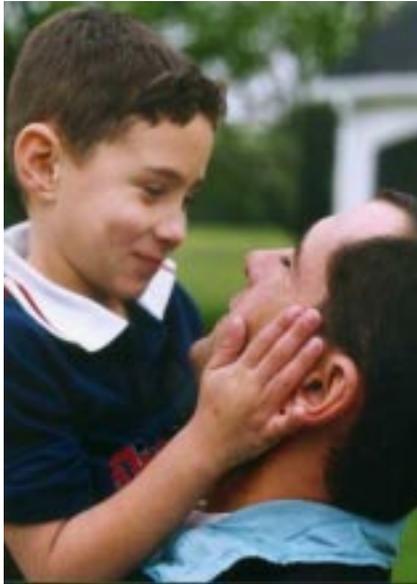


NEWSLETTER Amistad



Fifth anniversary of Elián's return to Cuba

Havana 22/04/05 (AP) excerpts —



**Elián being re-united
with his father on
April 22, 2000**

Elián González, the young Cuban castaway whose inter-national custody battle ended five years ago with him being dramatically snatched from a Miami relative's home by armed U.S. federal agents, [after relatives repeatedly refused to return him to his father] addressed a crowd of thousands Friday, thanking Cubans and Americans alike for fighting for his return to the island.

Elián, now 11, read a speech at a televised event in Havana commemorating the fifth anniversary of being reunited with his father in Cuba. "Five

years ago I returned to my dad," he said, speaking on stage in front of thousands of Cubans. "When I saw him, I became very happy. I could hug him, I could see my little brother. That was the happiest day of my life."

Elián captured the international spotlight after he was found floating on an inner tube off the south Florida coast in November 1999. His mother, Elisabeth Brotons, perished along with 10 other adults in the failed attempt to [illegally] reach the United States. González, then five, was one of only three survivors. His rescue set off a seven-month international custody battle by the boy's relatives in Miami, who fought to keep the child in the US. He became a cause celebre for [extreme right] Miami Cubans.

Kidnapped by his mother, suffering both the death of his mother and the forced separation from his father, brother and both grandparents plus the trauma of the shipwreck, the child was exploited by the right-wing Cuban Americans as they attempted to use the media to further their cause of demonizing the Cuban government. But it backfired as the frenzied media coverage of Elián also brought their actions before the US public.

Don't Miss this AGM!

Thursday, 26 May, 2005 7:30pm

290 Danforth Av (east of Chester Subway)

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Bring new ideas

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Program

Nature: CUBA

Interesting and expertly done documentary on
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Afterwards the 'free, objective' US media again went back to an almost blackout on Cuba except for news that was usually negatively slanted or distorted. (In Cuba, media coverage — both Cuban and foreign — was limited so Elián could return to a normal life.)

From K. Wald, California — The AP report, printed in Miami newspapers and MSNBC, mentioned that Elián had for the first time addressed a crowd in Cuba alongside his father.

What the AP wire didn't mention (or those who reproduced it decided to take out) was that Elián also spoke about the five Cubans held in US prisons for infiltrating the terrorist groups based in Miami.

[Elián] specifically said that he hoped that the people in the US who fought "so that I could be back with my family, also fight for the return of our five heroes and then Ivette can enjoy being with her father."

YOUR EXECUTIVE REPORTS . . .



Another year has passed since the Executive was elected, and we are now preparing for another Annual General Meeting (AGM) on May 26th. The Executive has worked hard again this year; the following will give you an idea of who we are and what we have been up to:

Ann Nicholson, is Editor of *Amistad* and CCFA rep on the Free the Cuban Five committee.

Ardis Harriman, Events Coordinator, ensures that events are on the Agenda and comes up with ideas for more events. She is also Associate Editor of *Amistad*.

David Warner, CCFA President, chairs our meetings, provides experienced leadership, has political and material aid contacts and emcees our events.

Doug "Chico" Oyler, our Membership Secretary, keeps track of members, renewals, mail, and the distribution of *Amistad*. He is also always on hand at the bar at all our events.

Geoffrey Allen is the Recording Secretary, takes the minutes and prepares the agenda for each meeting. He also helps out at events.

