
International delegations to celebrate May Day in Cuba

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Delegations from around the world will show their support for the Cuban Revolution during marches and events scheduled throughout the country on May 1, to celebrate International Workers Day under the banner of this year's maxim chosen by the Federation of Cuban Workers (CTC), "United in the construction of socialism."

Engineer Ernesto Freire Cazañas, head of the CTC's international relations department and a member of the Federation's National Council, shared this information with **Granma International**, explaining, "More than 116 persons from some 115 trade union organizations in 17 countries have confirmed, indicating a high level of participation in May Day activities."

A highlight this year will be the physical presence of the Cuban Five, unjustly imprisoned in the United States for their efforts to stop anti-Cuban terrorists based in that country. Their release was won in large part as a result of a unified international solidarity campaign supported by trade unionists, Freire stated, adding, "There are many reasons for this celebration of the proletariat. We will really reaffirm the socialist character of the Revolution, and all that we do to ensure that our socialism is prosperous and sustainable."

Delegations will be arriving toward the end of April, and will visit workplaces on the 29th and 30th, attend the march May 1, and on the 2nd meet in a solidarity conference to learn more about Cuba's current reality, and agree on initiatives for actions to be taken in their respective countries, over the coming months.

Set to take place are bilateral meeting between Cuban trade unionists and their counterparts in other countries, such as is the case with those affiliated with the Latin American Federation of Construction and Wood Workers and this sector's international organization, while trade unionists active in countries which belong to the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (Alba) will meet to discuss further developing the Alba Social Movements Council.

A trade union seminar is to be offered visiting delegations April 27-May 10, with most of the time devoted to

practical, personal interaction at workplaces, in addition to presentations on current issues. Freire Cazañas explained, "It is a hands-on sharing of experiences, how we conduct an assembly, collective negotiation about how we address the issue of work conditions and wages, both in the state and non-state sectors."

Granma International asked about the affinity existent between trade union organizations in other nations and Cuba's.

What unites us is the confrontation with capital, in all of its variants. Other elements which may differentiate us, like the methodology used to accomplish objectives, we leave aside. We advocate for unity within diversity.

What is the interest in Cuba?

They would like to know how we are building a society which is distanced from capitalism, and under what conditions we carry out our trade union work. We do not hand out recipes, we only share our experiences, but we also learn.

Organizing unions in the non-state sector, as a result of the updating of Cuba's economic model, is new for us.

They are seeking answers about the resistance of our people to the unjust, genocidal blockade imposed by U.S. imperialism for more than 50 years.

They would like to share the humanism and altruism which comes from our proletarian internationalism, demonstrated by the more than 50,000 health care workers offering medical assistance in 67 countries, and in the International Henry Reeve Brigade which sent more than 200 collaborators to West Africa to confront Ebola, who have now successfully completed their mission.

How does the CTC establish relations with similar organizations around the world?

Internationally, the trade union movement is organized in three blocs, one affiliated with the World Trade Union Federation (WFTU), which is having its 70th anniversary (founded October 3, 1945), of which our historic leader Lázaro Peña served as vice president.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) advocates dialogue and consensus as its methods of struggle, but its principal objective is the defense of workers' interests.

A large group of trade union organizations are not affiliated internationally since they prefer autonomy, although they may align themselves with one of the blocs, given the circumstances.

We Cubans have a principle approved at the 20th Congress of the CTC, that our Federation will develop, consolidate and promote international relations with any trade union organization in the world, regardless of its international or regional affiliation, on the basis of mutual respect and non-intervention in the internal affairs.

For that reason, we maintain relations with more than 1,100 organizations in 136 countries, in all social systems, regions, nations, autonomous areas, provinces, federations, confederations and trade union organizations. All undertake solidarity initiatives in our country.

We were able to appreciate this when we participated in the Cuban delegation to the Summit of the Peoples in Panama. The trade union organizations and popular movements attending the event defended the dignity of Cuba, which unquestionably was held in high esteem at this event.