

# Cuba Today

**CUBA**  
**SUPPORT GROUP**  
**IRELAND**

NEWSLETTER OF CUBA SUPPORT GROUP - IRELAND

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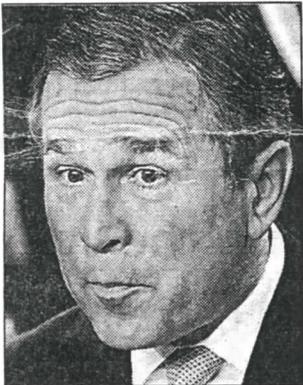
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## NO MORE EXCUSES!

**G**eorge W Bush is in the White House. Bill Clinton is gone. The end of the Clinton presidency is also the end of the enduring myth that Clinton would be "easier" on Cuba. Despite all the evidence - the Cuban Democracy Act and the Helms/Burton Act just to give two examples - many people still harboured, until the end, the notion that Clinton would make some move to normalise relations with Cuba. He didn't. As the Cubans said all along, he was never going to.

For the past eight years and in the lead-up to Clinton's first term, the notion was very comforting to those who, for whatever reason, adopted a weak position on US policy towards Cuba. Now there are no excuses.

In case anybody is harbouring any fancy notions about Bush just take a look at some of the influences which will be at play. Brother Jeb, Governor of Florida, for instance. And Mel Martinez, the first Cuban-American to be appointed to a Cabinet post who will head the Department of Housing and Urban Development. He is a former member of the board of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) which has been the main organisation in the US promoting US aggression against Cuba. This is the same Martinez who paid for Elián Gonzalez to visit Disneyland during his kidnap in Miami. Or more seriously, Otto Juan Reich, President Bush's choice for post as assistant secretary of state for Western



Hemispheric affairs. Reich, a Cuban-American, is a staunch anti-Communist who favours "economic warfare" against Cuba. Reich has quite a history. Apart from his illegal endeavours in overthrowing the Sandinista government in Nicaragua Reich was more recently a paid lobbyist for the Bacardi rum company whose lawyers drafted the Helms-Burton bill.

Speaking (anonymously) from the "land of the free and the home of the brave" one US businessman who favours trade with Cuba declared in the *Dallas Morning News* that if Reich were appointed he would be "the assistant secretary of state for Bacardi and the Cuban American National Foundation". There can be no more ambiguities, no more wishful thinking. Join the growing movement of solidarity with Cuba today.

## Cuban Ambassador Presents Credentials

The Cuban Ambassador to Britain and Ireland, Jose Fernandez de Cossio, presented his credentials to President Mary McAleese on 15 March. This event completed the process of the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between Ireland and Cuba and paves the way for the opening of the Cuban Embassy in Ireland.

Ireland was the only remaining country in the European Union which did not have diplomatic relations with Cuba and Cuba Support Group warmly welcomes the normalisation of relations between the two islands.

We look forward to the opening of a Cuban Embassy in Dublin and to the arrival of Teresita Trujillo who we understand will be the *Chargé d'Affaires*.

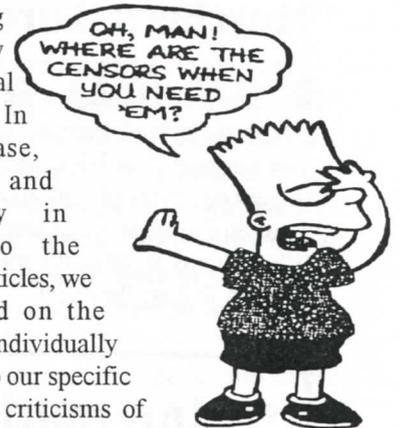
## Irish Times Attacks Cuba

"Czechs not alone in struggle for press freedom" beamed the Irish Times headline. Indeed, they're not alone. Cuba Support Group has been having its own problems with freedom of the press - Irish Times style. In December, 2000 and January, 2001 the Irish Times published two articles within two weeks which exposed - yet again - a long-standing hostility on the part of that newspaper towards Cuba. Michael McCaughan and Paul Cullen, while allowing a grudging acceptance of Cuba's achievements, proceeded to attack Cuba with every weapon available, including prejudice, distortion and inexcusable mistakes.

Needless to say, the Irish Times refused to print any letters which attempted to correct the material in the articles. Cuba Support Group has no difficulty in condemning the Irish Times when such action is deserved. However, we hesitate in questioning the integrity of individual journalists. In this case, however, and specifically in relation to the published articles, we have called on the journalists individually to respond to our specific and general criticisms of their published articles.