Irene Kuusela, member at large, is our contact at labour events. She is our contact at the Labour Councils and keeps us up to date on union issues

Lee Lorch, our distinguished Chair, helps keep us abreast of political issues about Cuba and how the Canadian government responds. He attends many conferences where Cuba is on the agenda, especially the DFAIT annual conference on human rights.

Liz Hill, our busy School Trustee and VP, prepares the AGM documents and pinch hits for the President.

Roy Heron, member at large, has represented CCFA on many occasions and helps as a volunteer worker at events and at others' events.

Sharon Skup, Secretary Treasurer, keeps the books, answers our busy phone & email, looks after the web site and is Production Manager for *Amistad* and our rep to the CNC.

Valerie Packota, member at large, is our unofficial youth rep and has brought a number of young people to our events and meetings; she recently coordinated our latest Café Cuba event.

We need *you* to come out and volunteer to be on the Executive this year. Some of us will be running again for the Executive, but Cuba solidarity work will benefit if there are new faces and fresh ideas.

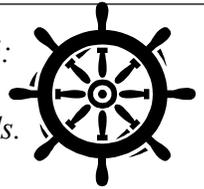
We need your enthusiasm and love for Cuba to keep us going!

See you on May 26th 7:30pm 290 Danforth Av

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Cuba Announces New Vaccine for Cholera

Havana, Apr 20/05 (Prensa Latina): Cuba's Finlay Institute announced the completion of clinic trials of a vaccine for cholera at the 12th International Fair "Health for All" in Havana.

Specialists from the prestigious institution - whose research and development resulted in the new vaccine - said the product will soon be evaluated in Africa, where the disease is endemic.

Cholera covers a very wide medical geography. It became endemic in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and has even affected Europe. It is estimated that there are 120,000 fatalities annually, but accurate figures are difficult to obtain due to fear of international stigmatization and possible sanctions.

The Finlay Institute has developed several other vaccines to fight diseases like typhoid fever, tetanus, meningitis B and combined vaccines, all of which were approved by the Ministry for Public Health vaccination program targeting different age groups.

The strategy of the Institute is to develop new medicines for diseases still lacking a cure, relying on technology meeting national and international standards.

The 12th International Fair "Health for All" had 332 companies from 29 countries attending. This biennial event was first held in 1983.



In Memory of Two Giants



Niagara folklore tells the story of 'The Maid of the Mist.' It is said that on a misty day, a ghostly image of the hapless maiden is discernible through the moisture-laden clouds. In recent months we have lost two giants, one from each side of the river, both of whom have earned enshrinement in that shiny place.

John Trufal of Welland, husband of Millie, Chair of CCFA Niagara, leaves behind an illustrious history. A union organizer for United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, his pursuit of justice extended from fighting for industrial environmental clean-up, labour union contract bargaining, to Viet Nam Peace Movement involvement long before the body bag count could no longer be concealed from an unwitting public. In 1953, not content with leaving decision-making to only one stratum of society, he won a council seat in local municipal governance. His service and loyalty to the working people of his community remained constant and true throughout his term of office and beyond.

Frank St. George of Buffalo was the son of immigrant Italian parents. Emotionally affected by the Great Depression, he took part in the founding of the local branch of the Socialist Workers' Party in the 1930s and was instrumental in organizing the Bell Aircraft workers into a CIO LOCAL. Jailed for a week or two during a very bitter strike against Bell Aircraft, he was subsequently fired and blacklisted. Unable to find a workplace that would hire him, he worked thereafter in several self-employed ventures. He was a credit to his family and to his daughter, Maxine Inera, an active member of LASC (Latin American Solidarity Committee) of Western New York.

On both sides of the river, we celebrate the lives of these two heroes. They leave a legacy that will forever be imprinted upon their respective communities.

Helen Santek on behalf of CCFA Niagara

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Laureano Cardoso, Consul Gen. of Cuba
Guest Speaker

Stephanie Van Zandwyk, Niagara Falls Boxing Club
On Canada/Cuba Sports Exchanges
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Lee Lorch, CCFA Toronto's Chair, beams with pleasure after winning a prize at a recent Café Cuba held as part of a fund-raiser for George Brown "Destination Cuba" students.

