

NEWSLETTER Amistad



“International pressure works,” says Activist — Posada Hearing in Texas Delayed

Excerpt from Jeff Heinrich, Montreal Gazette, 14 Jun/05

Pro-Cuba activists in Montreal yesterday welcomed a decision by a Texas judge to postpone the immigration hearing of Luis Posada Carriles, an ex-CIA agent they consider a terrorist.

“It proves that international pressure works,” said Philippe Le Roux, an expert on the case with the *Table de concertation de solidarité Québec-Cuba*. “The worst-case scenario was that (he) would have been released today like his lawyer wanted. The judge didn’t let that happen,” Le Roux said.

“At the same time, the basic problem still isn’t settled and that is that (Posada) should be tried under anti-terrorism laws, not immigration laws.” Le Roux organized a news conference yesterday morning at the same time as Posada, 77, was to appear before an immigration judge in El Paso.

In the end, the hearing was postponed to June 24, when the Judge said he will decide whether to grant Posada bail on a Bond. [The request for a change of venue to Miami was denied. *To see results of June 24th bail decision, visit our website*] The Judge also set Aug. 29 as the date the court will hear his request for ‘political asylum’ in the United States....

A dual Cuban-Venezuelan citizen, Posada is charged [only] with illegally entering the United States, this spring [although he had publically boasted about the Air Cubana bombing]. He had been in the country for two months (before) immigration authorities in Florida arrested him May 17 .

In 1998, Posada also admitted organizing a series of hotel bombings in Cuba in the mid-1990s that left one Montreal tourist dead — Fabio Di Celmo. Yesterday, the victim’s brother, Livio, told reporters that he and his family want Posada tried. “We don’t want vengeance, we just want justice,” Di Celmo told reporters at the Centre St. Pierre in east-end Montreal. Di Celmo said news of the postponement in Texas isn’t surprising, “I had a feeling they were going to postpone it, to drag things out.” *See page 4 & 5*

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CUBA, CANADA AND THE UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

By Lee Lorch, Chair, CCFA Toronto

Canadian-Cuban relations can be characterized as good and mutually beneficial. Trade, tourism, medical research and joint ventures are among the productive relationships. Canada has resisted US pressures, including the arrogant Helms-Burton Law. Yet there remains one serious area in which the Canadian government helps the US government's aggressive anti-Cuban programme. This is the question of human rights.

This is particularly conspicuous once a year, namely at the annual Geneva session, recently concluded, of the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). Each year the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAIT) holds consultations with NGOs, including CCFA, in preparation for Geneva. I have represented



CCFA Toronto for several years at these consultations. DFAIT never includes the US on the agenda. This year David Warner and I also discussed Canadian-Cuban relations with DFAIT officials. We made a second trip to Ottawa for such discussions with the

NDP Leader and Foreign Affairs critic. This was the first time that CCFA has done the latter. I hope this practice will continue and expand to institute discussions with other participating NGOs.

Each year the US initiates a demand that Cuba accept a UN human rights monitor. In the past, it has found some other UNCHR member to introduce such a resolution. This year it was unable to do so and had to introduce the resolution itself. [and watered down this time with no mention of any human rights' violations] Using strong arm methods (threats of retribution against countries more or less defenseless against the US), it secured passage of this demand with 21 for, 17 against and 15 abstentions, that is, with only a minority of UNCHR members actually supporting it. The most populous countries (China, India, Russia, Indonesia) representing the majority of the world's people, all voted against the US resolution. Canada voted with the US.

At the same session, Cuba introduced, for the first time ever, a resolution calling upon the US to accept a UN monitor on Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. US pressures against this were enormous. It was defeated 8-22-23. It is worth while noting that there were more abstentions than anything else. Canada, for all our protestations on human rights, despite voting for the corresponding resolution dealing with mainland Cuba, abstained.

At the Ottawa consultations, CCFA's positions enjoy much support from other NGOs, with much appreciation for Cuba's help to developing countries in support of the social and economic rights stressed in the Universal Declaration on Human

Rights. There is also restlessness over the government's turning a blind eye to the notorious human rights scandals perpetrated by the US government. In addition, to cite what Warren Almand, former Cabinet Minister, emphasized at the consultations, Canada does not come before the UNCHR with clean hands and should try to improve itself. Many participants supported his concerns.

