

Ten Million

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1970

Returning members of the Venceremos Cane Cutting Brigade encountered their comrades who will take up the work of the first contingent of the brigade in the sugar cane fields of Cuba. The Venceremos Brigade is a group of young Americans who have been and will continue to be participating in the Cuban sugar harvest of 1970, now known internationally as the Battle for the Ten Million Tons.

They met in St. John, New Brunswick, on Feb. 12, on the western coast [sic] of Canada as the Cuban ship Luis Arcos Bernes returned the 216 members of the first contingent and picked up 500 members of the second contingent. An additional 100 brigade members from the southwest traveled to Cuba through Mexico where they were flown to the island from Mexico City on a Cuban Airliner.

Departure from Detroit took on a combination comic opera and spy thriller aura. The twenty people leaving from the Motor City were joined by 24 others from Chicago and planned to go through Windsor and across Canada to New Brunswick.

The group was posing as a ski group, but no one was fooled as the lobby of the Fort Pick Shelby hotel was crammed with undercover police and newsmen. The newsmen kept asking questions like: "Do you plan to cut much cane in New Brunswick?"

FBI agents were behind every post and police photographers were having a field day as the travelers persisted with their story. When the bus arrived at the Canadian border it was turned back because the immigration authorities said the group had not stated their true purpose in entering the country. The bus was then rerouted through the U.S. and crossed into Canada at the Maine border with no problems.

The battle to harvest ten million tons of sugar represents for the Cuban people the culmination of 11 years of struggle against, underdevelopment. With the success of the harvest, the people of Cuba will be able to acquire the fundamental tools necessary to build a prosperous economy and to establish themselves as economically independent.

The Venceremos Brigade represents the solidarity of the American movement with the Cubans in their historic struggle as well as a blow against the imperialist blockade against the island imposed by the government of the United States.

The members of the Venceremos Brigade cut cane for six weeks and then traveled for two weeks visiting the island from one end to the other.

Returning member of the brigade Rick London described the trip to Cuba as a "fulfilling revolutionary experience."

"We had the opportunity," said London, "to gain an understanding of Cuban socialist society as well as to participate in one of the most significant struggles in the history of the world revolutionary movement."

He added that, "I knew we were back home in the heartland of imperialism when we were greeted at the bus station in Detroit by about 20 agents from the FBI and the local red squad." The pigs were on hand to photograph all the returning members of the brigade.

The second contingent of the brigade will stay in Cuba for approximately 2-1/2 months.

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