



# CUBA Newsletter

Summer 2007

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## Contact us

The ACFS meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month  
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## Newsletter Contributions

We welcome contributions to the Cuba Newsletter. If you would like submit an article, please contact:  
[newsletter@sydney-acfs.org](mailto:newsletter@sydney-acfs.org)

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

Hi members and friends

Welcome to another year of activism in ACFS. We had a very energetic 2006, with participation in rallies outside the US Consulate, the completion of our project in Cuba, Project Rainbow - Arco Iris, and awareness raising events with speakers and music including on the occasion of Fidel's birthday when we joined with the CPA and several other groups to celebrate the Cuban revolution. Some of us also travelled to Adelaide for the ACFS National Consultation. This year's National Consultation is coming up in Canberra on the weekend of April 13 - 15. Please contact us for more information. Recent exciting developments in Latin America have been the subject of lively discussion at our meetings, particularly in relation to Cuba's role. We finished the year with a fundraising event featuring a screening of Fidel: The Untold Story and a performance of live Latin music. The annual Work-Study brigade travelled to Cuba and we hope to be able to welcome them and hear about their experiences at our next meeting.

One of the highlights of the year was our joint work with other parties and solidarity organisations. These included the Committee in Solidarity with Cuba, Western Suburbs, the Communist Party of Australia, the Australia Venezuela Solidarity Network, the Communist League, several trade unions and individuals from a range of parties and organisations. Working together on activities is a valuable exercise in developing a real comradeship that goes beyond gasbag rhetoric. While each group or party may differ in many ways, solidarity is built on a foundation of socialist ethics, mutual respect, equality, humanity, collectivity and hard work. This is one of the lessons of the Cuban revolution.

ACFS continued to draw attention to the shameful actions of the US government and its backers including the continued blockade of Cuba, the imprisonment on trumped up charges of the Cuban Five, US protection of the terrorist Carriles and the concentration camp that it runs on occupied land on Guantanamo Bay. Media silence about these abuses makes it more important than ever to raise these issues at every opportunity. The film, Mountain of Light, put on last year by the Friends of Cuba and Aidwatch, showed the work of Cuban medical teams across the world. It also highlighted the medical training that Cuba is providing to students from Timor Leste and many other impoverished nations, putting to shame the fatcat governments that can't even look after their own citizens. The Latin American Film Festival is on again this year and includes works from Cuban film makers. Check out the program enclosed with Cuba News and try to get along to see some of the most exciting cinema being made today.

In solidarity

Joan Silk, Secretary, ACFS Sydney Branch

## REPORT BACK FROM THE 2006/07 CUBAN BRIGADISTAS

Members of the recent ACFS Brigade to Cuba will be reporting back on their experiences at the next ACFS meeting. This is your chance to hear first hand about the reality of life in Cuba today. The meeting will be held on:

**Thursday 1 March 2007**  
**Level 1, CEPU Building**  
**741 George St, Sydney**

The entrance to the CEPU is in the lane beside the building. All friends of Cuba and those who would like to find out more are welcome to attend meetings. We look forward to seeing you.

## **HUNDREDS GREET CUBAN PHOTOGRAPHER IN SEATTLE**

BY GEOFF MIRELOWITZ  
The Militant, Vol.62/No.43



*Korda with his famous photo of Che*

SEATTLE - More than 500 people turned out to meet and hear acclaimed Cuban photographer Alberto Korda during a three-day visit here. An overflow, standing-room-only crowd of more than 300 filled a Seattle University event October 30 for Korda's slide show and lecture titled, "Cuba: Diary of a Revolution."

Korda accompanied Cuban leader Fidel Castro in an official capacity from 1959 to 1969. Korda's photographic images are among the best known of that era. Perhaps his most well-known photo, of Cuban revolutionary leader Che Guevara titled, "Heroic Guerrilla," is among the most reproduced images in the history of photography.