Queen's U Students to U of Havana

For five years, large groups of Queen's students have spent two weeks in May at the University of Havana, receiving Queen's credit for a Philosophy and Development Studies course, "Development Ethics". This year, for the first time, a group of 26, mostly students, spent two weeks in a credited course, entitled "The Philosophical Foundations of the Cuban Revolution."

The first week of the course, taught by distinguished Cuban philosopher, Professor Rigoberto Pupo Pupo, focused on the philosophy of José Martí, and the second week, taught by internationally known scholar Professor Carlos Delgado, addressed the philosophy of Ernesto Che Guevara. Most participants recognized, as is true, that it is not possible to fairly understand Cuba without understanding the conceptual uniqueness of the theory of the Cuban revolution, particularly ideas about freedom, democracy, solidarity, Latin American identity, political unity and moral development.

Surprisingly, José Martí, named by UNESCO in 1995 as a "spiritual guide for humanity" is not taught in Philosophy departments in the United States or Canada. There is urgent need for the ideas explaining the Cuban example. The interest in this course was indicative, and we hope to organize it again soon.

from Professor Susan Babbitt, Philosophy Dept, Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario via the CCFA Kingston



Hurricanes vs Drought

Suffering from its worst drought in 100 years, eastern Cuba welcomed the rains accompanying Arlene, the first tropical storm of the year which did little damage. Over the last 6 years, the drought has been creating such severe problems for people, plants and animals that even tropical storms are welcome - in spite of its 'inconveniences' and possible flooding in low-lying areas. Although the rain helped a bit in eastern Cuba, water conservation practices will continue.

CCFA Toronto's Annual General Meeting Well-Attended

Consul General of Cuba Laureano Cardoso (Paquito) brought warm greetings to this, his second, CCFA Toronto AGM. Paquito spoke of the CCFA's excellent solidarity work, including its role in the well-organized CNC National Convention, last year's 9th Toronto-Cuban Friendship Day, the Cruise around Toronto Islands on the Anniversary of Moncada, of the 100 Years Photo Exhibition at City Hall and helping surpass the original goal of \$60,000 hurricane relief up to \$82,000 which sent almost two full containers of Canadian roofing supplies to Cuba — thanks to the help of the organizer CCFA Toronto member Keith Ellis, the other Cuba friendship/solidarity groups across Canada, the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Charitable organization and John DuBois of the DuBois Charitable Foundation.

The CCFA extends special thanks to David Warner for his contribution to the work of CCFA Toronto.

David Warner who, for family reasons, is stepping down as President, reflected on CCFA's busy year and paid tribute to members and to the Executive. He said: "In this my final report as President, I wish to pay tribute to the remarkable group of women and men who were elected as your Executive. They are, without exception, dedicated, enthusiastic and determined. There is always a focus on trying to be solidly supportive of Cuba's right to sovereignty."

"Everyone is mindful that Cuba continues to face incredible hostility from the world's greatest military power, that Cuba has a daily task of being vigilant against imported insurrection. Yet, despite the daunting workload associated with the challenges, the wonderful people in the CCFA ... exhibit cheerfulness and optimism." Due to a motion at the AGM, he will continue work as 'Honorary President.'

Vice President Elizabeth Hill presented an illustrated booklet detailing activities during the past year, a Proposed Plan of Work for 2005-06 and reports and financial statements compiled by CCFA's executive members.

The following people were elected to CCFA's Executive Committee 2005-2006: Geoffrey Allen, Maria Carrusca, Ardis Harriman, Roy Heron, Elizabeth Hill, Irene Kuusela, Lee Lorch, Ann Nicholson, Doug Oyler, Valerie Packota, Sharon Skup, Brien Young.

Audit Committee — Mike Gautier, Jimmy Kibitsis and Steven Watts agreed to form an audit committee for the year 2005-06.

Who's Who on this Year's Executive?

At the first meeting of the new Executive, **Elizabeth Hill** was elected President; **Ardis Harriman** -Vice President; **Lee Lorch** - Chair; **Sharon Skup**- Secretary/Treasurer; **Doug Oyler** - Membership Secy.

