

As Bush escalates threat, Cuba refuses to be bullied

By Julie Fry

On Oct. 24, President George W. Bush gave an unprecedented speech on Cuba at the State Department. He outlined a new, much more aggressive U.S. policy that is clearly aimed at trying to destabilize Cuba. Surrounded by families of right-wing Cuban mercenaries, Bush came close to openly threatening a military assault against the socialist island. The Cuban people and the rest of the world took note.

Bush outlined his new strategy as follows: The creation of a multi-billion-dollar "Freedom Fund for Cuba" that he promises will help Cubans "rebuild their economy and make the transition to democracy"—but only if the Cuban people agree to forfeit their sovereignty and follow the political and economic conditions demanded of them by the U.S. government.

Bush will also give Cuba some computers and more Internet access, as well as some scholarships to U.S. schools, if Cuba agrees to his demands.

But the most important part of Bush's speech was not the offer of this pitiful amount of so-called aid, which even Bush can't possibly believe will entice Cubans to abandon their revolution. The real news in the speech was the fact that Bush came closer than he ever has before to threatening to overthrow the Cuban Revolution through force.

Throughout his speech, Bush repeatedly referred to Cuba's so-called "transition." He said that the U.S. would not seek to "accommodate" Cuba's acting president, Raul Castro. Ominously, Bush declared, "The operative word in our future dealings with Cuba is not 'stability.' The operative word is 'freedom.'"

Bush is apparently willing to destabilize Cuba in order to try to win this so-called "freedom" and Cubans immediately recognized this statement to be an absolute threat.

Cubans stand up to Bush

Throughout Cuban society, people responded immediately to Bush's threat. Cuba's foreign minister, Felipe Perez Roque, issued a statement calling Bush "raving."

Roque said Bush was completely out of touch with the reality of life in Cuba and the people who live there. In response to Bush's new initiatives,

Roque issued a 12-point platform of demands on the U.S. government.

Among these demands was an end to the illegal U.S. blockade of Cuba, the release of the Cuban Five, and, importantly, respect for Cuba's independence and sovereignty. Cuba demands that the U.S. cease its policy of aggression and stop its "intervention in Cuba's internal affairs and attempts to manufacture an internal opposition."

The Union of Communist Youth of Cuba (UJC) also responded to Bush's speech. Many of Bush's new policies, such as the computers and scholarships, were directed at youth in Cuba in the hope that they would be less loyal to the revolution than the older generation.

The UJC began their response with the following statement to Bush: "Your ridiculous words are embarrassing and disgusting to the Cuban youth." The UJC talked about the reality of life for youth in their society and how distant it was from Bush's portrayal. "The Cuban youth," they wrote, "raised on values completely different from the model you represent, are not a bunch of uncommitted and fanatic people that will run after your cynical offerings. We know our history and have learned very well the lessons of sovereignty that so many generations have left us throughout many years."

U.S. isolated in policy toward Cuba

Although Bush invited diplomats from all over Latin America to attend his Oct. 24 speech, the only people who applauded when he announced his policy were the right-wing mercenaries and U.S. politicians he invited to be there.

Although Cuba is a small country with much less military and economic power than the U.S., it has managed to rally international support for its position. The presidents of Nicaragua and Venezuela, Daniel Ortega and Hugo Chávez, respectively, both immediately condemned Bush's policy. On Oct. 30, the United Nations General Assembly members voted overwhelmingly to oppose the U.S. blockade against Cuba, for the 16th consecutive year.

Here in the U.S., there is no mass support for an attack on Cuba. Bush's current war against Iraq has lost the support of the vast majority of people in the United States. His more recent threats against countries such as Iran, which Bush and the U.S. media have demonized thoroughly, have only caused

further opposition to his administration, given the disaster it has caused in Iraq. There is no support for such an aggressive policy against Cuba except among the most extreme right-wing forces.

Given the seemingly arrogant detachment of Bush's latest speech, many U.S. media sources have commented that Bush was only pandering to the Cuban right-wing in Miami, who are frustrated that the Cuban Revolution did not collapse after Fidel Castro's illness over a year ago.

There may be some truth to this view. After pursuing an unsuccessful policy of aggression against Cuba for the last 50 years that included assassination attempts, terrorism and many forms of subversion, all the U.S. government had left to rely on was its own propaganda: the belief that the Cuban Revolution was totally dependent on Fidel Castro. And now, over a year later, it is clear to everyone that it was wrong. Surely, the anti-Cuba forces must be a bit panicked.

