



Viva Cuba

The newsletter of Rock around the Blockade
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Free the Cuban 5!

Cuba calls for solidarity to release political prisoners of US imperialism

The Cuban Five, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando Gonzalez, Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labanino and Rene Gonzalez, have been prisoners of US imperialism now for nearly nine years. The Five were arrested while monitoring the activities of notorious anti-Cuban terrorist groups in the United States to try and prevent further destruction and slaughter. These groups, such as Alpha 66, Commandos F-4 and Brothers to the Rescue, are responsible for killing over three thousand people in Cuba as well as countless other acts of sabotage and provocation. They operate with the support of the CIA and FBI and with the protection of the US ruling class in Miami and Washington.

At their trial in the hysterical and intimidating atmosphere of an anti-communist Miami courtroom in June 2001, the Five were convicted of espionage, conspiracy and associated charges and given a total of four life sentences and 75 years in prison. Since then they have been held in separate prisons, often in solitary confinement. Two of the prisoners' wives have been refused visas to enable them to visit their husbands. Meanwhile, terrorist killers from the Miami mafia, such as Orlando Bosch and Posada Carriles, have been granted freedom by the Bush government.

In August 2005 the Five won an unprecedented victory when the three-judge 11th Circuit



Above, 2006 protests in New York for the release of the Five. There are more planned this September.

Court of Appeals overturned their convictions and ordered a retrial away from Miami. However, one year later the full panel of judges voted 10 to 2 to revoke the appeal. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions has since ruled that irregularities denied the Five a fair trial, calling on the US government to remedy the injustice.

The 20 August appeal took place before two of the original judges. The defence team was allocated just 30 minutes to present their case. Written evidence was also limited, as is normal in such appeals. The issue of

Miami as an unfair trial venue cannot be raised again. Instead, lawyers for the Cuban Five must concentrate on a few outstanding issues which, if won, could mean victory. The first aim is to quash the conviction of Gerardo Hernandez for conspiracy to commit murder following the shooting down of two planes flown by Brothers to the Rescue in provocative raids over Cuban airspace. The terrorists had been warned of the possible consequences by both the Cuban government and the CIA if they went ahead with the flights. At the trial of the Cuban Five the prosecution admitted their evi-

dence for the charge was weak. No individual can be held responsible for the action of their government, an action that the Cuban forces had every right to carry out in order to protect their people. The second main appeal issue is the misconduct of the US prosecutor at the original trial, who went beyond evidence presented at the trial in his summing-up. On three occasions he claimed that the Cuban Five intended to destroy the United States when in fact the Five carried no explosives, carried out no acts of sabotage and threatened no-one. The third prominent issue will be the life

continued on page 2

continued from page 1

sentences given to three of the Five for conspiracy to commit acts of espionage when no classified documents, US state secrets or issues of US national security were involved.

It is expected that deliberations on the appeal will take several months. However, this is not, of course, simply a legal issue. This is a political trial. With US elections looming next year the influence of the Miami mafia in the important state of Florida will continue to be significant. Political support and demonstrations in solidarity with the Cuban Five in the United States, Britain and throughout the world will be essential if the Five are to receive justice. Cuba has called an international month of action from September 12 to October 6, with protests organised globally to demand their release.

Jim

Viva Che Guevara!

On 5 December 1956, the henchmen of US-backed Cuban dictator Batista launched a surprise attack on 82 revolutionaries led by Fidel Castro who had landed on the shores of Cuba three days previously, aiming to liberate the masses from the yoke of imperialist oppression. In the ensuing chaos of the battle, a box of ammunition was dropped at the feet of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, a 27-year old Argentinean medical graduate. 'I was faced with the dilemma of choosing between my devotion to medicine and my duty as a revolutionary soldier. There, at my feet, were a knapsack full of medicine and a box of ammunition...I picked up the box of ammunition'.