Prior to the Cuban revolution in 1959 Korda was a prominent fashion photographer. With tens of thousands of other Cubans he was in the streets of Havana to greet the Rebel Army led by the July 26 Movement and Fidel Castro as they marched into the city that January. Korda, attracted as he explained, "by the power of the moment," took a photograph - also well known - of Castro and rebel army leader Camilo Cienfuegos. He donated the photo to the newspaper *Revolución*, an organ of the July 26 Movement, which ran it prominently. Shortly thereafter, Korda explained, the director of the newspaper appointed him Castro's personal photographer for a trip to Venezuela and New York. In that capacity he continued to travel with the Cuban revolutionary leader across Cuba and the world.

Korda told the crowd, "I feel honoured that a Cuban and a revolutionary can be welcomed at this university." In showing one slide, an early photo titled, "The child with a doll made of wood," he described his experience travelling with Castro to a peasant village. There he photographed the child, who looked in amazement at Korda's photographic apparatus as she stroked a piece of wood. Her family was so poor she did not even have a doll. That moment helped Korda decide "to devote my life to the revolution that would change these inequalities." That devotion has "continued to today, and I am 70 years old."

In response to a question about cultural life in Cuba now, Korda explained that the revolution opened the doors of culture to most Cubans for the first time. "Cuban culture under capitalism was very poor," the photographer said. Most people did not have access to the most elementary materials to create art of any kind. The revolution changed that.

Cuba remains a relatively poor country economically, and one that has suffered from decades of a U.S. trade embargo. Korda noted that despite enormous advances in many fields of art and the opening of arts education to ordinary people, there is still no photography school. The reason is economic. Photographic supplies - from cameras to film, chemicals, photographic paper, and machinery - are very expensive. Nevertheless, he noted a burgeoning interest in photography in Cuba and an enormous increase in interest in the subject among young women.

A questioner asked Korda, "So what do you think of Mr. Castro?"

"First," Korda replied, "no one calls him 'Mr.' everyone calls him Fidel." This is how Castro prefers it, Korda said, because the Cuban president is not interested in titles. Castro, Korda continued, "is one of the most important men of the 20th century." When the revolution triumphed, Korda explained, some people thought it would not last very long. "But here we are 40 years later."

Korda's visit was organized by a group of Seattle area photographers

with support from the Seattle-Cuba Friendship Committee and others.

## **MORE THAN 2 MILLION PEOPLE LEARN TO READ & WRITE VIA CUBAN METHOD**

BY JOEL MAYOR LORAN  
Granma

WITH the addition of its most recent versions in Quechua and Aymara for Bolivian indigenous people, the Cuban "I Can Do It" literacy method is now in 12 languages, said César Torres, dean of the Latin American and Caribbean Pedagogical Institute (IPLAC), during the inauguration ceremony of the 2007 International Pedagogy Congress at the Karl Marx Theatre in Havana.

The children's theatre group La Colmenita welcomed the educators who are participating in the event.

More than two million people have learned how to read and write via this method, which provides a methodology but respects the native languages of the peoples where it is used. In Bolivia, the stated goal is to declare that country free of illiteracy in 30 months.

Cuba was the only country that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization awarded the 2006 King Sejong Literacy Prize for its results in helping other nations in that field.

## **WWF FINDS CUBA ONLY COUNTRY WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Prensa Latina  
Thu Oct 26, 2006 5:31 am (PST)

A report published by the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) claims that the only country in the world with "sustainable development" is Cuba.

WWF includes in its report a graph which shows two features: the human development index (established by the United Nations) and the so-called "ecological footprint" which shows the per person energy and resources consumed in each country.

Surprisingly, only Cuba has passed in both arenas, which is enough to be

designated a country that "meets the minimum sensitivity criteria".

The study's authors credit the high level of literacy, long life expectancy and low consumption of energy for this success.

The Living Planet Report 2006 was released globally Monday from Beijing, China, and carries data indices which indicate the Earth's well-being.

### **WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CUBA?**

By Manuel Alberto Ramy  
[maprogre@gmail.com](mailto:maprogre@gmail.com)

Abridged version

It's been little over three months since Fidel Castro delegated his powers on First Vice President of Government and Second Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba (CPC) Raúl Castro. What has happened in the interim?

