

2010 Encuentro Local Updates

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Reflections on organizing against U. S. militarization in Latin America

In a description of activities directed against U. S. militarization in Latin America and the Caribbean, one ought to touch upon the concept of militarization as a range of activities, one encompassing so-called "dirty wars" or "wars of low intensity." Also, for me, militarization tends to exist as a tool that empires use to exert political and economic hegemony over nations and peoples.

My involvement organizationally has been with Let Cuba Live, a Cuba solidarity group in Maine, USA, with the Maine chapter of Veterans for Peace, and with writing for the newspaper paper "People's Weekly World" (Now appearing exclusively on line as "People's World") published by the Communist Party USA, of which I am a member.

Involvement with Let Cuba Live has focused on the belligerent U. S. economic blockade of Cuba. Methods we utilize toward the goal of normalization of U.S. - Cuba relations include attempts at popular education, advocacy before public officials, promotion of people-to-people contacts, humanitarian aid, and direct action.

Articles in the People's Weekly World cover U.S. militarization in Latin America within the context of overall attention to U.S. inroads in the region. Presently colleagues in that group, for a variety of reasons, are unable collectively to undertake significant short term actions aimed at U.S. militarization. Over 7-8 years, my writing on Latin America has centered on nations undergoing basic political changes, those targeted by U.S. power brokers, notably Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador.

The Maine Chapter of Veterans for Peace has worked to highlight U.S. wars and preparations for wars as causing diversion of U.S. wealth away from human needs, both within the United States and internationally. I have been supportive of this project, yet not as active as would be ideal. VFP does not dedicate attention specifically to Latin America, although at the VFP national convention this summer, three of us are presenting a workshop covering Colombia, U.S. bases, and the role of natural resources extraction.

The effectiveness of these activities, especially involvement in political education, is difficult to measure, but one suspects that the yield of individual efforts may be quite small. Lessons drawn from experience, however, suggest increasingly that action, and organizing toward action, promise more, not only in terms of realizing change, but also in the education of involved activists. Additionally, it seems the more that action on a single issue is undertaken in ways that highlight connections of one bone of contention to others, the better.

By action, I mean political education with a vengeance, plus demonstrations, strikes, passive resistance, and more, the purpose being to recruit large numbers to our side. Putting the matter of closing the School of the Americas within the context of U.S. militarization, of course, serves to illustrate these thoughts on moving beyond the exclusive pursuit of single issues. Beyond that, fighting U.S. militarization as one phase of struggle against imperial over-reach makes sense to me. Also, one assumes that those dedicated to the political and economic status quo see the project of extending and protecting an empire - militarization along with it - as absolutely necessary. These are connections that are meaningful for me. I believe too that they need to be conveyed to our allies, present and potential, if we want to build a movement large enough to project power.

My bias is that the rich and powerful are more likely to come over to change because they have to, rather than because of considerations of morality, legality, and common sense.

A few of us in Maine have recently formed the Maine Committee on Latin America as a forum for undertaking special projects, ones not necessarily limited to particular nations or peoples. This would be the setting for us getting down to work on, for example, the School of the Americas and taking on manifestations of U.S. militarization in Latin America.