Che Guevara's choice to commit himself completely to the heroic course of the guerrilla fighter was to be entirely vindicated over the historic events of the next two years. Becoming commander of the Rebel Army's second column in 1957, Guevara won a decisive victory over the dictatorship's army in the battle of Santa Clara in December 1958. Soon after, Cuban workers responded to Fidel's call for a general strike, paralysing the country. On 2 January 1959, the Rebel Army columns led by Che and Camilo Cienfuegos joined Fidel in Havana City and the Cuban Revolution triumphed.

October marks the 40th

Extradite US hitman Posada Carriles! Justice!

Cuba and Venezuela are continuing to campaign for the extradition of the notorious Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela to face charges related to the blowing up of a Cubana airliner in 1976, killing all 73 civilians on board. As Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez pointed out at a press conference in August, the whole world knows Posada is a terrorist, yet in April he was freed by a US court to walk the streets of Miami with impunity.

Having been forced to arrest Posada for 'immigration' offences, the administration then did all it could to ensure Posada would never be brought to book for his terrorist history – because it exposes the activities of the CIA over four decades. Indeed,

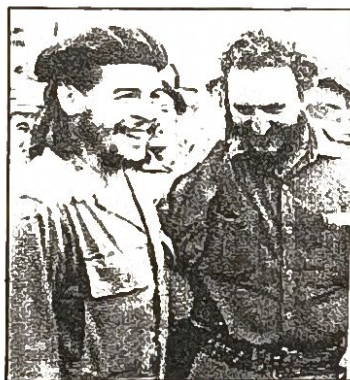
faced with the threat of a legal gag to prevent Posada speaking out, his own lawyers conceded that his entire defence would rest on his ongoing partnership with the CIA. Posada threatened that if brought to trial he would expose the involvement of the CIA and FBI in the Cubana bombing, and the decades he spent working for the CIA through Operation Condor, the campaign of torture, kidnapping and murder sponsored throughout Latin America by the CIA throughout the 1980s. In 1997 he organised the bombing of hotels in Cuba in which a young Italian tourist died, and in 2000 was responsible for a failed assassination attempt on Fidel Castro in Panama City. Despite his conviction, he and his co-conspirators were freed shortly afterwards at the behest of the US. When legal manoeuvres to

silence their star terrorist pupil failed, the administration ensured his freedom.

Shamelessly, the US administration in August also freed Osvaldo Mitat, who had served barely 22 months in prison. He had not completed his sentence for possessing weapons and explosives for a planned attack on Cuba. And in El Salvador, Francisco Chavez Abarca, Posada's main accomplice there, is also about to be released.

Meanwhile, in Guantanamo, hundreds remain detained without charge or prospect of release. In the US itself, the Cuban Five continue to serve long sentences in inhuman conditions for the 'crime' of exposing and fighting anti-Cuban terrorism. The case of Carriles, who today is living the high life in Miami alongside his crony, terrorist Orlando Bosch, embodies the hypocrisy of the 'War on Terror'.

Kyle



Che Guevara and Fidel Castro

anniversary of the death of one of its chief leaders, Che Guevara. So closely is the life of Che Guevara identified with the Cuban Revolution, it is impossible to recall one without the other. Through his outstanding service in the Rebel Army, his crucial work as head of the Department of Industry and subsequently the National Bank, and his relentless commitment to the promotion of voluntary labour and a new communist morality, Che set the foundations of the new Cuban republic. He remains a visible inspiration in Cuba today, and the enduring development of Cuba's socialist revolution remains Che's greatest legacy.

Today in Venezuela, Guevara's writings are once more being taken up as a weapon in the fight for socialism. When President Hugo Chavez proclaims Che to be one of the

founding symbols of the new Venezuela, it is no mere populist gesture. The debate on 21st century socialism is drawing on Che's economic theories for fresh inspiration. 'The pipe dream that socialism can be achieved with the help of the dull instruments left to us by capitalism (the commodity as the economic cell, profitability, individual material interest as a lever etc) can lead into a blind alley' wrote Che in 1965. The revolutionary essence of Che's work, that the emancipation of the working class is a conscious social process, is as vital as ever.