SORRY ABOUT THE NATURE MOVIE

CCFA Executive sincerely apologize to those who expected to see the documentary "Nature: Cuba" at the AGM. Gremlins got lodged in the VCR machine and refused to eject the last video. We plan to show the video at an up-coming Café Cuba or other social occasion.



Eric Mills lends a hand with the dishes at the AGM.



(I) Mitzi Concha and Maria Gomez check out some papers at CCFA'S AGM

June issue of MEDICC Review now online!

Dedicated to "Pediatrics: The First Year of Life in Cuba," the June issue of MEDICC Review is now online at our website: www.medicc.org.

Spotlight: Well Babies: Cuba's National Program
 - MR Feature: Cuba's Maternity Leave Extended to Fathers, But Few Dads Take It
 - Cuban Medical Literature: Prenatal Hydronephrosis: A Proposal for Postnatal Study & Follow-Up and
 -The Skin-to-Skin Method (Kangaroo Care):
 -Age Adjusted Evaluation of Neuro-behavior at One Year and Infant Mortality Due to Congenital Malformations

MEDICC / Emory University Nursing School
 1520 Clifton Rd, NE, Room 438 Atlanta, GA 30322

Medical Education Cooperation with Cuba (MEDICC) is a non-profit educational organization which promotes bilateral cooperation in medicine and health between the U.S. and Cuba. MEDICC publishes a monthly, journal, the MEDICC Review, which is the only on-line source in English of Cuban medical research and health news from Cuba.

Posada Carriles: The double acquittal myth *A lie, if repeated often enough, turns into truth – the only truth.*

CARACAS - The mass media repeats – in radio spots, television reports, wire services, and newspapers stories – the same news that “Luís Posada Carriles was twice acquitted in Venezuela.” We get the impression that Venezuela [is] still persecuting an innocent man.

A lie, if repeated often enough, turns into truth – the only truth. ... Does it matter that the premise is unsupported by the court files in Venezuela? Does it matter that recently declassified documents from the CIA and the FBI leave no doubt that Posada is guilty of the murder of 73 people aboard a civilian airliner.

Posada’s own attorney, Eduardo Soto, fans the fallacy and quotes: “My client was acquitted twice in Venezuela.” Hardly a coincidence, the State Department repeats the fallacy in a May 27 diplomatic note to the Venezuelan Embassy, when it rejected Venezuela’s first request for the preventive detention of Posada.

Why is this false premise used so cavalierly by lawyers and the government alike? Why does the press today accept as gospel truth something that can so easily be shown to be false?

FACTS:

The plot was carried out by two Venezuelans (Freddy Lugo and Hernán Ricardo) who boarded a Cuban passenger plane in Trinidad on Oct. 6, 1976. They hid C-4 explosives in a camera that Mr. Ricardo placed in the rear bathroom of the plane. Both men deplaned in Barbados, and the ill fated plane took off, exploding in midair off the sandy beaches of Barbados...

Police in Barbados arrested them a few hours after the attack. **Under interrogation, both confessed and implicated two others in the plot: Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch. Venezuelan authorities arrested Posada and Bosch in Caracas. During a search of Posada Carriles’ home and business, police found evidence corroborating the confessions of the men in Barbados.**

On Aug. 25, 1977, Judge Delia Estava Moreno referred the case to a military tribunal, charging all four co-conspirators with treason. [*ed: There were death threats against the judges – the son and driver of one judge was murdered – and recently released US documents reveal the US Ambassador’s interference (Posada & Bosch were long-time CIA agents) and also in helping Bosch escape prison. The military court absolved them, thus giving rise to the origin of the acquittal myth.* But that is not the end of the story. **The Military Court of Appeals found that the military tribunal lacked jurisdiction to try the men nullifying the previous proceedings.** The Judge ruled that “those prosecuted are civilians and the crimes imputed to them are governed by the penal (and not the military) code...”

What did the Military Court mean that it had no “procedural capacity” to try the case? That **the lower Court’s decision is annulled, [not aquited again] and that the entire record of the case is void**, much akin to the legal effect that an annulment has on a marital union. For example, an **annulment legally declares that the marriage (or the trial) never happened.**

The four were then charged with aggravated homicide and treason before a Civilian Court: the 10th Superior Court. The litigation / trial began as if for the first time.