Whatever about the reasons for such journalism it is clear that such articles damage those who, like Cuba Support Group, attempt to present accurate and objective perspectives on Cuba, and on the many changes taking place in Cuba.

We have formally complained to the Irish Times and demanded a right of reply. We received neither reply nor acknowledgement. We have also invited the journalists to debate the issues in a public and open forum. Both journalists are currently in correspondence with us and we will report on developments in the next issue.



# Solidarity in Action ...

## CSG Support for Health and Education Projects in Cuba

A school, two polyclinics and a hospital received financial and material support from Cuba Support Group and the Cuba Health & Education Project in November, 2000 during the World Solidarity Conference.

In Cotorro, on the outskirts of Havana, the Efrain Mayor Amora Polyclinic was presented with USD\$1,800 by Stephen McCloskey from the Belfast Branch. The money will be used to replace doors and windows in the clinic. The Luis A. Turcios Lima secondary school was presented with USD\$600 from the CHE-Project and the Cork Branch by Joyce Williams.

In the Diez de Octubre Municipality in Havana, Billy Cameron from the Galway Branch presented the Luis A. Turcios Lima Polyclinic with USD\$750 of medical equipment including infra-red lamps and dental equipment which the clinic had specifically requested.

The Instituto de Nefrologia in Boyeros in Havana City (which had previously received a Gamma X-Ray Unit) was presented with a small amount of medicines and medical equipment.

## Irish Containers Arrive in Havana

Four containers of medical equipment from Ireland arrived in Havana since last November. The containers were organised by the Cuban Irish Medical Association – an organisation established by Dr David Hickey. The equipment was destined for specific health facilities and for the Ministry of Health. A donation of medicines and medical supplies from Cuba Support Group to the Ministry of Health was included in the shipment.

## Northern European Meeting in Dublin

Cuba Support Group is hosting a conference of Cuba solidarity organisations from northern European countries in April. Delegates from Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Britain, Ireland and Cuba will attend the weekend conference. The conference will deal with issues such as planning Work Brigades, examining the effectiveness of national campaigns and planning for greater co-operation between European organisations.

While this is an annual conference it is the first time that Ireland has been in a position to host the event.

## International Work Brigade to Cuba



*Experience of a Lifetime*

9 - 29 July 2001

For further information contact:  
Cuba Support Group  
15 Merrion Square, Dublin 2  
Tel: (01) 8436448  
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## 'Cuba Night' Success

More than 250 people filled the Teacher's Club for a night of salsa music to raise funds for education projects in Cuba. The event was the initiative of participants in the Summer 2000 Work Brigade to Cuba who organised the night in conjunction with the Cuba Health and Education Project (CHE Project).

After expenses, £1,200 pounds was raised which will be sent to the Luis A. Turcios Lima secondary school in Cotorro, Havana. The CHE Project has supported improvements in this school for a number of years and this contribution will allow for significant improvements to the school.

Support for one school in the area of Cotorro does not mean that other schools are put at a disadvantage. This school was initially nominated by the local municipality because it was in need of immediate attention. Now, the local education authorities are able to divert more of their budget to other schools in the area.

## What Can You Do?

Are you a printer or a wizard on the Web? Let us know if there is any way you can help develop and strengthen solidarity with Cuba.

### GET INVOLVED!

- Join Cuba Support Group
- Renew membership
- Contribute to CHE Project
- Join 50-50 Club

# 50 - 50 CLUB

### Recent Winners:

A Marshall, Dublin  
B Lynch, Dublin  
B Dowd, Cork

# 2nd World Solidarity Conference

## Solidarity for Ever!

Opening the Conference, Sergio Corrieri, President of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the People (ICAP) referred to the necessity for international solidarity:

"Here we are, you and us, proclaiming once again and as always that Cuba is not alone, that there are many of us, that with every day that passes there will be more of us and that although there have been forty years of blockade, there have also been forty years of solidarity.

"There are various reasons for being in solidarity with Cuba.

We know that all those who are, are not motivated by the same reasons or with equal intensity. The Movement is broad based because it is heterogeneous. It could not be otherwise. And that is its strength.

"We have never intended that each and every one of the measures or decisions taken in Cuba should be immediately understood and unconditionally accepted by our friends. The world is too complex for that. We are therefore not against

explaining our reasons over and over again, not against expounding our arguments. When the truth is multiplied, friends multiply. "The struggle of and for Cuba transcends us, it is not different from the struggle for all just causes in the world. No one, no person with integrity, no country can achieve wholeness and peace by themselves. The world must have solidarity or there will be no world.