In a ferocious speech addressed to the Tricontinental in April 1965, Che Guevara took stock of the international state of imperialism and the world's revolutionary movement. Guevara was no romantic liberal. He clearly recognised the unlimited bestialities of world capitalism, the millions it had left dead in Algeria, Korea and Vietnam. But he did not for one moment cease to call for the exploited and oppressed of the world to rise up and pursue the class struggle to its fullest extent. Who cannot recognise the relevance of Che's internationalist message for today's world? 'The peoples of three continents are watching and learning a lesson from

Vietnam...the correct response is not to fear war. Attack hard and without let-up at every point of confrontation – that must be the general tactic of the peoples.' We may look with despair at the atrocities imperialism is now committing in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine, but also with optimism as the resistance of the oppressed inflicts daily blows upon the imperialists. For the first time since the 1970s, Latin America has raised the standard of socialism. 'There are no other alternatives,' warned Che, 'either a socialist revolution or a caricature of revolution.' The Cuban Revolution remains the best proof of this process, inspiring the developing processes.

Che Guevara was captured and executed in the Bolivian jungle on 9 October 1967, on the orders of the Bolivian and US governments. Fidel Castro said: Che 'gave his opinion...that if death surprised him anywhere, it would be welcome as long as his battle cry had reached a receptive ear and another hand reached out to take up his rifle. His battle cry will reach not just one receptive ear, but millions of receptive ears! And not one hand but millions of hands, inspired by his example, will reach out to take arms!'

Joey

Cuban victory exposes US imperialism at UN

'A resounding, undeniable and historic victory for Cuban diplomacy' – Felipe Perez Roque, Cuban Foreign Minister



On 22 June the Human Rights Council voted unanimously to remove Cuba from the list of countries under permanent scrutiny by the United Nations and subject to monitoring by a UN Special Rapporteur on human rights.

Up until 2005 the US had regularly presented a motion to the UN Human Rights Commission, the forerunner of the current council, condemning Cuba for so-called human rights

abuses. In recent years, it had presented the motion through proxy states such as the Czech Republic, remaining in the background to coerce and blackmail other countries into toeing the imperialist line. It was precisely because of such abuse and manipulation that in 2006 that the Human Rights Commission was disbanded and reconstituted as the Human Rights Council. With its power to influence proceedings stymied, and aware that

it would itself face scrutiny over secret prisons throughout Europe, extraordinary rendition, torture at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and other sites and its shameful concentration camp at Guantanamo, the US refused to stand for the new body – while attempting, along with the European Union, to undermine support for Cuba's nomination. However, Cuba was elected onto the council by 135 out of 191 countries. Unlike the US, it has nothing to hide. The council also voted overwhelmingly to place Israel under constant scrutiny 'until the end of the occupation'.

As Felipe Roque pointed out, this decision 'put an end to the anti-Cuban operation conceived of by the US precisely as a pretext for maintaining and exacerbating its genocidal policy of blockade and aggression against Cuba' and acknowledges 'the unjust, selective and discrimina-

tory nature of the actions perpetrated against our country over decades'.

'It constitutes an acknowledgement of the prestige and work of Cuba and its Revolution, whose undeniable labours in promoting and protecting all human rights for everybody, and in creating a society that is constantly more just, more egalitarian and more humane, cannot be ignored or distorted'.