The evidence from that trial is voluminous and is now corroborated by documents recently declassified by the CIA and the FBI by the National Security Archives of George Washington University. [CIA reports relate that] Posada Carriles admitted a few days before the downing of the plane, “We are going to attack a Cuban plane, and Orlando has all the details.” Court files have affidavits confirming that Hernán Ricardo admitted calling Posada long distance from Barbados to inform him the mission to blow up the plane had been accomplished, referring to the murdered passengers as ‘dogs.’

On the eve of his sentencing on Aug. 8, 1985, he escaped from the penitentiary. **No verdict was entered against Posada Carriles because according to the Venezuelan Penal Code, judicial proceedings can’t continue without the presence of the accused. The court issued an arrest warrant against him.**

After fleeing from that Venezuelan prison, Posada Carriles reappeared in El Salvador, using the alias of “Ramon Medina.” According to FBI documents in the National Security Archives, he became the “support director” for the illicit Contra Re-supply Operation being run by the Reagan White House out of the Illopango airbase in San Salvador. [*Note: that was the Reagan-BUSH White House, and Bush Sr. had been the director of the CIA in 1976 when the bombing took place. klw*]

Posada Carriles continued his terror campaign from San Salvador. He admitted to the New York Times on July 12, 1998, that he organized a string of bombings in Havana that led to the murder of an Italian tourist [from Montreal] and the wounding of others. In 2004, he was convicted in Panama for “endangering public safety” in a bomb plot to kill Fidel Castro at the University of Panama before a large gathering of students. Months later, he was pardoned by the [retiring] President of Panama [who moved to the US.]

Posada arrived in the United States several weeks ago, surfacing at a cloak and dagger press conference in Miami

on May 17. The Department of Homeland Security arrested him while he tried to flee and charged him only with “entry without inspection,” as if he had merely crossed the border illegally... DHS officials say for the record that the U.S. will not deport Posada to either Cuba or (in a not-so-veiled [and insulting] reference to Venezuela) “to any country that acts on behalf of Cuba.” [That is an offensive statement implying that Venezuela is not capable of acting on its own. klw]

Yet Venezuela is actively seeking his extradition.

It had provided the Department of State with ample evidence to meet the standard for extradition: probable cause that he is wanted in Venezuela for an extraditable offense under the 1922 Treaty between the United States and Venezuela, namely homicide.

He has not been acquitted. He is a fugitive from justice. The charges are still pending and he is still wanted in Caracas for first degree murder.

Posada Carriles is the Osama Bin Laden of Latin America. If the Bush Administration is at all serious about the war on terror, he needs to be extradited to stand trial for the murder of 73 passengers. [The immigration hearing is a red herring and a delaying tactic.] *excerpts – by José Pertierra, a Cuban-American attorney in Washington, D.C. and Rosa Miriam Elizalde, a Cuban journalist. klw: comments by Karen Wald, California*

Montréal Seeks Justice for Brother

Excerpts – by Jeff Heinrich, Montréal Gazette, 13 Jun/05

There’s a long shadow over Livio Di Celmo’s life — the shadow of the exiles he calls Cuban terrorists... who fight for the overthrow of Fidel Castro. On the morning of Sept. 4/97, in Havana, those shadows engulfed Di Celmo’s younger brother, Fabio. ...The 32 year old was killed in a bomb attack by anti-Castro militants...to which Posada had admitted involvement.



Livio Di Celmo, whose brother was killed in the bombing, wants Posada tried. Photo: Allen McInnis, The Gazette

...Relatives of his alleged victims think the immigration proceedings [and request for asylum] a travesty. “I’m disgusted,” said Di Celmo ...who spoke at a press conference in Montréal organized by the *Table de concertation de solidarité Québec-Cuba*. Posada “should have been arrested immediately for terrorist activities and then extradited, rather than having all the blah-blah of an immigration hearing,” said Di Celmo. “It’s ridiculous.

One Man’s Terrorist, another Man’s Freedom-Fighter

Excerpts: by Peter McKenna & John Kirk, Globe & Mail 10 Jun/05

The U.S. “War on terror” took a decidedly strange and unpredictable turn recently when U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials finally arrested the notorious Cuban exile Luis Posada Carriles for entering the U.S. illegally.

