary project, only that this time it would be an armed struggle, from the very beginning.

The day in which Chibás — whose body lay in state at the University of Havana — was to be buried, I proposed that the leadership of the Orthodox Party lead the enormous funeral procession to the Presidential Palace and seize the premises. I had spent the entire night answering questions from radio reporters and inciting the people to undertake radical actions. No one at the university paid any attention to the radio broadcasts that night. We had a disorganized, panic-stricken government, a demoralized army that had no intention of repressing that procession. No one would have held it back.

One year after the death of Chibás, I wrote a proclamation titled "A Harsh Blow", which was mimeographed six days following Batista's treacherous coup. What follows is the text of this proclamation.

Not a Revolution, but a harsh blow! Not patriots; but destroyers of civil liberty, usurpers, backward-minded individuals, adventurers thirsty for gold and power.

It was not a military uprising against the apathetic and lazy President Prio; it was a military uprising against the people, on the eve of an election whose results were a foregone conclusion.

There was no order but it was the people whose duty it was to decide democratically, in a civilized manner, on the men who would govern them, by political will and not by force.

A fortune would be spent in favor of the imposed candidate, nobody denies that, but that wouldn't change the result just as the result was not changed by a flood of funds from the Public Treasury in favor of the candidate imposed by Batista in 1944.

It is completely false, absurd, ridiculous and childish that Prio would attempt a coup d'état, a clumsy excuse; his impotence and incapacity to attempt such an enterprise has been irrefutably demonstrated by the cowardice with which power was seized.

We were suffering from bad governance, but we were also suffering from years of waiting for a constitutional opportunity to avert the evil, and you, Batista, who remained in the shadows as a coward for four years and futilely indulged in politicking for another three, now you appear with your tardy, disturbing and poisonous remedy, ripping the

Constitution to shreds when we were only two months away from reaching the goal through the official channels.

Everything you allege is a lie, a cynical justification, concealed vanity and not patriotic decorum, ambition and not ideal, greed and not civil nobility.

It was correct to overthrow a government made up of embezzlers and murderers; we tried to do this by civic channels, supported by public opinion and with the help of the masses; in contrast, what right do they who yesterday robbed and killed indiscriminately have to replace it in the name of bayonets?

It is not peace, it is the seed of hatred which is being sown. It is not happiness, it is mourning and sadness which the nation feels as it is faced with the tragic panorama it begins to discern. There is nothing in this world as bitter as the spectacle of a people who go to sleep in liberty and awaken in slavery.

Once again the military boot; once again Columbia dictating laws that remove and appoint ministers; once again tanks rumbling menacingly through our streets; once again brute force reigning over human rationality. We were becoming accustomed to living by the Constitution; we had twelve years without any great difficulties, even though there were some errors and rash actions. Superior states of civic coexistence can only be attained through arduous efforts. In a matter of a few hours, you, Batista, have demolished the Cuban people's noble illusion.

All of the ills Prío was responsible for in three years, you committed in the course of eleven. Your coup is thus unjustifiable; it is not based on any serious moral reason, or on any social or political doctrine of any kind. It finds its only reason for existence in force, and its justification in lies. Your majority lies with the Army, never with the people. Your ballots are guns, never free will; with them you can win a military uprising, but never clean elections. Your usurping against power lacks any principles to legitimize it; laugh if you will, but in the long run principles are more powerful than cannons. Principles are what form and nourish the people, what embolden them for battle, what they die for.

Do not call this outrage revolution, this disquieting and untimely coup, this treacherous stab in the back of the Republic which you have just given. Trujillo has been the first one to recognize your government, he knows who his friends are in the covey of tyrants who are battering America; that shows, more than anything else, the reactionary, militaristic and criminal nature of your coup. Nobody even remotely believes in the governmental success of your old and rotten covey; the thirst for power is too great; there is no moderation when there is no Constitution and law other than the will of the tyrant and his gang.

I know beforehand that your guarantee for life will be torture and humiliation. Your followers will kill even though you don't want them to, and you will tranquilly consent because you owe yourself completely to them. Despots are masters of the people they oppress and slaves to the force on which they base their oppression. A torrent of lying and demagogic propaganda will rain down on us now, in your favor, from all sources,

using both soft and hard methods, and your opposition will be deluged with vile slander; Prío did that also and it had no effect on the people's consciousness. But the truth which illuminates the fate of Cuba and guides the steps of our people in this their difficult hour, that truth which you will forbid to be told, the whole world will know it; it will race clandestinely from mouth to mouth, down every man and woman, even though no one says it in public or publishes it in the press, and everyone will believe it and the seeds of heroic rebellion shall be sown in every heart; that is what guides every conscience.