However, while acknowledging that on this occasion the European Union followed the underdeveloped countries of the world in voting in favour of Cuba, Roque also pointed out that now was the time for the EU to engage with Cuba as an 'equal and sovereign state' by abolishing EU's so-called 'common position', the sanctions imposed against Cuba at the behest of the US in 1996. *Cat*

The Russian Revolution: 90 years on

90 years ago the working class of Russia overthrew capitalist autocracy and seized state power, declaring communism as the only way to free the masses from oppression and exploitation. Organised through the Soviets (councils) of workers, peasants and soldiers, and led by the Bolsheviks, the revolution of October/November 1917 began what would become the longest sustained effort at building socialism so far. What's more it had a profound influence on workers' movements internationally, an influence which echoes in Cuba today.

Under the Tsar, the people of Russia had been dragged against their will into the barbarity of the First World War, forced to fight for Russian imperialism. Thousands starved in the trenches and at home things were hardly any better. The Tsar was overthrown in the February Revolution, replaced by a bourgeois Provisional Government. Months of battles between the workers and the government followed. Soviets sprang up across the country and a situation of dual power became clear.

By October the ruling class was in turmoil and the masses were well organised. On 10 October the Bolsheviks voted to organise an armed uprising. Two days later Petrograd Soviet, led by Trotsky, established a Military Revolutionary Committee to prepare for revolution. On 25 October the Provisional Government was overthrown in Petrograd and the Soviets took power there and in other towns and cities. The Russian Soviet Socialist Republic was declared and soon after there were decrees on redistribution of land, the right to recall politicians from office, limits on the wages of officials and nationalisation of the banks.

Immediately a campaign of counter-revolution was waged by bourgeois forces, led by the Mensheviks and 'Socialist Revolutionaries'. 12 foreign powers intervened militarily against the Soviet government, led by the European imperialists. Soviet offers of a just peace, including the right of nations to self determination were rejected and the Red Army had to beat the invaders back.



Following the defeat of communist revolutions in Germany and Hungary, the new Soviet Union was forced to begin constructing socialism alone across a backward and unevenly developed country. Through the 1920s and 1930s the Soviet economy went through a period of rapid industrialisation; meanwhile global capitalism nose-dived. With three five-year plans the Soviet Union built its strength to the point needed to beat back the Nazi onslaught, despite the loss of 20 million Soviet citizens in the war. In the years that followed communist and national liberation movements were given the strength to win important victories against imperialism and soon socialism was

being built in countries as far afield as China and Cuba, as well as in Eastern Europe.

In 1991 the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc, besieged by imperialist hostility and internal contradictions, collapsed, a catastrophic event for oppressed peoples everywhere. In the six years that followed the Russian economy halved; Russians experienced the world's sharpest fall in life expectancy on record. For socialist Cuba the collapse meant the loss of 80% of its trading partners, a loss still being felt. But in Cuba the ideas of the Russian revolution, of communism, still live on. In Cuba the ideas and the gains of socialism still shake the world.

Louis

News in brief

Barclays attacks Cuba

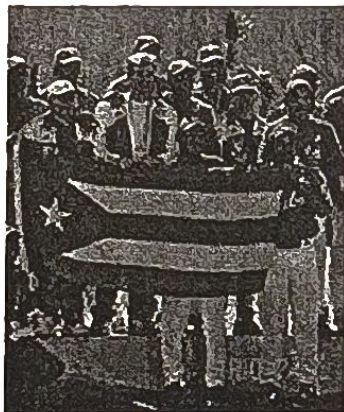
Barclays Bank is the latest corporation to follow the aggressive and illegal US blockade of Cuba, by closing the London bank accounts of two Cuban organisations. The legislation of the blockade aims to stop companies from third countries trading with Cuba, alongside the US's own boycott, so now the Havana International Bank and Cubanacan, a state-owned travel organisation, have been told to take their accounts elsewhere. A Cuban Embassy spokesperson pointed to an 'intensification of US pressure in various countries in order to make them comply with the regulations of the blockade imposed on Cuba. These pressures include the banking and financial system'. This follows the US-owned Hilton hotels in Oslo refusing to take a Cuban trade delegation. Given Barclays' current role in helping privatise the British health system, and its parasitic global role which has included support for apartheid South Africa, these new attacks on socialist Cuba are no surprise.