First, what we all know and the international media have reported: there has been absolute tranquillity in the country. The predictions of crises and disasters, the product of ignorance about this country or feverish hopes, came to naught.

Will Fidel resume command of the government? His health and political evaluations will determine his return, but he will always be the leader of the Revolution. What's certain is that we are looking at the beginning of process of transition Cuban-style, rather unusual because it is made during the life of the conductor of the Revolution -- an influential factor -- who, despite his convalescence, participates in the important decisions, as he said in the abovementioned video.

Since April, the CPC has been strengthened by the return of the CPC Secretariat, which had disappeared in 1991 and is an auxiliary organization of the Political Bureau (PB). A good many of the 12 members of the Secretariat are part of the new generations.

The logical conclusion is that we're witnessing the strengthening of the Party and the incorporation of the new generations of militants to different

levels of management. Out of the current 21 members of the PB, 10 come from the generations that followed the triumph of the Revolution.

The strengthening and renovation are answers not only to the logical generational succession -- in which Raúl is the bridge -- but also to the fact that the CPC, as the successor to Fidel's leadership, is going to forcefully play its role as a vanguard force to deal with the complex situation affecting the country in regards to economic and social matters, such as lack of motivation, labour indiscipline, low productivity, and corruption.

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The challenge before Cuba was analysed in depth by Fidel Castro in a transcendental speech he made at the University of Havana in November 2005. In it, he stated that only the revolutionaries could destroy the Revolution.

### **The Communist Party of Cuba and the government**

Many articles and statements have been published that speculate whether Raúl Castro enjoys sufficient support in the Party structure to lead it and preside over the country. Army Gen. Raúl Castro's authority is undisputed, a quality enhanced by his history, his confirmed fame as an excellent leader, a good organizer and an efficient administrator of resources. The military-run industries (which are less bureaucratic and have rational personnel staffs) are profitable, and their workers enjoy a different wage policy: they receive extra payment, according to the profits earned by the company.

To extend these experiences gradually (a task known as "entrepreneurial improvement") seems to be another facet of the strong demands on labour discipline that will be applied beginning Jan. 2, 2007. It is very clear to all Cubans that, as much as the CPC may

strengthen and renew itself at the highest levels, the decisive battle will be waged at the base, especially in the work centres.

The provisional President seems to be the man who will reorganize public administration and make it more efficient. Proof of this? I point out some very visible changes: The International Finance Bank (IFB), which belonged to the powerful CIMEX Corporation, was transferred to the National Bank of Cuba; and the travel agency Havanatur, also a CIMEX property, went to the Ministry of Tourism several weeks ago.

Another appreciation is that the directorate of the CPC seems to be functioning under the principle of democratic centralism: an open discussion and acceptance of the majority opinion, which in turn commits members who held a different view to abide by the majority decision. According to many, this is the style of work of Raúl Castro, a man with integral upbringing who is willing to listen to different opinions. In fact, in his speech at the closing of the 19th Labour Congress, he said that it is important "to talk to people, but honestly, to find out what they think. We shouldn't be satisfied just with talking but we should also listen, even if we're not pleased by what others say; to admit our mistakes and, if the situation requires it, tell our interlocutor that he is wrong. These concepts are valid not only for the labour movement."

Parallel to the strengthening of the political apparatus and the generational relay, we can see a greater supervision by the political apparatus over the administrative activities; also, there is a tendency to set boundaries between the functions of the CPC, as the guide and vanguard of society, and the tasks assigned to the government. This definition of duties is difficult, because of the haziness of the boundaries between the two institutions, but the trend is noticeable. And if the policy of Entrepreneurial Improvement spreads, the authority of management will overrule all others in administrative matters.

This might be an indication that the political organization will increasingly play the role of critical conscience of

the State's central management. And the national press may be beginning to operate in the same direction, sometimes moving along with the measures taken, other times previewing them or acting as pollsters to gauge and measure reactions.