Mr. Posada, 77, is legendary for alleged involvement in numerous plots to kill Cuban President Castro, has admitted to helping organize the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961; is wanted in Venezuela in connection with the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner that killed 73 people and is also implicated in the 1997 bombing of the Copacabana Hotel in Havana — an event that resulted in the death of a Montreal tourist, Fabio Di Celmo. His presence in the U.S. has enraged Mr. Castro, who regards Mr. Posada as “the most famous and cruel terrorist of the Western hemisphere.” Last month, more than a million Cubans demonstrating against global terrorism in front of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana demanded that the U.S. take action against Posada. In an impassioned speech, Fidel declared: “This is not a march against the people of the U.S. It is a march against terrorism, in favour of life and of peace.



March in Havana. Victims’ photos carried to US Interest Section.

Fabio’s brother, Livio commented “It’s like a New York resident who lost a relative in the 9/11 attacks, and the mastermind of this terrorist act is living in Canada. Wouldn’t they be upset at Canada?

Since 9/11, Washington has made it increasingly difficult for genuine refugees to gain sanctuary in the U.S. If Posada is given asylum in the U.S., what message does that send to the rest of the world? Are U.S. borders open to anti-Castro terrorists but not to *bona fide* refugees? Clearly, if Posada was a suspected Islamic terrorist, the Bush administration would not be so accommodating. Put another way, would the United States be so passive if Cuba was harbouring Osama bin Laden?

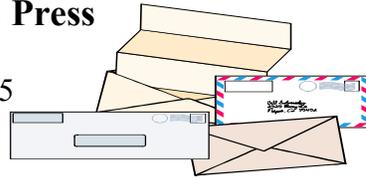
President Bush’s obvious double standard here is bringing into serious question his commitment to combatting international terrorism. And this dictum of “do what we say, not what we do” will be easily recognized by the rest of the global community.

It’s the same as giving an immigration hearing to Osama bin Laden. If (Posada) had been an Arab, the Americans would have thrown him in one of its torture chambers...” Di Celmo, ...a fierce critic of US policy in Cuba, is not alone in his outrage...

Italian born Fabio emigrated to Montréal at age 22 where his brother already lived. ... He always vacationed a few weeks in Cuba... “He liked the cordiality of the people there and the climate, of course,” his brother recounted. “He also appreciated the Cuban revolution and its social achievements” and considered Castro a benevolent leader, Di Celmo said. ...“It’s not a perfect system, the Cuban system, but I don’t believe there is repression in Cuba.” *Continued on page 8*

Letters to the Canadian Press

Halifax Daily News, 8 May/05



In April 2004, my boyfriend and I travelled to Santa Lucia, Cuba, for a week of fun in the sun. It was my first time on a vacation that did not involve travelling in either Canada or the U.S., so I was a little worried about what to expect. Well, I had nothing to worry about. We had a wonderful time at Club Amigo Caracol. The staff was helpful and friendly, the food was good, and we had lots of time to lie in the sun and do some activities.

I really enjoyed renting scooters and exploring on our own. We also took a day tour of Camaguey, Cuba's third-largest city. It was founded by the Spanish in 1514, and is one of the seven original Spanish settlements. Some of the architecture we saw was unbelievable.

Other highlights of our trip included a sail on a catamaran and trying the local lobster, called langosta. Our trip to Cuba definitely gave me the travelling bug, and we would return to Cuba in a heartbeat.

-Starr Francis & Rick Cross

GLOBE & MAIL, 17 Jun/05 - Letters to the Editor
CUBAN CONUNDRUM

Yes, the plight of Osvaldo Alfonso is sad (A Cuban Family 'Destroyed By The System' — front page, June 16). But he made a conscious decision to dissent in full knowledge of the consequences. People in neighbouring islands die at the hands of roaming thugs, starvation and sickness. When Fidel Castro disposed of the Batista regime, Cubans were suffering like their neighbours; now they enjoy education, food and an excellent health-care system. Not bad when you consider you can't eat freedom.

- Rick Durst, Milford Bay, Ont. [ed: Dissent does not mean being employed by the US Interest Section/government]

Marina Jiménez perpetuates Washington's "big lie" that Cuba is not democratic. The implication that moving to a party system would represent a transition to democracy is nonsense. Democracy is defined as government by the entire population, and is usually characterized as a classless, tolerant society that favours social equality, all of which sounds like Cuba to me. Multiple political parties have nothing to do with the matter.