But Bush, of course, isn't dependent on the Cuban right wing. They work for him, and not the other way around. The U.S. government provides them with every ounce of power and influence they have. Bush and his predecessors have provided the Cuban right wing with all the training, arms and money they have used to attack Cuba over the years.

Bush is really speaking for the part of the U.S. ruling class that sees Cuba as a threat and wants to overturn the revolution by force. As different hostile and isolationist policies toward Cuba have failed over the years, a split has developed among U.S. capitalists.

Some would like to continue along the same track of open hostility. Others, fed up with past failures and eager to try to exploit Cuba's natural resources and highly educated workforce, favor more normal relations. Bush falls decidedly in the former camp with regard to U.S.-Cuba relations. And as the president and his foreign policy have become increasingly unpopular, those who he represents are desperate to see some gains. That is why Cuba does not regard Bush's statement as an empty threat.

Neither does the Cuba solidarity movement in the U.S. The International Action Center and the New York Committee to Free the Cuban Five issued a statement this week condemning Bush's speech and calling on the movement in the U.S. to organize in defense of Cuba. Attached to the statement was an online petition calling on Bush to cease his aggression toward Cuba. If Bush decides to carry out his threats, the movement in the U.S. will be poised to respond, and so, of course, will the Cuban people. Go to www.iacenter.org to read the statement. Fry is a leader of FIST in New York City ■

Who was Che Guevara?

By Caleb Maupin

Ernesto "Che" Guevara was born into a middle-class Argentine family. As a child he suffered from asthma. It was in his illness that he began to desire a life helping the afflicted. He made it his life's goal to become a doctor.

He went to medical school and became trained as a physician. Che traveled on a motorcycle across Latin America, an experience which he wrote about. The book was later adopted for a 2004 movie of the same name, "Motorcycle Diaries." He saw the horrors of poverty, starvation, war and repression, and it was at this point that he became committed to social change.

Until his death he affirmed that he was still a doctor, but he committed himself at an early age to fight against social illnesses. As he began to discover that poverty, war, starvation and brutality were symptoms of a worldwide disease called imperialism, he believed that the resistance of the people throughout the world could cure this affliction and allow humanity to taste real freedom.

First Che went to Guatemala when Jacobo Arbenz was president, in the early 1950s. Arbenz was the democratically elected leader who was nationalizing land, and who had legalized the Guatemalan Communist Party. Che put his hope into the democratic process, but the U.S. imperialists did not. A U.S.-backed coup overthrew Arbenz in 1954 and installed a right-wing dictator.

Che learned that reform and elections could not provide the path to power for the oppressed peoples. Action and armed struggle were necessary. Che soon joined with Fidel Castro and his July 26th Movement and they went on to bring down the U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio

Batista on Jan. 1, 1959. Now, the Cuban people had a country of their own. As that revolution developed, socialism was declared the road that the people would take to find liberation.

In Cuba, Che was involved in the efforts to nationalize the land and to administer the national bank. He also served in the revolutionary courts which brought justice to those who had brutally repressed the Cuban people for so long.

Che wrote an essay entitled "Man and Socialism in Cuba," in which he laid out how socialism's goal was the creation of a "new socialist human" or a new human race, cleansed from the greed and brutality that was inherent in capitalist relations.

Che traveled throughout the world to many of the socialist countries trying to encourage unity among them, as he viewed them each as peoples who formed part of the world revolution.

In 1964 while the Cuban masses and its leadership were constructing socialism, Che left Cuba to help organize armed struggle on behalf of other peoples fighting for liberation. He joined the fight of the people of the Congo. Later he attempted to form a guerrilla group in Bolivia. While he was engaged in that struggle in Bolivia, he was captured the U.S. trained Bolivian army, and with CIA agent Felix Rodriguez on site, put to death.

Che lives on as a symbol to oppressed people everywhere. One can hardly attend a progressive demonstration without seeing the image of Che Guevara, based on a photograph taken by Alberto Korda.

Reactionary pro-imperialist



Photo: Julio Robles

forces have recently attempted to tarnish Che's image with a propaganda campaign claiming his example is already forgotten, but the proof of Che's example sits on the island of Cuba, where there are jobs, health care, and education for all, and the workers and farmers are in power.

The proof of Che's example sits also in Venezuela, where workers are attempting to win and build a socialist society through the Bolivarian revolution. The proof of Che's example sits in Zimbabwe, where the African people are getting their land back from the colonialists who have illegally owned it for so long.

Che was on the right side of history. He was on the side of the oppressed, struggling to free themselves from the chains that bind them. He will live on as a symbol of the quest for permanent worldwide revolution.

Long Live Che Guevara! Long Live the Socialist Revolution!

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