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**T**his issue of *Progressive Librarian* is the first published since the tragic, horrific events of September 11, 2001. Around the globe reactions to the terrorist acts of that day and to subsequent military and civil actions taken by the United States in its “war on terrorism” have varied widely. While there exists near unanimity that the accomplices and organizers of the terrorist attacks be brought to justice, ideas concerning the method for doing so are divergent. Surprising to many is the divergence of opinion concerning this matter found within the left, progressive community. September 11<sup>th</sup> has fissured the U.S. left in ways many of us never imagined and the Progressive Librarians Guild too has not been spared some of the aftershocks of that day. This divergence appears in the exchange published here between *PL* editors Mark Rosenzweig and John Buschman, who discuss the appropriateness of librarians taking a position on U.S. preparations for war.

Less contentious, thus far, is opposition to legislation and presidential executive orders aimed ostensibly at countering further terrorist acts and to the chilling effect these developments and military activities are having on our much coveted rights to freedom of expression and association. Most PLG members would agree with 300 law professors, for example, when they issued a statement characterizing President Bush’s order to establish secret military tribunals as “legally deficient, unnecessary and unwise.” Already some government information, once widely and freely accessible is being removed from depository libraries and websites. Under provisions of the recent USA PATRIOT Act libraries can be served secret warrants by the FBI, for confidential patron information, that needn’t reveal the names of individuals being investigated. Already blacklists are being compiled of those whose criticisms of U.S. foreign policy have been judged unpatriotic by an organization recently founded by Lynne Cheney and Senator Joseph Lieberman, and at least one tenured professor has been fired from his job because of ideas expressed concerning U.S. foreign policy. And U.S. citizens have experienced being blocked from crossing borders and

boarding airplanes, suffering unexpected consequences for expressing anti-war sentiments. So, the question will be asked, where is PLG's "line in the sand" in our opposition to military solutions to political and economic problems and erosion to democratic rights? Wherever it is, we must join together to oppose measures that threaten civil liberties and to fight the co-opting of libraries and librarians into the propagandistic, you're-either-with-us-or-you're-with-the-terrorists campaign in the U.S. government's Wild West approach to global problems.

On the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nobel Prize, one-hundred Nobel laureates issued a statement expressing grave concern over ever-increasing inequities between rich and poor and the environmental degradation of the planet. "The only hope for the future lies in co-operative international action, legitimized by democracy. It is time to turn our backs on the unilateral search for security, in which we seek to shelter behind walls. Instead, we must persist in the quest for united action to counter both global warming and a weaponized world." This is a progressive statement and a much-needed call to reason. PLG's new Coordinating Committee has been convened to formulate actions and positions informed by a vision which sees librarianship as an ally of democracy, peaceful change, environmentalism, and a fair distribution of resources among all the world's people. Now, more than ever librarianship needs an organization like PLG that is unafraid to "speak truth to power."

*Elaine Harger*

**Editor's Note:** *The following statement was inadvertently left out of the last issue of Progressive Librarian introducing Sanford Berman's article "Inside Censorship." This paper represents an expanded, revised and updated version of work Mr. Berman has previously delivered or published in a variety of forms, among them: "Inside Censorship," delivered at Simmons College, sponsored by the Library and Information Science Student's Association and Simmons GSLIS Alumni Association, April 12, 2000. "Talking the Talk and Walking the Walk: What Librarians Say They Do But Frequently Don't," delivered at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign School of Library and Information Science, April 17, 1997. Reprinted in the New York Library Association Intellectual Freedom Round Table Newsletter, Fall 1997. "Three Kinds of Censorship that Librarians (Mostly) Don't Talk About," Minnesota Library Association Newsletter, Vol. 23 No. 7, August/September 1996. "Inside Censorship," Wisconsin Library Bulletin, Spring 1981. John Buschman*

## **Librarians or Dissidents?: Critics and Supporters of the Independent Libraries in Cuba Project**

**by Stuart Hamilton**

**I**n February 1998, after Fidel Castro stated "In Cuba there are no prohibited books, only those we do not have money to buy," Berta Mexidor, an economist from the Las Tunas province, inaugurated the Independent Libraries in Cuba Project. The project aimed to form independent libraries, as opposed to the official libraries of Cuba run by the government, which would give Cuban readers unrestricted access to books, magazines, documents and other publications not provided by state institutions. This report looks at the origins of this movement, its supporters and detractors, and the future prospects for a project that has been criticised by the Cuban authorities, among others, as being funded by the US government in order to undermine the current regime's authority. It shall do this through an examination of existing documentation relating to the project and those connected with it, and also from information collected during fieldwork at 3 independent libraries in Havana between the 24<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> May 2001. The report will argue that the independent libraries, whose existence demonstrates a desire for materials on the part of the Cuban people and a perceived failure on the part of the Cuban library service, constitute a network of dissidents whose claims to be politically neutral are tainted by the connections of some of their supporters.

Cuba, the largest island in the Caribbean, has been under the control of Fidel Castro's Cuban Communist Party (PCC) since Castro led a rebel army to victory over the Batista regime in 1959. July 2001 estimates put its population at 11,184,023<sup>1</sup>. The state, which has been under pressure from the US embargo that began in 1961 after the revolution, has seen many changes in the 42 years of Castro's rule. The Cuban economy was aided by Soviet support during the 1960s, 70s and 80s but the withdrawal of aid in 1990 after the collapse of the former Soviet Union led to a severe recession. The "special period," the term Cubans use to describe the hard times after the removal of aid, began to ease after