- Brien Young, Toronto. [ed: Cuba had a multiparty system under the dictator Batista that was corrupt with ties to the US government & the US Mafia.]

Write letters to your local/national papers to compliment or condemn the media coverage of Cuba. Make your voice heard and it does contribute to our efforts to combat the deliberate mis-information to the public.

RECYCLE YOUR BICYCLE

Recycle Your Bicycle is a project started by Harold Hosein in April 2003 to collect unwanted bicycles and parts and send them to Cuba, thus diverting them from our landfill sites and putting them to good use.

In April 2004, 2 containers were shipped. 150 bikes went to Moa, and the remaining bikes, and parts, went to Holguin. In July 2004, 1 container was sent to Holguin. In total, about 900 bikes were delivered in 2004. Some of these have gone to an orphanage in Holguin, some to the Teachers Training College, and the rest distributed in the community. The bikes collected have been a variety of sizes from tricycles up.

On May 2nd this year, another container was sent to the Medical College in Las Tunas. This container contained about 250 bikes, which were all repaired, some computers and typewriters, used clothing and shoes, medical text books, and mathematics, engineering and science text books suitable for high schools and university, sewing machines and other household material.

Visit the new website at: recycleyourbicycle.com

We hope to link with the bicycle clubs and repair shops eventually and do some cross-promotion. Plans are continuing to send another container in October 2005. This one may go to the city of Moa.

Financial contributions go through the Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto (CCFA Toronto), and are eligible for tax receipts. Please memo the cheque at the bottom to **recycle your bicycle** so the correct account is credited, and mail to: CCFA, c/o Recycle Your Bicycle
3306 Thorncrest Drive Mississauga, ON L5L 4K6.

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A MESSAGE FROM SILVIO RODRIGUEZ

In the last few days, we have reported on a very serious and shameful incident that, until now, has been silenced by the big media. And, if it were known in the United States, it would offend the conscience of all men and women of the homeland of Abraham Lincoln.



The government of that country, the self-proclaimed world leader of the so-called 'war on terrorism' is hiding in its own territory one of the most notorious terrorists of modern history .

There is irrefutable proof that Luis Posada Carriles and other terrorists of Cuban origin, all with long criminal histories, are being sheltered by high level officials of the government of the United States and the fascist mob in Miami.

Cuba was among the first countries to denounce the monstrous facts of Sept. 11, 2001 and to give concrete offers of solidarity to the people of the United States. Convinced that no cause can justify the death of innocent people, Cuban revolutionaries felt deeply moved by the chilling, unforgettable images of the attack on the twin towers. At the same time, with the bitter moral authority granted us as victims of similar acts during the last 40 years, we demand that those responsible for such heinous crimes as the terrorist sabotage of a Cuban plane that caused the death of 73 civilians (among them members of the juvenile fencing team of our country) be punished.

Doesn't the pain that has afflicted so many Cuban families for so many years deserve world attention? Is our pain different from that of families who have suffered and are suffering from the loss of dear ones on that fateful September 11? Is terrorism legitimate when it is carried out against Cuba? Are crimes against the civilian population justified in these cases? Is it possible that the conscience of the people of the United States can live with this concept, devoid of any ethical sense, by keeping these facts hidden indefinitely?

We ask the artists and intellectuals of the United States, men and women who love peace, truth and life not to allow the facts presented by Cuba to be ignored. And that they denounce, through all means available to them, the existence of this dangerous terrorist coalition in the heart of their own society. The Cuban people do not want vengeance; they want justice to be done.

Silvio Rodríguez. Singer-Songwriter, Cuba
and Casa de las Americas, Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba, Union of Journalists of Cuba, Hermanos Saiz Association, Cuban Academy of Sciences

Wage and pension hikes: why Cubans feel more secure

Excerpts from an article by RAÚL ESTRADA ZAMORA

While the world reduces pensions and the number of unemployed increases, Cuba has announced an immediate increase in funds for pensions, social benefits and wages. The Revolution has allocated more than 2.5 billion pesos a year in increases and this has affected more than 3 million of the lowest income earners; for example, the lowest pension will increase from 65 to 150 pesos, the middle income from 120 to 180 pesos. Over 1.5 million pensioners, or 97.3% of that population, will benefit. For families living under social security (receiving monetary aid, social services etc.), subsidies will increase by 50 pesos a month. Result: almost half a million people whose income will rise from 62 to 112 pesos.