I do not know what the furious pleasure of the oppressors will be, when their treacherous whip hits human backs like a new Cain against their brothers, but I do know that there is an infinite happiness in fighting them and raising a strong arm while saying: I don't want to be a slave!

Cubans: again we have a tyrant, but again we will have the likes of Mella, Trejo and Guiteras; there is oppression in our homeland but one day there will be freedom again.

I invite all brave Cubans, all the brave militants of the Glorious Party of Chibás; the time has come to make sacrifices and fight; should our lives be lost, nothing is lost; "to live enchained is to live in dishonor and outrage. To die for the Homeland is to live."

Fidel Castro

When this irreverent article was not published—who would dare publish it?— it was distributed at the Colón Cemetery by friends and sympathizers in the Orthodox Party on March 16, 1952.

On August 16, 1952, the clandestine newspaper *El acusador* published an article entitled "A Critical Assessment of the Cuban (Orthodox) People's Party", under the pseudonym of "Alejandro". As I have already offered a critical assessment of that party, I thought it apt to include the following analysis:

Above and beyond the commotion of the cowards, the mediocre and the fainthearted, it is necessary to voice a brief but courageous and constructive assessment of the Orthodox Movement, following the fall of its great leader Eduardo Chibás.

The formidable and sharp criticisms of the champion of the Orthodox Party left it such an immense profusion of popular emotion that it brought it right to the doors of Power. Everything was done, and all that remained was to know how to hold on to the ground already gained.

The first question each honest Orthodox member must ask himself is the following: Have we enhanced the moral and revolutionary legacy left us by Chibás..., or, on the contrary, have we misappropriated part of that legacy...?

He who thinks that until this moment everything has been done well, that we have nothing to reproach ourselves for, is not sufficiently severe with his conscience.

Those sterile feuds that followed the death of Chibás, those colossal scandals, for reasons that were not exactly ideological but purely selfish and personal, still echo like bitter blows of the hammer on our conscience.

That dreadful process of going to the rostrum to clarify pointless disputes was a grave symptom of lack of discipline and responsibility.

March 10<sup>th</sup> came unexpectedly. It was to be expected that such a serious event would rip from the roots of the Party the petty quarrels and the sterile personal ambitions. Was that what actually happened...?

To the amazement and indignation of the Party masses, the clumsy disputes cropped up again. The culprits were so foolish that they did not realize that there was narrow room in the press to attack the regime, but ample room to attack the Orthodox Party. Those who have helped Batista in like fashion have not been few.

No one would be shocked that such a necessary recount should be made today, when it is the time for the great masses who, in bitter silence, have suffered these losses, and there is no more fitting moment than today to be accountable to Chibás at his tomb.

That immense mass of the Cuban People's Party is on its feet, more determined than ever. It asks at this hard moment... Where are those who were candidates... those who wanted to be the first in the positions of honor at the assemblies and in the executive, those who would go on tours and chart tendencies, those who would claim their places on the platform at the large rallies and who now no longer go on tours, or mobilize the grass roots, or ask for the positions of honor in the front line of combat...?

Whoever has a traditional concept of politics could be pessimistic when faced with this vision of truths. On the other hand, for those with a blind faith in the masses, for those who believe in the uncompromising force of great ideas, the indecision of the leaders will not be a reason for weakness or despair, because these vacancies will be occupied in short order by upright men who come from the rank and file.

The moment has come for revolution and not politics. Politics is the consecration of the opportunism of those who have the means and the resources. Revolution opens the door to true worthiness, to those who possess courage and sincere ideals, to those who bare their chest and uplift the banner. The Revolutionary Party requires a revolutionary leadership, young and from the ranks of the people, in order to save Cuba.

Alejandro.

Later, we set up a clandestine radio station which did what Radio Rebelde would later do in the Sierra. In relatively little time, the mimeograph, broadcaster and the few things we had fell to the hands of the coup officers. I then learned the rigorous rules to which the conspiracy which culminated with the attack on the Moncada garrison had to adhere.

Shortly, a small volume which expounds on two fundamental ideas that were expressed in two of my speeches — the one I delivered at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro over 15 years ago and at the international conference titled “Dialogue among Civilizations”, held two and a half years ago — will be published. I ask readers to study the two documents in depth. I apologize for this act of self-publicity, from which I hope you, not I, will profit.