They showed the documentary "Spirits of Havana" of the trip to Cuba by musicians Jane Bunnett & Larry Kramer - travelling around Cuba meeting & playing with Cuban musicians. They also delivered musical instruments and repair parts to a Cuban music school.

Rice Cookers Are Not the Only News

Marina Menéndez Quintero, *Juventud Rebelde*(Havana)

11Mar/05 excerpts

Although we all jumped for joy when our Commander-in-Chief announced that every home will soon have the



famous economical, fast, clean and pretty rice cooker, and our eyes shone thinking of the 100,000 pressure cookers that will follow; [but this] was not the most electrifying news in the speech during the closing

ceremony of the event dedicated to us, women.

What made the five hours of lively conversation between Fidel and the people into a transcendental speech, was learning that a period that had been very difficult — economically, socially and even emotionally — is coming to an end, and the fact that we will resume the march — never really abandoned, but certainly hindered by the Special Period — towards a more equitable society based on the principle of “to each according to his/her work.”

Certainly the rice cooker will save us time and effort in the kitchen and also save rice. But the really meaningful thing is not how we will be cooking our rice — a traditional dish indispensable in our menu. The really important thing is to know that this country finally has the economic possibility and the infrastructure not only to provide the convenient rice cooker to each family, but also to sustain the energy consumption their use will demand. Even when — as Fidel said — we should be rational and save energy. This is the real reason to be happy. It shows how much we can do now.

Similar thoughts are inspired by other projects announced with such air that it makes us feel that we are in a family reunion. Some of these projects are as important as the modernization and remodeling of the railway system; or the plan to build 100,000 houses next year — despite the high cost in a world ruled by the dollar.

Perhaps not of the same magnitude, when compared to issues related to transportation and housing, but indeed important, is the project of adding new items to the family quota [of subsidized food, clothing and household products]. [The amount will be austere, but steady and reliable. Contrary to what many believe, the “libreta” is not a symbol of rationing, but a way to equality. It is good to see it revitalized and growing.

Listening to Fidel’s detailed explanation and enjoying his optimism, which we shared — among which our public health system will continue to be a priority — we understand better the importance of the agreements recently signed between Cuba and China; the meaning of the agreements signed with Venezuela based on the solidarity concepts proposed by ALBA, more partial to human need than to marketing profits.

And, why is it possible now? Simply because now we *can*. We are en route to becoming economically invulnerable; a statement this country was not able to make since — how long ago?

Today we return to the point where we were before the fall of the socialist block...All this despite the US blockade!



This is the good news. A reason to feel sure that our heroes did not die in vain. The certainty that we are doing the right thing.

Cuban Minimum wage more than doubles

Granma Int'l 22Apr/05(excerpts): PRESIDENT Fidel Castro affirmed yesterday that Cuba is advancing toward raising the people’s quality of life, and announced that the minimum wage for workers is to be increased from 100 to 225 pesos (a month).

Speaking before Cuban authorities and representatives of the mass organizations, the president stated that the measure will go into effect next month, raising wages for all workers currently earning 100-224 pesos per month: a total of 1,657,191 employees. [This] will increase the average monthly wage from 282 to 312 pesos, he explained.

Fidel emphasized that the systems of paying for the results of work done would be maintained, as will increases already in effect in the budget sector and state enterprises that are part of the enterprise improvement process.

The wage increase comes in addition to the raises in pension and social security benefits which have stirred enthusiasm and optimism among Cubans.

During his talk, Fidel affirmed that what is being strived for is a society of workers, of creators, with no unemployed or unprotected people, no families left to fend for themselves; a society that studies, a society with quality of life.

“We will continue to implement raises, to care for the neediest, for everyone,” he affirmed, and reiterated “We’re doing fine!” — quoting his own famous statement to *Comandante Camilo Cienfuegos* at the beginning of the Revolution.

Electricity:Improvement /Conservation & Sharing *See page 8*

Talking Turkey at United Nations Human Rights Commission

Julie Webb-Pullman

Havana, Apr. 14 (*Prensa Latina*) Like a new annual tradition, the US has again trundled out the tired old turkey of alleged Cuban human rights abuses for another roasting in Geneva. But rather than the generous basting they hoped for, the US had to be satisfied with the scrapings from the bottom of the pan to get their resolution onto the plate.