"A beautiful flower has blossomed... the flower of friendship and solidarity, a preview perhaps of the gardens of tomorrow. Let us take care of it, it is the daughter of rebelliousness and of the refusal to put up with injustice."



## Cuba Support Group Co-ordinator Addresses Conference

Addressing an audience of about 4,000 delegates during the final plenary session, Declan McKenna, Co-ordinator of Cuba Support Group called on European delegates – not just those in the EU – to develop a co-ordinated approach to changing the policies of European countries towards Cuba.

He described the policies of the European countries and the "Common Position" of the EU in particular as "shameful, cowardly and entirely opportunistic."

Contrasting the weakness of the European countries with the strength of Cuba he continued: "The EU buckled under US pressure in adopting the 'Common Position' and the so-called 'Understanding'. Contrast the pathetic EU position – accepting the dictates of the US – with the strength and resolve of the Cuban position expressed so many times during this conference by so many senior leaders of the Revolution.

"Cuba does not, and will not accept imposed conditions from any source – not from the US, not from the IMF, not from the World Bank, not from the Organisation of American States, not from anybody. Have the governments of Europe no shame?" he asked.

He went on to describe European policies as "weak in substance" – policies on such shaky foundations that they are susceptible to a co-ordinated campaign. Work on co-ordinating a campaign will be discussed between individual organisations and at a number of conferences taking place in the near future.

## Conference told of overwhelming UN vote

For the 9<sup>th</sup> successive year the United Nations General Assembly has condemned the US blockade of Cuba with an overwhelming vote of rejection. Addressing the Assembly, Felipe Perez Roque, the Cuban Foreign Minister acknowledged that the UN General Assembly did not abandon Cuba in these tough years when it had to confront - in addition to its own hardships - the economic war that the United States reinforced when it believed that the time had come to launch the final attack on Cuba. However, while year after year a larger number of members of the Assembly asked the United States to change its policy, such repeated appeal was disregarded with "imperial arrogance" by the US.

Looking to the future the Foreign Minister challenged the

history as the President who - being able to do so - was forced

incoming US president to change US policy on Cuba and rebuked Clinton for his failure to end the blockade or normalise relations with Cuba:

UNITED NATIONS VOTE AGAINST US BLOCKADE										
	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	
IN FAVOR	59	88	101	117	137	143	157	155	167	
AGAINST	3	4	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	
ABSTENTIONS	71	57	48	38	25	17	12	8	4	

"The new President of

the United States should decide whether to promote a change in this outdated policy in Congress or continue being held hostage to the mean interests and delusions of revenge of an extremist, unscrupulous minority long overridden by history.

"The current US President (Clinton) is perhaps a case in point. He probably wanted in the beginning to transform the situation that was passed down to him. However, he will go down in

to act in a completely opposite direction.

There are men who make history for their courage and the conviction prevailing in their deeds; there are others who fail to make it for what they could not or did not want to do out of incapacity or fear.

"The President-elect and the new US Congress must decide. Cuba, in the meantime - more determined and optimistic than ever in its decision to continue being a free nation - stands both ready to have normal and respectful relations with the United States.... (or) to face another century of blockade and acts of aggression".

## Spot the Difference

Decades ago Gore Vidal famously described the US political system as a one party state with two right wings. Not much has changed. The Republicans and the Democrats view each other with hostility, yet the issues that split them remain quite narrow. There are no broad differences

over the economic or social principles by which America should be run. Both are unshakable advocates of capitalism. There are some disagreements about gun laws and abortion and, to some extent, about tax.

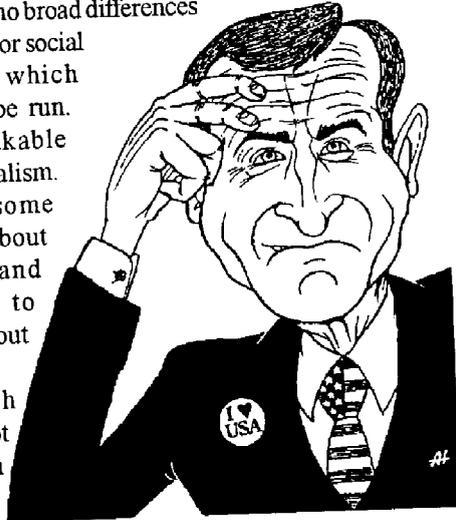
However, Bush and Gore did not campaign on these issues, with the

exception of tax, but agreed between themselves to avoid them in an attempt to appeal to the swinging voters.

