

Free Lessons

Sabotage & Revolution

Pam Shriman

1970

“To the accusation that Cuba wants to export its revolution, we reply: revolutions are not exported—they are made by the people.”

—Fidel Castro, Second Declaration of Havana, 1962

Another witch-hunt is underfoot. The late '60s and moreover the '70s are beginning to reek of McCarthyism. The latest example of repression and red-baiting is exemplified by Sen. James Eastland's charges that Venceremos Brigade Volunteers acquired guerrilla training in Cuba.

A copyrighted story in the March 22 *Detroit News* cited “Almost certain proof” that the nearly 1,000 American youths who have worked in Cuban sugar fields have been “indoctrinated, instructed and trained to wage revolution in the United States.”

The *News* quoted Sen. Eastland, a Mississippi Democrat who has called for public hearings on the matter before his Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS).

Eastland said that members of the Venceremos Brigade and other American radicals visiting Cuba went there under the pretention of cutting sugar cane when actually, “the Cubans really need no help in harvesting their sugar.”

Eastland and the *Detroit News* draw a connection between “the rash of terrorist bombings throughout the nation and the Cuban ‘trainees’.”

Under the headline “CUBA TRAINING YOUNG RADICALS FOR U.S. REVOLT,” the *News* sought to connect Cuba, China, the Venceremos Brigade, the bombings, the SDS meeting in Flint and all leftist movements into one gigantic international conspiracy.

However, as much as the U.S. would have its people think differently, the myth of a Communist Conspiracy is an actuality an international solidarity of youth and Third World people against U.S. imperialism.

The government is trying to move the spotlight away from the injustices in Amerika and onto a false image of Cuba.

The government is attempting to isolate and distort the Cuban Revolution and then use these distortions as an excuse to repress the Black Panthers, the Conspiracy 8, 21, 11 etc. etc. through judicial manipulation.

Eastland's committee obtained a passenger list from the Cuban ship Luis Arlos Bergnes listing 213 people bound for Cuba and probably will subpoena these people for hearings before the SISS.

The lies and hypocrisy of these charges and investigations are underscored when it is noted that Eastland owns 5,800 acres in Sunflower, Mississippi, the town where Emmett Till was lynched. The city is 68% Black, yet most don't vote. The Eastland family holdings bring about \$200,000—if not more—a year in Federal subsidies for land left idle.

Further, most families in Sunflower County live on poverty incomes of seldom more than \$1,000 a year, while the Senator's approximate income is over a quarter of a million dollars per year.

Eastland's racism is common knowledge, yet he somehow holds public office and the *Detroit News* believes his lies. In 1956, Eastland waged a campaign against the New York Times when they revealed that he had bottled up 122 civil rights bills in his committee.

When asked to comment on this tirade by Eastland and the *Detroit News*, one brigade member made these remarks to the *Fifth Estate*:

“Eastland’s statement concerning our activities in Cuba is another absurdity invented by the U.S. Government as a pretext for repression.

“If I wanted to learn military tactics I would do so in the comfort of my living room.

“The U.S. Army has provided ample information to the public on how to make explosives as well as given first-hand training to many of our brothers who have joined the struggle after being discharged.

“I wouldn’t have to leave Detroit to obtain this knowledge much less travel to Cuba.

“We went to Cuba in an expression of support for the revolution—not to get military training.”

Another member of the Venceremos Brigade said, “We went to Cuba to cut sugar and did so for six weeks. We also went to learn about socialism in practice by traveling throughout the island during the last two weeks of our visit.

“No, we did not receive any kind of military training...No, our camp was not a training ground for guerrillas to be exported to Latin America...”

The SISS hearings are set to open April 2nd. And as Sen. Eastland and the *Detroit News* say, “From every part of this country—and now Canada—is coming a steady stream of evidence that there is indeed a direct link between Cuba and the TERROR in the streets of this country. The information we will develop in hearings before the SISS is even more revealing.” Heavy!

The *Detroit News*, in its usual maudlin style, spoke to Morris Hoff, the father of Philip Hoff, a Venceremos Brigadier.

The *News* article is almost too honky to quote, But check it out:

“Like many Americans, Morris Hoff describes himself as a man who tingles when he sees OLD GLORY snap in the wind, likes to tangle with a hard day’s work and looks forward to being with his family. ‘I don’t want to believe my son is a saboteur or anti-American revolutionist.’ Hoff, 48, sat in his bathrobe and sipped steaming coffee from a blue mug.”

The *News* told how Philip Hoff’s father called Philip in Greenwich Village after reading the article in the *Sunday News* about the bombings and Cuban influence.

The father told the *News* reporter: “Philip was brainwashed, He’s—a-good kid. Used to be anyway. Not an all-American, but a good kid.

“But when he got to Wayne State something happened. You could see it. We tried to talk to him but he wouldn’t listen.

“He even wants me to give my money away to the poor...He believes strongly in Castro’s philosophy of everyone being on the same level. No capitalism, no nothing.

“We don’t condone it, but what can we do? Tell him we don’t want him anymore and throw him to Castro?”

So much for All-American Honk and Witch Hunts for now, but we’re sure the worst is yet to come.

Sidebar

On April 2 the Senate Internal Security Committee, headed by Mississippi Senator James Eastland, started investigations of the Venceremos Brigades, other persons who have travelled to Cuba, and Weatherman SDS, in a repressive attempt to connect the recent wave of bombings with Americans who have visited Cuba and the Cuban government. Anyone who receives any contact from the Committee, either in writing or in person through the Committee’s investigators, should (1) refuse absolutely to speak with them or furnish any information and (2) immediately contact the National Lawyers Guild Office, 5705 N. Woodward Avenue, Room 200, phone: 871-1251.

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