The average increase is between 92 to 129 pesos and the average wage for workers will double. Effective May 1, 2005, minimum wages rose from 100 to 225 pesos and middle income wages from 282 to 312 pesos. Over a million workers gained from this increase.

Family purchasing power has been significantly boosted by these measures. In 1990s it had fallen due to the negative effects of the world economic crisis, the collapse of the Soviet Union and European Eastern socialist countries, and the toughening of the inhuman blockade imposed by the United States. That stage of the economic crisis known to Cubans as the Special Period has, as President Fidel Castro said, become part of the past.

SOCIAL BENEFITS: Apart from these new increases, Cuban citizens benefit from the unchanging policy of the Revolution to never abandon anyone, no matter what the circumstances.

This is illustrated by the cases of Georgina Fernández, aged 73, Carlos Manuel Donekián 72, Natalia Avilés 74, Yonel Dorta 71 and others from the 18 members of the *Jose Martí* grandparents' circle in Las Tunas province, 650 km. east of Havana.



Sitting in a picturesque central children's park, they were waiting for nurses to take their blood pressure so they could do the physical exercises that will keep them in shape and prolong their lives. They told me that in their experience the Revolution has always kept them in mind. Even though some of them live alone – as in the case of Georgina and Natalie — no one feels abandoned.

Continued on page 8

Wage and pension hikes *Continued from page 7*

Shortly after his retirement seven years ago, Yonel was widowed and left in charge of the household. Nonetheless, his physically disabled son was able to pursue a career as an Electrical Energy Engineer without spending a cent. Now he has a permanent job and can continue his computer studies, all financed by the state.

FULL EMPLOYMENT: Cuba has achieved what few countries in the world have: full employment for its economically active population. Today its unemployment rate is scarcely 1.9%.

According to the principles of socialism, every human being has the right to participate in building a life of dignity. Cuba offers studying as an alternative to employment, and this is benefiting hundreds of thousands of teenagers who can now graduate from universities located in every city in the country at no cost.

In spite of the distortions and lies to which the Commission of Human Rights of the United Nations has lent itself and which has been systematically manipulated by the United States government, Cuba is a country where people are respected and secure.

Montréalér Seeks Justice for Brother *Continued from page 5*

In Sept. 1997, Fabio, deciding by then to apply for permanent Canadian citizenship, travelled to Cuba to see a friend who was celebrating his honeymoon. He was seated with them at the bar when the bomb exploded ... wounding others and killing him. His father heard the blast from his room but he couldn't save his son. Nine months later in an interview with the New York Times in Aruba, Posada admitted authorship of the bombing campaign, but expressed no regret... (He) later denied involvement, just as he did in the Air Cubana bombing.

Two years afterwards, the father moved to Cuba ... "He wants to die where my brother died," Di Celmo said. Father and son will have a lot to talk about when Di Celmo visits Cuba — like the US 'war on terrorism' that, according to Di Celmo, doesn't extend to the terrorists it helped create. ... Governments are watching closely to see how the Bush Administration reconciles (its) use of Cuban exiles like Posada when it suits Washington's needs and its campaign against global terrorism... "The US campaign is a farce, it's garbage... They have a double standard ... and they are as guilty as the Cuban mafia in my brother's death," said Di Celmo.

Prensa Latina Launches Photo Website

Havana, June 15/05 (Prensa Latina): The Latin American News Agency *Prensa Latina S.A.* (PL) launched its Photo Internet. The posting of the site www.fotospl.com which commemorated the 46th anniversary of the Agency's foundation, was attended by reknown Cuban photographers.

The site has stored 7,000 photos in barely eight months, and plans to fill its capacity with 60,000 pictures a year. He added that transferring *Prensa Latina's* archives to the www will help it store nearly 50 years of valuable records of the history of Cuba and many other developing countries.

Prensa Latina has signed exchange agreements with *Bolivariana de Noticias* (Venezuela), *ITAR-TASS* (Russia), *VNA* (Vietnam), Argentina and other national papers.

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