The struggle for the presidency and the struggle between the two parties is about power and possession, not about ideas. The closeness of the vote reflects not the result of a closely fought battle over diverse ideas but reflects just how little there is to choose between them.

Even on foreign policy where many commentators are trying desperately to show major differences between Bush and Gore there was little to choose between the two. Under either president, the US would retain the right to threaten and destabilise un-favoured governments, dictate global business and trade terms, ignore environmental standards, flout treaties, defy international law, impose unilateral sanctions, maintain an aggressive arms selling business, use (and abuse) the UN and generally abuse its dominant position on the international front.

Remember Elián? Remember how Gore found himself on the same side as Bush? It wasn't a matter of policy – just a matter of expediency. In the end, the US suits itself, no matter who is president.



## Imagine...

*(John Lennon would understand)*

US Presidential election explained – properly for once: Imagine we read of an election occurring anywhere in the third world in which the self-declared winner is the son of the former prime minister and that former prime minister was himself the former head of that nation's secret police/intelligence agency.

Imagine the self-declared winner lost the popular vote but won the election based on some old colonial hold-over from the nation's pre-democracy past (the Electoral College). Imagine the self-declared winner's 'victory' depended on disputed votes cast in a province governed by his brother! Imagine that poorly drafted ballots of one district, a district heavily favouring the self-declared winner's opponent, led thousands of voters to vote for the wrong candidate. Imagine that members of that nation's most despised caste, fearing for their livelihoods, turned out in record numbers to vote in near-universal opposition to the self-declared winner's candidacy.

Imagine that hundreds of members of that most-despised caste were intercepted on their way to the polls and prevented from voting by state police operating under the authority of the self-declared winner's brother. Imagine that six million people voted in the disputed province and that the self-declared winner's 'lead' was only 327 votes. Fewer, certainly, than the vote counting machines' margin of error.

Imagine that the self-declared winner and his political party opposed a more careful by-hand inspection and re-counting of the ballots in the disputed province or in its most hotly disputed districts.

Imagine that the self-declared winner, himself a governor of a major province, had the worst human rights record of any province in his nation and actually led the nation in the number of executions including the execution of minors and mentally handicapped people.

Imagine that a major campaign promise of the self-declared winner was to appoint like-minded human rights violators to lifetime positions on the Supreme Court of that nation. None of us would deem such an election to be representative of anything other than the self-declared winner's will to win power. All of us, I imagine, would wearily turn the page thinking that it was another sad tale of a third world country.

## 'Nice Guy' Gets to the Top

Nice guy, former General, now US Secretary of State Colin Powell – where did it all begin? In Vietnam actually. Covering up the My Lai massacre in 1968 to be precise. When US soldiers Ron Ridenhour and Tom Glen, reported a day-long orgy of murder, torture and rape in My Lai, Powell drafted the memo that would take care of matters finding that "Relations between American soldiers and the Vietnamese people are excellent." Under Reagan, Powell helped in the secret shipment of heavy weapons to Iran in exchange for hostages, and also in exchange for secret money with which to fund the illegal war in Nicaragua. He also assisted in deceiving Congress about these violations of Congress policy at the time. Ever consistent, the US invasions of Grenada and Panama received his strong endorsement. He also wants to "revitalise" sanctions against Iraq... plans to have a nice little war in Colombia... has strong views on homosexuals...

## Killer Nation – Killer Bush

The US has carried out more than 700 executions since resuming judicial killing in 1977 according to *Amnesty International*. More than 500 of them have occurred since 1993. The 700 men and women executed so far have been selected through a lethal lottery - a system riddled with arbitrariness, discrimination and error. Among the 700 executed were those who committed their crimes - or allegedly committed their crimes - when they were still children, the mentally impaired, those denied adequate legal representation, foreign nationals denied their consular rights, and defendants whose guilt remained in doubt. In over 80 per cent of the 700 cases, the crimes involved white victims.

Former governor – now President – George W is a big fan of executions. He killed so many that he became the undisputed lord high executioner of the US.