That the stuffing is falling out despite fancy trimmings and trussing is no big surprise — cries of “fowl”-play have been resounding around the world for the last month, including from such illustrious persons as Nobel Prize laureates, parliamentarians of several countries, academics, artists and writers alike, as well as ordinary citizens too numerous to count.

What is surprising is that countries who should know better, like Guatemala and Honduras, who receive free medical assistance from Cuba while the US rapes what few resources they possess, joined the gravy-train.

And what was the guts of it? The resolution called on Cuba to cooperate with the special UN ENVOY, French magistrate Christine Chanet, who recently urged Cuba to free all political dissidents, grant freedom of expression, and lift travel restrictions.

I fear the lady has had her head too long in the oven! Cuba cannot possibly release all political dissidents because they are being held by the US in Guantánamo, over which Cuba has no control. And any “dissidents” who have committed criminal acts for which they have been accorded due process, tried, convicted, and sentenced, must pay the penalty for their criminal acts, however hard they gobble about their glowing journalist [or librarian] credentials.

Having said that, many of them have been already released under humane considerations on the part of the Cuban authorities.

She does not need to come to Cuba to taste freedom of expression — there are several thousand Cubans singing, dancing, exhibiting their artworks, screening their films, acting, writing and publishing all around the world at any one time — even, Fidel forbid, criticizing aspects of their country!

And yes, all those Cubans in the US, not to mention a few million other US citizens, just can't wait for the restrictions on travel to Cuba to be lifted — by the US government!

George W. Bush and his Words of Mass Deception may have fooled the other farmyard animals snuffling in his trough, but one thing the vote showed unequivocally is that there are at least 32 who aren't afraid to talk turkey — or give the US the bird!



Cuban UN Resolution re US torture at Guantanamo

Letter To the Editor



Much has been said about the effectiveness of the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights in recent months, with critics complaining that some of the countries sitting on this year's Commission are themselves know violators of human rights.

Today's developments show that the Commission is indeed in dire need of an overhaul, as a resolution introduced by Cuba was defeated. That resolution would have asked the United States “to authorize an impartial and independent fact-finding mission” to the Guantánamo Bay naval base run as an illegal prison by the U.S.

The substantive allegations of torture, unlawful imprisonment and cruelty at the base (itself illegally occupying Cuban territory) meet or exceed the same crimes of which Washington has long accused other nations. The hypocrisy that allows the U.S. to freely commit crimes against humanity while condemning others for the same acts is, to say the least, disgusting.

Mark Rushton, Halifax

(Sent April 21/05 to the Globe & Mail and local papers.)

Note: Canada abstained in this vote but did vote for the US resolution against Cuba.

The US attempt to get other nations to vote for its annual anti-Cuba resolution this year required it to water down the resolution so much that it didn't even MENTION any rights violations, but simply asked that the rapporteur the US had forced down the Commission's collective throats in past years be maintained.

Thus countries who knew that any restrictions on rights in Cuba (primarily having to do with limitations of individual civil and political liberties for those seeking to overthrow the current system) of course pale to insignificance in comparison to real rights violators like the US and its puppets around the world, would feel it was okay to vote for it (21). If, as the US claims, the resolution had 44 co-sponsors, why did it only have 21 countries that voted for it?

Even so, the majority either voted against (17) the US resolution or abstained (16). One must understand that abstention at the HRC hearings is a form of passive resistance employed by countries that cannot afford to suffer the vengeance the US metes out to those who vote against it.

So in effect, the US LOST 32-21 in the vote count (as it lost every year, once you count in the abstentions) — which will not stop it from proclaiming around the world that “Cuba was condemned for human rights violations”, and this will continue to be echoed, both knowingly and unknowingly, by reporters, politicians and even progressive people who should know better...

TERRY FOX RUN: Interview with Simon Cridlan regarding the Terry Fox Run in Cuba

CBC-NEWSWORLD April 12, 2005, at 16:30

Chris: Exactly 25 years ago today, Terry Fox set out on his historic marathon of hope. And on this milestone anniversary, supporters of Terry's gallantry are remembering him at home and around the world, including Cuba where there is a great and almost passionate regard for Terry. Joining us by phone from Havana is Simon Cridlan with the Canadian embassy. He is one of the Terry Fox Run organizers. Welcome to the show. You are working with the embassy. I gather it is the embassy that got this going. Tell me how Terry became so popular there.