### The press at the current stage

In recent weeks, the newspaper Juventud Rebelde (JR) of the Union of Communist Youths (UCY) has been publishing in its Sunday issues investigative reports on social and economic topics. They range from the analysis of different segments of today's youth -- showing that youth is not a homogeneous bloc -- to articles dealing with the difficulties faced by young people to make love. The report that has attracted more attention has been The Big Old Gyp, a series of three articles that strips naked the world of services and reveals how some State-owned enterprises have become private.

More important yet, the articles pitted the opinions of the workers at those labour centres, who claimed they didn't receive any raw materials, against the opinion of managerial leaders who alleged the opposite. In the end, to settle matters, the journalists found a two-year-old report made by the Ministry of Auditing and Control that said that those work centres had not received raw materials since 1984, 20 years ago, and had not been given cleaning equipment since 1991, 15 years ago.

Is it negative for socialism to expose a problem that goes back years? Does the publication of investigative reports help the enemy?

For a long time now, the Cuban press needed to run articles that focused not only on the evident achievements made by society but also on the serious problems that exist in different sectors. Months ago, the daily Granma published articles related to non payments to the farm sector, revealing that at least in one province the Ministry of Agriculture owed farmers about 4 million pesos. If the State doesn't pay, Granma reported, the farmers sell their produce to the private market, which operates on a supply-and-demand basis and pays more for farm products. Did the sky fall as a result of those articles? The

Cuban National Bank paid the debt, leaving a question unanswered: What was done about the Ministry of Agriculture?

Socialist journalism must have a space for criticism (and it shouldn't be occasional) on the basis of the socialist option that serious, well-made opinion is a way to strengthen the system, not to harm it. The people want to see their problems reflected, analysed and discussed; they want to see that, as a result, the responsibility is placed on the right shoulders. In that sense, socialist journalism has a big task and can make a major contribution.

The final article in JR tells about the creation of an academic, multidisciplinary team that will study the issue of socialist property. I think it's the first time that a decision of that kind is made public as a result of a journalistic effort. It is healthy for the academic world to collaborate in the formulation of policies, it seems to me.

One of the interviewees, Dr. Ernesto Molina, consulting professor at the Department of Economic and Technical Disciplines of the Directorate of the International Relations Institute, said that "What we must not do is to allow the market to transform the nation's economic structure all by itself. That can be done only through a rigorous plan, and in that regard the State has an irreplaceable role."

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True enough, the role of the State is irreplaceable, but that "all by itself" when referring to the market is significant. It opens the door to speculations about what sectors of the economy can function with well-regulated market criteria, in order to help the transformation of the economic structure.

I'm not the only one who wonders how socialism can be undermined by the individual ownership of an ice-cream

stand or a barbershop or a small refreshment stand.

If we begin from the Leninist axiom that "practice is the criterion of truth," we could say that the service sector (food, repairs and many others) always has been extremely money-losing, unstable and unsystematic. "The debate on these deficiencies is as old as the decision to socialize the nation's services after the so-called Revolutionary Offensive of the 1960s. So said in the 1980s the outstanding intellectual and revolutionary fighter Carlos Rafael Rodríguez." (Juventud Rebelde, Oct. 22, 2006.)

For his part, Omar Everleny Pérez, who holds a Master's degree in Economic Sciences, told the same newspaper that "We blame 'the special period' but the fact is that even before 1989 the service industry did not work well. [...] The indispensable direct relationship between State-sponsored labour and the benefits it generates is missing. It is unthinkable, perhaps impossible, that for a salary of 200-and-some pesos someone will provide good service while at the same time he has to supply the light bulbs, the mops and whatever other utensils he needs for his work."

What will happen tomorrow? Unlike the many Cubanologists who predict futures that never materialize, I don't have a crystal ball. But I know that reality is stubborn and will make itself felt -- not to dismantle socialism, as the empire and the Cuban-American far-rightists wish, but to make it more efficient and satisfying for the population.

At the moment, Raúl Castro, as the interim President, has his hands full reordering procedures, wiping out corruption and trying to extract the most from labour productivity. To this end, he seems to lean toward a combination of material stimuli (rewards for efficiency) and moral stimuli, which also are important.