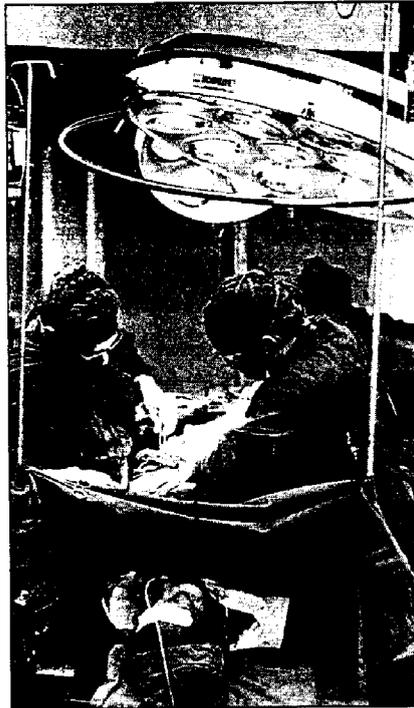
# Inside Cuba...Inside Cuba...Inside Cuba...

## The Latin-American School of Medicine

The Latin-American School of Medicine in Havana which was established in the aftermath of the devastation caused by hurricanes George and Mitch now has 3,432 students from Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, and the Dominican Republic. There are also students from Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina; and the African nations of Equatorial Guinea, Cape Verde, and Guinea-Bissau.

The school of medicine is located in what used to be a Naval Academy for the formation of army and marine higher officers which was donated by the Cuban Ministry of the Army to the Ministry of Public Health in 1998. For the students of this school, just as for Cuban students, the lessons, lodging, books, and other teaching materials are free.

Another 2,000 students will commence studies this spring plus 500 from black communities in southern USA. It is expected that 10,000 students will train as doctors as a result of this impressive project.



## Cuba Tops Alternative Table

The United States, predictably, won the most medals at the 2000 Olympics, but it drops dramatically to 62nd position in *The Guardian's* alternative medals table, which adjusts results to take into account the size and prosperity of individual countries. Cuba came No 1 in the ranking.

In the alternative ranking three points are allocated for a gold, two for a silver and one for a bronze and then the total number of points is divided to see how many each country got per \$10bn of national income. This produces a totally different outcome, with all except Cuba dropping out of the official top 10 medals table. Cuba moves from ninth position to the top of the alternative table, by a long stretch.

First prize under these rankings in the regional stakes went to the Caribbean. Cuba, Jamaica and the Bahamas took first, second and third places - with Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago also in the top 20.

## Sporting Greats Bow Out

Three great stars in Cuba sports hung up their gloves and running shoes in a ceremony in the Sports City in March attended by President Fidel Castro. The ceremony also paid tribute to the 100 best Cuban athletes of the 20th century, in front of 20,000 spectators.

It was a farewell to three long sporting careers, boxer Félix Savón, three-time Olympic champion and six-time world champion; volleyball player Mireya Luis, three-time Olympic champion and two-time world champion; and runner Ana Fidelia Quirot, two-time world champion and two-time Olympic medallist. Before this presentation, distinguished figures awarded diplomas and a glass cup to each of the 100 best athletes of the last century, 16 of whom have passed away. The selection was the result of a survey published in *Granma* in January, with almost 400 candidates. The list was compiled from the votes of 300,000 fans and trainers.

Félix Savón, three-time Olympic champion in the heavyweight category, told *Granma International*, "I don't regret having turned down millions to box professionally. Today I feel more Cuban than ever, I am happy to see both the president's and the people's emotion towards me."

## Castro Receives International Award

President Fidel Castro has been awarded the Benito Juarez International Award for being the 20th century's most outstanding leader and greatest defender of the people's sovereignty. Sponsored by 270 organizations from over 23 countries, the Benito Juarez Award was created in 1987 on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the African National Congress. The award is granted to the most prominent leader in the fight for peace, self-determination and sovereignty.

The Benito Juarez International Award has been previously granted to personalities such as Nelson Mandela and Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu.

According to Bertha Zapata — who headed the Mexican delegation in Havana that presented the award to Fidel Castro, the leader of the Cuban Revolution is "one of the most outstanding figures in the fight for the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, confronting this century's largest empire."

## 39,000 Foreign Students Graduate in Cuba

Since Cuban cooperation with Asia, Africa and Latin America in education began in the 1970s, around 39,000 young people from more than 120 countries in those regions have graduated in Cuba. Of those, 16,656 have studied at higher education levels. During the present 2000-2001 academic year, there are 8,433 foreign higher education students in Cuba. This record number will be surpassed once again in February when 10,000 new scholarship students will arrive.

Students can take courses in natural sciences, mathematics, social sciences and humanities, economics, technical sciences, agricultural science, medical science, design, professional and technical education, pedagogy, art and physical education.