Cuba vs 'The revolting commercialisation of athletes'

This summer Cuba came second in the Pan American Games in Brazil, winning tens of gold medals. Sport is one of the growing achievements of socialism and Cuban athletes are steadfast defenders of the revolution, especially in the face of foreign capitalists who offers millions of dollars if they go 'professional'.

Towards the end of the Games it was reported in the German media that two Cuban athletes had deserted their team to sign lucrative contracts with European agents. It was even stated by representatives of the Hamburg-based Arena promotions agency that they were holidaying in Turkey while waiting for German visas. In the end it turned out that they had not left Brazil and that they wanted to return to Cuba.

Castro summed the situation up: 'The news stating that the boxers were in Turkey while immigration matters were being looked after had obviously been released by the mafia as a smoke screen. There was even a German Member of Parliament who attempted to hit a home-run with a fake ball. The company that had invested more than two million dollars in this grotesque business was talking about the "human rights" of the athletes' families. What will the United Nations say about this unfair competition?'



Cuban baseball players celebrate their success at the Pan American Games in Rio

Campaign news and events



**A recent protest in London
Newcastle solidarity event
harassed by police**

On 28 July RATB helped organise a 'Celebration of Resistance' in the centre of Newcastle to mark the 54th anniversary of the 26 July attack on the Moncada Barracks, a turning point in the Cuban revolution. The celebration was well supported by musicians and local people.

The event received severe harassment by the police, who arrived mid-way through and demanded the names, addresses and date of birth of all those running the event, under accusations of collecting money without a permit. The police then attempted to confiscate the money which had been collected, 'as evidence'. When a comrade holding the money tin explained that a law firm had advised that such a seizure of money was unlawful, he was arrested for obstruction. There was a picket of the police station and the comrade was bailed without charge to September. Comrades are discussing how best to organise in defence of all our democratic rights. Regular stalls and solidarity events will continue.

London

For details on Cuba events around London and for areas not listed
phone 020 7837 1688
or email office@ratb.org.uk

North West

**Hands off socialist Cuba!
Free the Cuban 5! Protest**
Saturday 22 September
12noon
Piccadilly Gardens,
Manchester
contact 07940 988 203; see
www.manchesterfrfi.co.uk

North East

RATB stalls
Saturday 15 and 29
September,
11-2 at Grey's monument
Newcastle

Oppressed people of the world support Cuba, why won't socialists in Britain? Public meeting

Tuesday 16 October
Northumbria university
Stage 2
contact 07857 323 523
see www.frfinortheast.co.uk

Scotland

**Free the Cuban 5 demo
Outside the US Consulate**
Saturday 29 September,
meet at Duke of Wellington
Statue, 12noon
Consulate: 3 Regent Terrace
Edinburgh
contact 07773 374 858
email
frfiscotland@yahoo.co.uk

Speaking tour 2008

In February-March 2008 we will be bringing two Cuban revolutionaries to Britain - one of whom was a comrade of Che Guevara, with the possibility of a third speaker if the support is there - for a two week speaking tour, traveling North and South, wherever we can organise a meeting!

The work needs to be done now to organise and publicise meetings, and make sure they are all packed. This is a unique opportunity to spread the word about revolutionary Cuba. Don't sit on the sidelines, contact us and be a part of it.

Yes! sign me up to join Rock around the Blockade

- ☐ I would like to join RATB* ☐ I would like to join the RATB e-mail list
☐ I would like to take part in the 2008 speaking tour
☐ I would like to make a donation to support RATB's work
☐ I would like a copy of the pamphlet 'Revolutionary Cuba' (£2.95 + 80p p&p)

Name

Address

Tel E-mail

Donation

*I enclose a cheque/PO payable to Rock around the Blockade for £10 waged/£4 low waged/£2 unwaged (please delete). Please return to Rock around the Blockade, c/o FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX.



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