Interviewee: The first run was held back in 1998. It was pretty small. But since then the message of Terry Fox has struck a cord here in Cuba, the message of fighting cancer, raising money for cancer research. The Cubans themselves have adopted the cause of Terry Fox. Both Cubans and the Cuban government itself. And so the run has just grown and grown and this year alone we had almost two million people running across Cuba in over 679 runs. Very impressive.

Chris: That's more than the number of Canadians who have turned out for these runs.

Interviewee: That wouldn't surprise me. These runs are simultaneous. They all start off at 10:00 in the morning and the kickoff is done by radio across the country.



Terry Fox stamp

Chris: So it's live coverage. I gather coverage blanket wall to wall all week long as well?

Interviewee: Exactly. There are interviews. Here at the embassy we give interviews. People from the cancer institute, they give interviews. There are spots on TV. People learn about it through their work, through their schools, in their neighbourhoods. Cuba is very good at organizing and they're really good at getting the message out. Everybody on the street knows about Terry Fox. It is quite incredible.

What is heartening is the extent to which Cubans have also adopted Terry as a hero as he is a Canadian hero. I think mostly because the dedication, courage and perseverance that he showed. Really, people can really identify with that.

Chris: Cuba, of course, is not a very rich country. Do people really have money to give, which is the point of these runs?

Interviewee: Well that's amazing. Here, you know, because people don't make a lot of money, they don't have a lot of money to give, but for all the reasons I've mentioned and because also a lot of people have personal connections with cancer. They have family members or good friends who have died or they themselves have suffered with cancer and survived. People have given much more generously, I would say on a percentage basis than many other countries. Over the last several years, we've raised over \$100,000 u.s. dollars here in Cuba. Very impressive.

Chris: Don't make much more than \$20 a week if that.

Interviewee: That's correct. But somehow people seem to dig deep in their pockets. And on the day of the run, make a donation. The embassy organizes a few events and those raise money as well. But it's the outpouring of enthusiasm and, even if it's a peso or a few pesos, every bit makes a difference and it is heart warming to see how people want to contribute, make a difference themselves as well as participating.

Chris: Pretty inspiring, Simon. Thank you very much for joining us your time.

Interviewee: Thank you, too

Dear Cuba friends,

A little while ago, the mainstream press has been awash with articles suggesting "Cuba cracking down on tipping and mingling with foreigners." We've been flooded with concerns of people preparing to travel to the island. I am certain you all have had questions too.

Information on this subject in the mainstream press is completely spurious, distorted and inflammatory — traits that characterize most Cuba news coverage in North America.

The new regulations are simply a code of ethics such as exists in all corporations and governments detailing professional behaviors of employers and employees and their relations with customers and suppliers. These guidelines are primarily directed at top Cuban tourist managers as you will see. Cuba is rightfully concerned about the potential of corruption of its tourist managers from influences by their foreign counterparts in the industry.

The new code of ethics does not effect everyday tourist staff such as average visitors come in contact with — and certainly not relations with Cubans in their communities.

In summary, nothing has changed that affects visitors' relations with Cubans in any way.



CCFA Toronto welcomes Juan Blas Hernández, new Consul of Cuba, who joins Consul General Laureano Cardoso's team in Toronto.

A widely-travelled diplomat, Sr. Blas, is multi-lingual and has an academic background in linguistics.

Cuba reopens border to Canadian cattle

HAVANA-CBC News 31 March/05: Cuba has resumed imports of live cattle from Canada after a ban of almost two years.

Federal Agriculture Minister Andy Mitchell announced the lifting of the ban at a news conference on Thursday in Havana. Cuba had already reopened its border to a wide range of beef and beef products from Canadian cattle of any age, as well as pet food that does not contain ruminant meat or bone meal.

The Caribbean nation had blocked imports after a single cow with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (Mad Cow Disease) was discovered on a northern Alberta farm in May 2003.

The discovery led to the closure of other international borders. Canada's beef industry has subsequently lost more than \$7 billion.