Less than 10% of foreign scholarship students in Cuba are self-financed.

# On the International Front

## People Trafficking Big Business

The international trafficking of persons, especially of women forced into prostitution, is the third largest form of organized crime in the world and a business worth about USD\$7 billion per year. Only the smuggling of narcotics and arms exceeds it. Around one million women annually fall victim to this trafficking, according to calculations by the UN. **The Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights**, a Finnish non-governmental organization, has estimated that some 75,000 Brazilian women are currently working as prostitutes in European Union countries.

The trafficking of persons, especially women, boys and girls, in order to submit them to force labour and exploitation, including sexual exploitation for commercial purposes, is a major violation of human rights – human rights violations which are largely ignored in the US and the European Union.

## World Bank “Unconvincing”

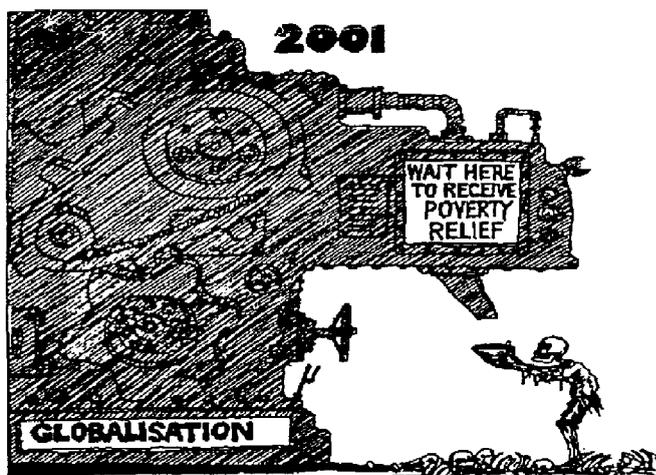
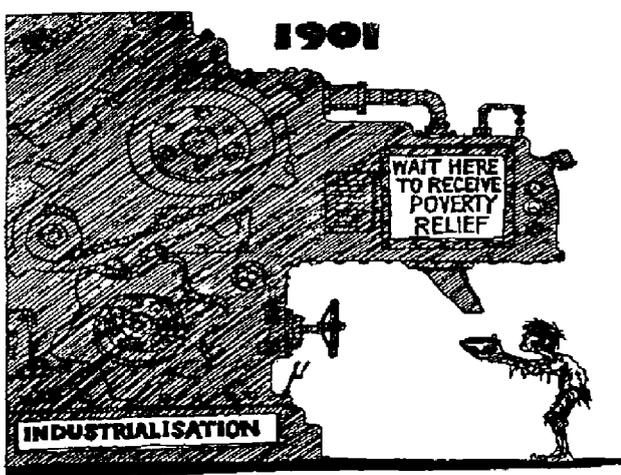
*Granma International* has described the new policies announced by the World Bank and the IMF as “unconvincing” though worthy of examination. Among the proposals which these institutions have described as part of their new perspective is the promotion of economic opportunities for the poor through equitable growth, improved access to markets and greater financial resources. However, there is little mention of the cancellation of foreign debt.

It is not only the Cubans who are harsh in their criticism. Ana Petifor, director of **Jubilee 2000** also cast a sceptical eye on the proposals complaining that while speaking of reducing poverty, these institutions insist on receiving millions of dollars in debt repayments. Nevertheless, the shapers of neoliberalism are being forced to examine the destruction their policies have caused throughout the world. What they will do to relieve their embarrassment remains to be seen.

## Mexico Reaffirms Position on Cuba

Mexican President Vicente Fox has confirmed that his government will continue to strengthen relations between Mexico and Cuba. Fox told *Prensa Latina* that there would be “a very close relationship, I order to continue working on the development of all areas” including exchanges in the areas of education, culture and health. Fox clearly stated that relations would remain good – “Our policy will be the same as we have followed until now, and that is to remain at Cuba’s side.”

While the new Mexican President and his party are known to be right-wing it appears that a certain degree of sovereignty exists which will ensure that Mexico’s position on Cuba will not be entirely dictated by the US.



## US Sells Half the World’s Arms

Three permanent members of the UN Security Council account for 80% of the world’s weapons sales at a time when the Council is incapable of mounting effective peacekeeping operations, according to a report by the **International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)**.

The US increased its share of the international arms trade last year and now accounts for nearly 50% of the \$53.4bn (£37bn) annual market, according to the IISS publication, the *Military Balance*.

Britain came second, selling nearly £7bn worth of weapons, while France was third at almost £4.6bn.