The wave of spectacular changes that foreign journalists and "transitionologists" would like to see does not necessarily have a capitalist spray. Socialism brings its own solutions, as long as it listens to the earth and the people and knows how to channel the needs according to its ability.

## **THE U.S. ECONOMIC BLOCKADE OF CUBA**

Prensa Latina  
Havana, Feb 3

US President John F. Kennedy, penned on February 3, 1962 presidential decree 3447, making the blockade on Cuba official, in an economic war already costing the island 86 billion dollars.

Since 1959, Washington undermined vital sectors of the Cuban economy as the suspension of the sugar quota, main support to the island and the cut of oil supplies and the refining industry as well as the boycott on spare parts acquisition for the Cuban industry.

As early as February 12, 1959, the US decided not to return 424 million dollars of Cuban National Bank reserves robbed by members of the Batista dictatorship. The revolutionary movement lead by Fidel Castro started to apply measures to defend the country's population.

Those actions to recover the country's wealth for the people hit big US monopolies which for more than half a century plundered and dominated the Cuban nation.

The White House sanctions aimed to vanquish the Revolution came rolling one after the other until turning this into the longest and most cruel blockade in history.

Washington snatched the Cuban sugar quota to the US market in March, 1960. In June, oil firms were prompted to cut fuel supplies to paralyse the nation. US refineries in the island denied to refine crude imported from the ex Soviet Union and the revolutionary government had to confiscate the refineries.

When then president Dwight D. Eisenhower decided to cancel 700 thousand tons pending of delivery from that year's sugar quota, Cuba responded with the nationalization of US companies established in the country, including 36 sugar plants. Washington intentions were clearly expressed in a State Department document on April 6, 1960. "Alienate domestic support through disappointment based on

dissatisfaction due to economic hardships, aimed to cause hunger, desperation and the overthrow of the government." Secretary of State Christian Herter himself defined such actions as "economic war."

On September, 1960, the US pressured to eliminate credits to Cuban banks and interfere in Cuba's foreign trade.

Further US sanctions were answered by Cuba on October, 1960 by nationalizing the rest of US properties in the country.

Diplomatic relations were severed by Washington on January 3, 1961 and in March of that year it totally cancelled the sugar quota for about three million tons.

President Kennedy signed the Presidential Proclaim 3447, in line with this hostile action, and the Proclaim started in force on February 7, 1962.

Kennedy ordered the US Secretary of Treasure to promulgate measures and regulations to forbid Cuban import of products, or import operations from Cuba or even through Cuba.

He also ordered the US Secretary of Trade to continue and reinforce prohibition of US export operations to Cuba.

The White House promoted Cuba's political isolation and carried out the mercenary invasion of Bay of Pigs, defeated by the Cuban people in less than 72 hours.

Washington dictated the Regulation for Control of Cuban Actives in 1963, which forbid every Cuban transaction, froze Cuban values in US of all kinds and the trade of subsidiary enterprises in third countries.

Many decrees, regulations and emends, including the Torricelli and Helms-Burton Acts and so-called Bush Plan have hardened the blockade to Cuba to limits over the boundaries of international rights.

Since 1992, the UN General Assembly approves a resolution demanding the US government to end

the blockade against Cuba with a growing majority.

In 2006, it obtained a favourable record of 183 countries in favour, with 4 against and just one abstention. Alfredo Boada, Prensa Latina

## **LETTER TO THE AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER – ECONOMIC BLOCKADE OF CUBA**

Dear Mr. Downer,

It appears that you may have decided to move the following amendment in the General Assembly of the UN to Cuba's 2006 motion of censure against the almost 50 year long blockade of the Cuban people:

"Noting that the such laws and measures were motivated by valid concerns about the continued lack of democracy and political freedom in Cuba, calls upon the Cuban Government to release unconditionally all political prisoners, cooperate fully with international human rights bodies and mechanisms, respect the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and comply fully with its obligations under all human rights treaties to which it is a State Party."

I would like to believe that this is not true.

These laws, enacted by Washington, are not motivated by any concern for democracy but are simply an attempt to discredit a government, chosen by the Cuban people, that refuses to be sycophantic to the dictates of Washington.

