

# ... for a confrontation with the Venceremos Brigade

NOTE: This article was written by a group of gay men who call themselves the "D.C. Faggots."

Our faggot rage has been steadily brewing since Cuba's National Conference on Education and Culture released this resolution last May:

*The social and pathological character of homosexual deviations was recognized. It was resolved that all manifestations of homosexual deviations are to be firmly rejected and prevented from spreading. It was pointed out, however, that a study, investigations, and analysis of this complex problem should always determine the measures to be followed.*

*It was decided that homosexuality should not be considered a central problem or a fundamental one in our society, but rather its attention and solution are necessary.*

*A study was made of the origin and evolution of this phenomenon and its present day scope and anti-social character. An in-depth analysis was made of the preventive and educational measures that are to be put into effect against existing focuses, including the control and relocation of isolated cases, always with an educational and preventive purpose. It was agreed to differentiate between the various cases, their stages of deterioration and the necessarily different approaches to the different cases and degrees of deterioration...*

*...Consequently a study is called for to determine how best to tackle the problems of the presence of homosexuals in the various institutions of our cultural sector. It was proposed that a study should be made to find a way of applying measures with a view to transferring to other organizations those who, as homosexuals, should not have any influence on our youth through artistic and cultural activities. It was resolved that those whose morals do not correspond to the prestige of our revolution should be barred from any group of performers representing our country abroad.*

*Finally, it was agreed to demand that severe penalties be applied to those who corrupt the morals of minors, depraved repeat offenders and irredeemable anti-social elements.*

*Cultural institutions cannot serve as a platform for false intellectuals who try to make snobbish, extravagant conduct, homosexuality, and other social aberrations into expressions of revolutionary spirit and art, isolated from the masses and the spirit of the revolution.*

*Excerpted from GRANMA (Cuba's Communist Party Newspaper). (Emphasis added.)*

In forming its latest contingent, the National Committee of the Venceremos Brigade and its Regional Committees refused to criticize this resolution. Rather, they expressed their solidarity with the Cuban Government's anti-homosexual position by excluding gay people from the Fifth Brigade thus reinforcing and validating their own sexism.

This provided the background for a series of local confrontations against the Venceremos Brigade and potential supporters. They began when a faggot member of the Community Bookshop was refused permission to display anti-sexist literature alongside the D.C. Regional Committee's propaganda leaflet. This leaflet was an attempt to avoid taking action on the exclusion of gays from the Brigade and to suppress criticism of the National Committee's decision. Even though the Regional Committee said that they "did not agree with this decision" they backed off and refused to confront the issue.

A few days later, on January 12, twenty-five angry faggots met with the Regional Brigade co-ordinators and chosen brigadistas. We read to them the Cuban resolution, anguished letters from Cuban gay people, and letters from returned gay Brigadistas telling of the oppressive treatment they experienced while in Cuba from other, non-gay, Brigadistas and from Cuban authorities.



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...we learned that they act against sexism by drawing from the Brigade and making public their reasons. Instead of entering into struggle around these issues, they accused us of "cultural nationalism." We feel these words were used to set up a situation that made struggling around sexism impossible. This was further proven by their demands that we prove our "anti-imperialist credentials." Because of their refusal to struggle we told them that we would continue to raise the issue in the community and attempt to block their funding efforts.

The next evening five of us met with some members of the Community Bookshop collective. We asked them to support the demands we made of the Brigade by removing Brigade literature and donation cans from the store and by refusing to financially sponsor a Brigadista's trip. We explained the basis of our criticisms and the Bookshop group voted to recommend support of the Boycott at the

new community-wide bookshop meeting. On the following strategy meeting, we turned a brigade fund raising cocktail party held in a posh Georgetown townhouse into a gay workshop. We asked the people who came not to make donations to the Brigade, but most refused to hear us. There were many angry exchanges during the evening. Support came from some people. One Brigade regional co-ordinator who acted on her feelings about the sexism in Cuba and on the Brigade resigned her position. We appreciated how difficult this was for her to do because of her long involvement with Cuba and the Brigade.

On January 20th, we attended the open meeting of the Community Bookshop. Several bureaucratic maneuvers were used to avoid dealing with our demands. In the past, all Bookshop decisions have been voted upon by those present at each meeting. But at this one, there were attempts by those supporting the Brigade to limit voting to Bookshop "workers" only. We felt this was done to exclude us and those supporting our position. A majority of those present agreed to continue open voting policy. Then the resolution supporting our demands was read. It stated:

*That the Community Bookshop shall refuse its support to the local contingent of the Venceremos Brigade by denying the Brigade its money and facilities until such time as the Brigade criticizes itself and Cuba in a real and meaningful way by word and action concerning the Brigade's and Cuba's oppression of gay men and gay women.*

After four hours of discussion, a vote was taken with the results 4-0 in favor of the resolution. We felt good that many people under-

stood and supported our criticisms of the Brigade.

However, tactics employed by the Brigade and their supporters were typical of male supremacist struggle. All issues were related to on a comparative and competitive basis. Groups were scored and graded on the degree of their oppression. This tactic is divisive, because it pits one oppressed group against another. It allows male supremacists to control and manipulate the nature and method of struggle. There is this fierce need to be correct and on top that is basic to male supremacy in all its forms. This leads to unyielding, rigid, defensive positions and this is especially so when gay people begin to challenge the privilege and power that characterizes male supremacist institutions be they socialist or capitalist.

The very fact that we had to debate our oppression and prove beyond a reasonable doubt that gay people's lives in this country and in Cuba are filled with misery, self-hate, and suicide was such an insult. We're tired of being told that our oppression is unimportant; that it is personal and not political. There is no valid politics that does not grow out of personal experiences. We gay people are constantly having to prove our commitment to "anti-imperialist struggles" without recognition that our gay struggle against sexism is by its very nature anti-imperialist. Imperialism is fundamentally a result of the need felt by the straight-identified men who govern and control this country to satisfy their male egos through their power and domination over other peoples. When we struggle against sexism--against male and female roles--we struggle to end that culture which forms the imperialist man. There will be no revolution without us.