Much of these weapons systems were supplied to the Middle East, the world’s biggest arms market. Saudi Arabia, the world’s largest arms buyer, purchased more than £4bn worth of weapons last year. Taiwan was the largest arms importer in East Asia.

More than 120,000 people were killed as a direct result of armed conflicts in 2000.

## Aristide Re-elected

Jean-Bertrand Aristide has been sworn in for a new five-year term as Haitian president. The 47-year-old former priest was first elected president in 1991, following the end of the reign of the Duvalier dynasty and ousted in a coup seven months later. Aristide’s plans for economic development are already in trouble. The European Union has decided against making 70 million euros available to the country (the poorest country in Latin America), and the US has decided to transfer aid worth \$76 million to NGO’s rather than the Haitian government. Smell sanctions?

## Blockade Tightened

Carlos Lage, vice-president of the Cuban Council of State, has rejected the notion that there has been a relaxation of the US economic blockade of Cuba and reiterated that Cuba "does not negotiate its dignity with anyone."

Lage categorically stated that the conditions presented by the US are completely unworkable. There is no transportation between the two countries nor bank connections, permission has to be asked on a case-by-case basis, there is a total absence of financial support, and, at the end of the day, "it is impossible to trade in that way with anyone, it's one-way trade," he observed. "We reject the US measure, because what has really happened is that the US policy on Cuba has hardened once again."

"This country will not trade with the United States or any other country under conditions signifying damage to our national dignity and to our people," the vice president emphasised.

Lage pointed out that even President Clinton had complained that the new legislation's block on financing makes it "virtually impossible" for small farmers in the United States to sell



produce to Cuba. Signing the legislation on October 28, 2000 Clinton also criticised a clause which writes into law the restrictions on travel to Cuba by US citizens.

"Imagine what kind of a measure it must be if even the president doesn't agree with it and then signs it", Lage commented.

## ...Blockade Stays - Powell

The US blockade of Cuba will stay in place as long as President Fidel Castro is in power according to US Secretary of State Colin Powell. According to Powell, the only exceptions the US should make to the blockade would be "anything that allows funds to go directly from people in the United States to people in Cuba (and) opportunities to have some interchanges".

"Any kind of release of sanctions that requires a government to government or private industry to government relationship with the Castro regime seems to me foolhardy". Nice guy.

## Solidarity Continues to Grow

Ricardo Rodriguez, vice-President of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) described the solidarity with Cuba offered by 1,700 organizations in 128 countries around the world as "unprecedented". Rodriguez underlined that efforts have grown over the last few years in response to US hostility towards Cuba, admiration for Cuba's resistance, and its example to other countries. Four hundred of the organizations are in Europe - a region where solidarity is stronger - although the number is increasing in other areas where people are against the US blockade and defend Cuba's right to self-determination and sovereignty.

## Another Attempt on Castro's Life

On November 17, 2000 on his arrival in the Republic of Panama to participate in the 10<sup>th</sup> Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, Fidel Castro publicly denounced a new plot hatched by the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF) to assassinate him. He identified the leader of the



group that was to carry out the assassination attempt as Luis Posada Carriles, the notorious international terrorist of Cuban descent. Cuban security provided the necessary information that enabled the Panamanian security forces to capture this criminal and his accomplices a few hours later. They were caught with a sketch of the University of Panama (where Castro was due to speak) and 20 kilograms of highly destructive C-4 plastic explosive.

Yet again, Luis Posada Carriles, with the support of the CANF, has been linked to ALL of the plots to assassinate Fidel at EVERY Ibero-American Summit.

## Cuba Demands Extradition of Posada

Cuba has demanded the extradition of Luis Posada Carriles, the notorious international terrorist of Cuban descent who was captured in Panama as a result of information provided by Cuban security.

Luis Posada Carriles' criminal record is extensive and shameful. He is linked to various plots to assassinate Castro; he is the author of numerous attacks planned against Cuban missions and officials abroad.

Recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), he directed different terrorist groups from which he organised and perpetrated numerous crimes. He was the author of the most monstrous crime of all, the blowing up in mid-flight of a Cubana Airline plane with 73 passengers on board all of whom died.

Imprisoned for this act, he escaped from a Venezuelan jail with the aid of the CANF and the CIA. From that moment on he has been based in Central America, where he was an important player in the financing of the Nicaraguan Contras. On the orders of Oliver North and on the payroll of the US State Department, he played a prominent role in the Iran-Contra scandal. Yet again with the support of the CANF, he has been linked to all of the plots to assassinate Fidel at all the Ibero-American Summits. He is responsible for the sabotage of various Cuban hotels and facilities in 1997, for which he used Salvadorian and Guatemalan mercenaries who left a toll of injuries and the death of an Italian tourist.

