

Cymru Cuba Celebrates

The close ties of friendship which have developed at all levels between Wales and Cuba over the past 25 years will surely endure, outliving the eventual demise of almost half a century of cack-handed US government policy towards Cuba. Venceremos!

by David Jones

The Cuba Solidarity Campaign started life as the Britain Cuba Resource Centre (BCRC) in the late 1970s. The first Welsh branch was set up at Prestatyn in Sep. 1982 following an appeal by the late Professor Gwyn Alf Williams at the Bangor International May Day festival five months earlier. With the launch of the south Wales branch in 1987, the Welsh region of BCRC became the Wales Cuba Resource Centre, later to be renamed the Wales Cuba Solidarity Campaign or Cymru Cuba for short.

Cymru Cuba in North Wales

This group has focused its efforts in two main areas: firstly, promoting solidarity with Cuba through organising political events such as public meetings and conferences; secondly, raising money (over £10,000) for Cuban medical and educational projects, mainly through the proceeds of salsa nights featuring top Cuban bands such as Sierra Maestra, Asere and Mambo Chambo as well as British based bands, including Omar Puente's *Cubania*.

The two popular venues for the Cymru Cuba salsa nights, Theatr Clwyd and Denbigh Town Hall attract fans from all over north Wales, Cheshire, Shropshire and Merseyside. On October 20, Omar Puente's red hot salsa band *Cubania* will feature as part of the 25th anniversary celebrations at Theatr Clwyd. Proceeds from the event will be used to launch our 2007/08 Cuba appeal, the target for which is £2,500.

Cymru Cuba in South Wales

Over the years, the south Wales branch has established a close relationship with Cuba's most easterly and poorest province – Guantanamo. This started with members taking small amounts of aid with them on visits to Cuba which later developed into a much more systematic operation. Working closely with Unison, the branch have sent literally thousands of artificial limbs, computers, medicines, hearing aids, hospital beds, operating tables and

ambulances for distribution by Cuban agencies or in many cases direct to hospitals, clinics, schools and local groups throughout the province.

At the National Eisteddfod

Cymru Cuba maintains a high public profile in Wales with a regular presence at the National Eisteddfod. This week-long annual event moves between north and south Wales and provides an ideal opportunity to engage with the public. For example, at last year's Eisteddfod in Swansea, the south Wales branch collected hundreds of get well messages, including those from members of the Welsh Assembly, to be forwarded to Fidel. Again this year at the Mold Eisteddfod we organised a number of Cuban and Latin events during the week which caught the attention of the ITV Wales film crew. Viewers of the programme 'The Visit' saw the presenter Chris Searle dancing the Chilean cueca outside the Cymru Cuba stall to the singing and guitar playing of Rosa Betts of the Clwyd Latin America Human Rights Group. As always, we offered visitors our popular 'El Che' non-alcoholic cocktail which never fails to get a conversation about Cuba going and more often than not procures a generous donation to the cause. Now that the Eisteddfod has scrapped the no alcohol rule we also offered a real taste of Cuba in the form of cocktails made with genuine Havana Club rum.

Working with other groups

Cymru Cuba in north Wales works closely with two other Latin America groups - the Wales Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign and the Clwyd Latin America Human Rights Group. Where our work coincides we put on joint events, for example the showing in Caernarfon of the film 'The Revolution Will Not Be Televised' and of course last year's highly successful solidarity conference at Theatr Clwyd. Cymru Cuba is a member of Cyfanfyd, the Welsh organisation for promotion of global citizenship and also the Welsh Institute for International Affairs.



Nuclear Free Wales & Cymru Cuba

Some members of the Wrexham Peace and Justice Forum will no doubt remember that exciting day in 1982 when Clwyd County Council voted for a ban on nuclear weapons and power stations throughout the county. Although only a symbolic gesture, it had great significance as Clwyd was the last county council in Wales to vote on the issue. During the previous weeks and months every county council in Wales had adopted the nuclear free declaration and the final positive vote at Shire Hall, Mold meant that the idea of a Nuclear Free Wales was born. To commemorate this seminal event CND Cymru commissioned a special poster and as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of Cymru Cuba we should not forget this other important silver anniversary.

In April 1985, the then Cuban Ambassador Hermes Herrera (pictured) visited north Wales as a guest of Cymru Cuba. We marked the occasion with a presentation to the ambassador of a framed Nuclear Free Wales poster by the vice-chair of CND Cymru, Tony Schiavone.

After five years as ambassador in London, Hermes Herrera returned to Cuba. He was later to be appointed Ambassador to the Vatican, one of Cuba's most important diplomatic posts and was closely involved with the visit of Pope John Paul II to the island. Hermes Herrera was a great friend of Cymru Cuba and we look back with fond memories to his support during those formative years.

25 Years of Solidarity

Message from the Cuban Ambassador, René Mujica Cantelar

The 25th anniversary of Cymru Cuba provides an opportunity to convey to the people of Wales a message of friendship and solidarity, the hallmark of Cuba's relationship with the rest of mankind as it strives to make its society more just, egalitarian and humane.

Cuba has given generous support to millions of people in developing countries. Cuban doctors, nurses, teachers, sports trainers, engineers and technicians work in more than 100 countries, 30,000 young people from 118 countries study through free scholarships at Cuban universities, Cuban eye surgery has enabled almost 700,000 blind people from 31 countries to recover the gift of sight. In return, during difficult times and circumstances, Cuba has received tremendous support from around the world including Wales.

Thousands of Welsh people have visited Cuba taking with them tokens of their support. Today there is ongoing cooperation between universities and scientific institutions in Wales and Cuba. Many Cubans benefit from artificial limbs donated from Wales. The Welsh spirit of cooperation and friendship has not been lost on the people of my country and Cymru Cuba has made a key contribution in this respect.

As it celebrates its 25th anniversary allow me then, on behalf of the Cuban people whom I represent, to congratulate Cymru Cuba most gratefully for the valuable work that it does in promoting the worthy bonds of solidarity between the peoples of our respective countries.

Internationalism,

Or:

**the way that capital
can fold itself around a place
and squeeze
the life from it.**

It may have been the mythical core
of our being thrown from a car window
into the verge;

we may be the bit
left over, the seeds that
stick in the teeth.

And workers can be tough to chew up
and spit out, the intelligent flesh strung
together with sinews and moral fibre;

the heart strings;
that catch in the throat.

But maybe it's the bits beneath the radar of
international capital or those that for reasons
of competition have to stay out of work that
will predict the future.

Or the ways that our bodies record consumption.

There is no international norm unless it is
that
there is no international norm and the
only transcendent is human and kind.

Ian Davidson

*Long time supporter of Cymru Cuba, the
Anglesey-based poet and academic Ian
Davidson composed this poem to mark the 25th
anniversary of the group.*

**CYMRU CUBA
CELEBRATES
25 YEARS OF SOLIDARITY**

**THEATR CLWYD, MOLD
SATURDAY 20TH OCTOBER**

Afternoon Celebration, music, poetry, films
exhibitions and stalls from 1-6pm **Free admission**

René Mujica Cantelar Cuban Ambassador
Tyrone O'Sullivan Tower Colliery, Hirwaun
Elfyn Llwyd MP Rob Miller Cuba Solidarity Campaign

Salsa Night: Omar Puente's Cubania
8pm until midnight. Tickets £10 (£7 conc)

More information:
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