

## A CALL TO COMBAT

Radical Journalists' Statement of January 26, 1972

During the struggle by the Cuban people to overthrow the dictator Batista, the guerrilleros of the Rebel Army had a radio station located on top of a mountain in the Sierra Maestra. Radio Rebelde, as it was called, issued its steady barrage of information and ideas from that mountain peak while the columns of guerrilleros fought below with their arms in hand. Fidel Castro visited the Radio Rebelde headquarters one day and when he left, Fidel told his comrades there to take good care of the station. "It's worth two columns," he said.

This story of Radio Rebelde was told to us by one of the men who worked on that station high in the mountains. It is part of the direct contact that we experienced as a group of people from the radical and underground press in the United States, who spent the past month in Cuba.

We visited many places, learning much about Cuban revolutionary history as well as about the life, struggle and accomplishments of the Cuban people in the new socialist society. We also took part in a seminar on the press and exchanged ideas about journalism. Being in Cuba has led us to a far better understanding of why the struggles now being waged throughout Latin America are so important. It has helped us to understand more precisely the relation between those struggles and the struggles of the Indo-Chinese peoples as well as liberation struggles inside the U.S. It has led us to understand better just what the word imperialism means in the daily lives of the Cuban people and of peoples around the world. Above all, it has made clearer what we ourselves must do in our day-to-day work.

Today, on the birthday of Angela Davis, we set three goals:

- We call for a press of combat.
- We call for a press of truth.
- We call for a press that works to build unity in the life-or-death struggle against all forms of U.S. imperialism.

Again and again, the Cuban press was described to us as a press in a state of war - a press that serves as a vital weapon in the struggle against imperialism and as a powerful force in building the revolution. In other words: a press of combat. We must begin to forge our own press into such a weapon.

A combat press knows that the lines are being drawn; that the time is nearing when vacillation in the face of the enemy in fact means collaboration with the enemy. A combat press seeks to be aggressive rather than defensive. We must ambush the enemy with our words and pictures, and out-manuever the forces of oppression with a high sense of strategy. We cannot fail to take advantage of every opportunity that we have to attack the enemy and encourage every act of resistance. We must do this on behalf of the forces struggling both inside and outside the United States. In the constant combat against false ideas, we must work to show our audiences the relationship between U.S. imperialism and people's daily lives.

A combat press know the name of the enemy. Its name is U.S. imperialism, its name is capitalism, its name is racism. Its name is napalm burning Vietnamese children and its name is pesticides that blind farmworkers in California. Its name is police brutality in Newark and Green Berets in Bolivia. We saw it in Cuba, in the photograph of the little Cuban girl whose foot was amputated as a result of recent CIA-sponsored aggression against Cuba, and we see it in the slow death of U.S. ghettos and barrios. The name of the enemy is written in blood across this planet. A combat press knows the struggle is international.

We also call for a press of truth. A press of truth is objective but not impartial. To be truly objective means to understand that humanity is on the threshold of shedding the old social order based on exploitation and oppression, and bringing in a new social order free of human misery. Once this is understood, then we see that standing aside means in fact taking sides. Then we see that so-called "objective reporting" is a bourgeois myth. It is camouflage for the marketing of bias and distortion, aimed to confuse people and maintain the power of those who rule. The press of Truth casts its lot with the oppressed peoples of the world and with those who are embarked on a socialist course.

What are our specific tasks in building a press of truth? First of all, we must use every possible means to break through the news blockade imposed by the U.S. government and the mass media. The truth about liberation struggles and the building of socialism around the world is prevented from reaching the U.S. We must climb out of our ignorance and combat our tendency toward national chauvinism, by educating ourselves about these struggles abroad. We have a deep responsibility then to inform and educate our audiences in the United States. We also have a responsibility to provide accurate information about struggles inside the U.S. to our sisters and brothers abroad. An exchange of accurate information is vital to victory.

In writing about socialist countries and national liberation movements, our press has often failed to portray the reality of what is happening. Sometimes we have romanticized revolution, or described a perfect Socialist society with no problems. At other times we have fallen into defeatism and seen a single setback as some final defeat, or concluded that the existence of problems means that an entire revolution is hopeless. Both tendencies must be combatted. We can recall the words of Fidel during the struggle against Batista, when he spoke about revolutionary propaganda and said: "Failure to tell the truth indicates a lack of faith in the future."

A press of truth should carry out a strong offensive against not only military and economic imperialism but also against cultural imperialism. This includes cultural imperialism as imposed on the Third World by the U.S., and within the U.S. It includes combatting the cultural chauvinism, unconscious racism and general arrogance that has been pumped into North Americans. That arrogance often takes the form of failure to understand the incredibly difficult struggle against under-development. The combat against cultural imperialism begins with recognizing the fights of all peoples to self-determination - and understanding that self-determination means exactly what the words say.

In Cuba we have seen the tremendous revolutionary force and dedication of workers in power. We have visited factories, farms, schools, and we have seen that the people of Cuba are working, working, working. They are building socialism against enormous difficulties. They are using every thread of ingenuity to make a better life for everyone, to build an economy, to insure the future of their children. In Cuba we have seen a revolutionary working class in action. This profound experience also forms part of the press of truth.

Finally, we call for a press that works to build unity. We know as well as anyone that the word unity cannot be used lightly or easily. In the radical and underground press, all of us have different audiences and all of us are engaged in struggles involving different groups. But we believe it is possible and necessary for us to agree on one central task: building an anti-imperialist consciousness. We call to everyone in the radical and underground press, and to all revolutionary journalists, to join with us in a renewed and deepened offensive against the common enemy.

This is a call for the creation of a partisan press dedicated to combatting imperialism rather than combatting each other. It is a call to work instead of wrangling, to action instead of argument. Only in action will we resolve conflicts. We have to begin to build regional and national cooperation among our presses, to share resources and information more effectively. This effort can begin in small

ways, but it must begin.

A great power lies in our hands. It is the power of information and inspiration. That power waits to be used. In using it, we can draw strength from eight words that are written in huge letters today all over Cuba. They are words from Che and they say: "THE PRESENT IS STRUGGLE, THE FUTURE IS OURS." Venceremos!!

MARGOT ADLER OF WBAI-FM  
FRANCES BEAL OF TRIPLE JEOPARDY  
LINCOLN BERGMAN OF KPFA-FM  
RENEE BLAKKAN OF THE GUARDIAN  
BETTY BROUSSARD OF THE VENCEREMOS BRIGADE  
TERRY CANNON OF THE VENCEREMOS BRIGADE  
SUSAN CANTOR OF NACLA - East Coast  
STEPHANIE COFFIN OF THE GREAT SPECKLED BIRD  
DAVID DOREY OF LEFT FACE  
BERNIE FARBER OF THE SEED  
JON FRAPPIER OF NACLA - West Coast  
BOB GABRINER OF PEOPLE'S PRESS  
TONY HERRERA OF BASTA YA  
TINK LEEFMANS OF THE LIBERATED GUARDIAN  
STORMY LIBMAN OF RISING UP ANGRY  
AL LONG OF THE VIRGINIA WEEKLY  
JUAN LOPEZ OF PEOPLES WORLD  
REES LOYDE OF EL GRITO DEL NORTE  
BETITA MARTINEZ OF EL GRITO DEL NORTE  
KAREN NORTHCOTT OF SPACE CITY NEWS  
JOE WALKER OF MUHAMMAD SPEAKS  
DAVID WALLACE OF NEWSREEL