Now that Washington can no longer rely on the one-time Banana Republics of Latin America to do its dirty work in the UN, is your government happy to rebadge Australia as the most recent Banana Republic to do Washington's bidding?

While anti-Cuban terrorists freely walk the streets of the USA and while the US illegally imprisons people, including Australian citizens, on illegally held land in Cuba at Guantanamo Bay, are you willing to attack Cuba in the name of Australia?

A glance at the Amnesty International Annual Reports will show that the greatest human rights abuses on Cuban Territory are occurring at Guantanamo Bay under the auspices of Washington not Havana!

Please spare the Australian people the ignominy of being seen as members of a sycophantic client state of Washington. Please vote, without amendment, against the US blockade of Cuba as Australia has consistently done in the past.

Peter Weitzel

*Peter is the President of the ACFS Sydney Branch.*

**MESSAGE FROM ICAP –  
ADVANCED NOTICE OF THE  
2007 “MAY DAY” WORLD  
BRIGADE OF SOLIDARITY WITH  
CUBA**

Dear Friends

Please accept fraternal greetings on behalf of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples.

Our Institute welcomes the second edition of the May Day World brigade of Solidarity with Cuba which will gather delegations coming from all over the world made up by friends who would like to share such a glorious date for workers with the Cuban people.

Among its objectives, the Brigade is aimed at providing a wider understanding of the Cuban reality as well as giving its participants the opportunity of contributing to the agricultural and productive development of the country through voluntary work sessions.

Apart from participation in the May Day Central Rally and attendance to the traditional International Meeting of Solidarity with Cuba, the program prepared for this occasion includes, visits to places of historical, cultural, economical, and social interest in the capital and in other provinces, as well as lectures and meetings with organizations of the Cuban civil society.

The activities of the Brigade will take place from April 23 to May 6th in the provinces of Habana, Habana City, and Matanzas.

The whole stay comprises 15 days and 14 nights, eleven of which will be in “Julio Antonio Mella” International Camp (CIJAM), which is located in Caimito Municipality, 45 kms. from Havana City; plus three more nights in Varadero, Matanzas Province.

The full cost of stay is 295.00 CUC (Cuban Convertible Pesos), covering accommodation in rooms shared by up to 8 people in CIJAM; three meals a day; in-out airport transfers; and transportation to all the activities included in the Program. Optional visits are not included in the package’s price. The cost for an additional night stay in CIJAM is 10.00 CUC. The voluntary work sessions will take place in CIJAM nearby areas.

The participation in this kind of event denotes the increasing solidarity that the Cuban Revolution arouses in its struggle against the blockade imposed by the American government and its right to self-determination. It also contributes to rupture the fierce disinformation enclosure used by our enemies to deflect the Cuban reality.

By attending the Brigade, a member is committed to comply with the Program and to keep a proper behaviour, discipline and shared living standards.

As we would be pleased with your presence in the May Day World Brigade of Solidarity with Cuba, we are extending a heartfelt invitation for you to participate.

Asia-Pacific Division,  
Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP).

*For further details on the brigade contact the ACFS or ICAP.*

**‘AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH’ TO  
SCREEN ON CUBAN TV**

The recently released documentary on global warming ‘An Inconvenient Truth’, narrated by former US vice president Al Gore, will be shown to a nationwide Cuban TV audience during the space of The Round Table program on Thursday evening.

Gore uses an array of powerful images and graphics in this multi-media production that makes a case for a concerted worldwide effort to reverse a trend that could lead to widespread catastrophe. To date, the Bush administration has ignored and manipulated the issue in complicity with the oil corporations and other US economic sectors that have no interest in addressing the problem of global warming.

The documentary will be presented to Cuban audiences by John Saxe-Fernandez, a professor from the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

**HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR ACFS MEMBERSHIP LATELY?**

***Your membership fee and donations directly support our solidarity work and community projects in Cuba. Every cent towards our work counts!***

**Enclosed is a \$20/\$10 (concession) for 1 year membership.**

**Enclosed is a donation of \_\_\_\_\_ towards the work of the Society.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

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