Luis Posada Carriles and his accomplices must be extradited to Cuba. It is up to the Cuban justice system to try him for his crimes, because they have been committed against the Cuban people, and the vast majority of victims have been Cuban.

# Raúl Castro's Advice to US



"With our insuperable differences, it would be better for the imperialists to try to normalize relations with Cuba during Fidel's lifetime rather than in the future, because it is going to be more difficult then," declared First Vice President and Minister of the Armed Forces Raúl Castro during an interview transmitted by Cuban national television in January. He said that the population currently demonstrates a consolidated unity that will be a decisive factor in maintaining the Revolution during the third millennium, a unity he

attributed to the "vigilant attitude of a people who are learned, cultured and ever more politicized".

With regard to those in the United States who speak about a post-Castro era and a peaceful transition on the island, he responded: "Of course there will be a transition process to an even better socialism."

"We have institutions, in the first place the Party, which are sufficient enough to ensure that we will not be taken by surprise by either well-intentioned foolishness or by evil betrayals," he added.

Explaining the continuing strength of the Cuban people in defence of their Revolution Raúl observed: "Nothing has come free of charge for our people. Looking back on history we see that many things came into being with a great deal of blood, sweat, tears and sacrifice. Our people have never stopped struggling".

## Venezuela Tops in Trade With Cuba

Cuba's Foreign Trade Minister, Raúl de la Nuez, has announced that Cuba's most important trade partners were currently Venezuela, Spain, Canada, the Netherlands, China, and Russia, in that order.

In the most recent statistics available, however, the Cuban Central Bank reported last year that the country's top six trading partners in 1999 were Spain with a trade value of \$882.6 million, Canada at \$553.5 million, China at \$478.5 million, Venezuela at \$463.3, Russia at \$427.3 million and Mexico at \$344.8 million. Diplomatic sources report Cuba's trade with Spain in 2000 remained around the \$800 million mark, meaning Venezuela's trade would have increased by over 80 percent. Almost all of Cuba's trade with Venezuela in the past has taken the form of petroleum and derivative imports.

Cuban President Fidel Castro and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez cemented their close political alliance and friendship last October when they signed a comprehensive trade agreement in Caracas.

The deal included Venezuela supplying 53,000 barrels per day of petroleum and related products to Havana, a portion with preferential financing that can be paid back through barter. The agreement took effect immediately and was expected to boost trade between the two countries further in 2001.

## WHO SAID THAT?

● *Cuba "will only accept the elimination of all the laws, measures and sanctions" imposed on the island by the United States.*

Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque

● *When I read the word "crossfire", I reach for my pen. In the Middle East, it almost always means that the Israelis have killed an innocent person.*

Robert Fisk

● *"The Palestinians always complain that we know the details of every proposal from the Americans before they do," he said. "There's a good reason for that; we write them."*

Israeli government source commenting on why the Palestinians might be a little suspicious of the US role in the peace process.

● *"Roger Barnett loves hunting. Most weekends he heads into the Arizona desert with his guns and his family. His quarry? Mexicans"*

*The Guardian* headline on vigilantes rounding up Mexican emigrants in Arizona.

● *"There are men who make history for their courage and the conviction prevailing in their deeds; there are others who fail to make it for what they could not - or did not want to do - out of incapacity or fear."*

Felipe Perez Roque, Cuban Foreign Relations Minister referring to Bill Clinton at the UN General Assembly debate on the US blockade.

● *"I hope I'm wrong, but what I've been told is that the embargo on food and medicine has been allegedly eased - although it probably won't do much because it doesn't offer any credits or financing facilities... Certainly this agreement is restrictive."*

Bill Clinton prior to signing the bill allegedly lifting the ban on sales of food and medicine to Cuba.

● *"He has been sent to Washington to free his industrial and commercial backers from many of the regulatory constraints that have been built up over the past half century".*

*The Guardian* on George W Bush.

● *"Our people have received nothing free of charge. Everything has cost them a lot of work and sacrifice"*

Raúl Castro

*"The whole nation is one large school, we have learned how to resist and overcome in the most inconceivable of circumstances."*

Fidel Castro

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

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**Title:** Cuba Today, Spring 2001

**Organisation:** Cuba Support Group Ireland

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