Mitchell said Tunisia and Lebanon had also recently lifted their bans on Canadian beef imports. The United States was set to open its border to young Canadian cattle earlier this month, but a Montana court granted an injunction to a U.S. ranchers' group that kept the border closed.

Canadian and Cuban Choirs to Perform in the Island

Havana, Apr 2/05 (Prensa Latina): Canadian Luther College, Cuban Schola Cantorum Coralina, and three other choirs from the Island gave a concert in this capital.

The Canadian-Cuban choral performance in San Francisco de Asis' Minor Basilica, in old Havana, included works by famous composers, such as British Elton John, Peruvian Chabuca Granda, US Kirby Shaw, Cuban Gonzalo Roig, and others.

Cuban choir conductor Alina Orraca, the concert hostess, told Prensa Latina the children and youth choir of the Schola Cantorum, and the Chamber choirs of the Music Higher Institute and the National School of Art will also perform in the concert.



This event will be another contribution to the continuous cultural exchange between both countries, sponsored by the Canada-Cuba Cultural and Sports Festival organization in Mississauga, Ontario and presided over by Jonathan Watts.



Artists Lyn Hutchinson and Amanda Hale's mural can be seen in background where Speaker of the Cuban Parliament Ricardo Alarcón read selections from a new book *Cuba and Human Rights*.

Try out some of these websites:

www.cuba-pictures.com Cuba-Pictures.com is a photo gallery by David Stanley, original author of the travel book "Lonely Planet Cuba."

www.debbiescaribbeanresortreviews.com Debbies Resort Reviews has a lot of info on Cuba including general info, some maps, places of interest, and reviews of various resorts. Thanks to Gordon R. for the update.

www.icap.cu ICAP (Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples) now has a website. Although in Spanish, it has articles and links to other Cuban websites. Thanks to Diamela of the Canada Desk at ICAP

www.fotospl.com Prensa Latina News Agency (Cuba) recently posted this website to provide an updated photo service to clients and subscribers about events taking place in Cuba and the world. It is still being updated.

www.canadiannetworkonCuba.com If you have not tried the Canadian Network on Cuba website, it is worth taking a look. Info on Canadian friendship & solidarity groups across Canada, articles on interesting subjects, latest info on the Canadian "Che Guevara" Volunteer Work Brigade – for all ages traveling to Cuba for 3 weeks the end of July, links and more!

www.nscuba.org The 1st website of our friendship groups –Nova Scotia-Cuba Association – lots of info

www.embacuba.ca Try the Embassy of Cuba in Ottawa for tons of info – consular locations, tourist and customs info, links to other Cuban websites – including schools, culture, sports, etc and more

www.cuba-automobiles.com For classic car buffs and photos of Cuba, you can look at photos inside the book.

www.cubaresource.org Casa Cuba, in Oakland, California, has a new website and eventually you will be able to access materials in their library.

www.walterlippmann.com (US) has lots of info relating to Cuba

www.karenleewald.com Karen's new website "Cuba Inside Out" has tons of info. She has lived in Cuba for years and has written many articles about Cuba and the US. She is now back living in the US.

Electricity: Repair & Improvement of old systems/Conservation & Sharing / Maintain Subsidized HydroRates for Cubans. Fidel referred to aspects of cooperation among government agencies... to continue checking on the remaining so-called prioritized circuits so that any shortages would be fairly distributed. Also production adjustments were to be made by enterprises to make more energy available for the population, ie.:the steel enterprise Antillana de Acero, 60,000 less tons of steel rods per year by halting production during times of peak energy demand.

The high level of commitment by workers in agencies related to the electric power program in their efforts to increase reliability of the country's system was praised. Also praised were the 48 municipalities and 190,000 families throughout the country who are doing research on electric energy conservation.

CCFA TORONTO STATEMENT The Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto is active in promoting friendship, respect and co-operation between Canadian and Cuban peoples. Our activities are directed to providing info/events about Cuba to the public in areas such as culture, health, education, sports, etc., to defend both Cuban and Canadian sovereignty from U.S. interference and to end the illegal U.S. blockade of Cuba.

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? Time to Renew ? If you think it's time to renew your membership but you are not sure if it has expired, check your mailing label. The month and year when your membership expires will be indicated. Help us keep the CCFA Toronto going by keeping your membership dues up to date.

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