

Gamma

**Vietnamese official supports
strengthening ties
of friendship with Cuba**

Nuria Barbosa León (Text & photos)

• BUI Van Cuong, president of the Vietnam General Federation of Labor (VGCL), described as special the ties of friendship between his people and Cubans; inspired by the example of Fidel Castro Ruz and Ho Chi Minh.

Van Cuong, also a member of the country's National Assembly and Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee, recalled Cuba's unwavering support for his nation, such as denouncing the brutal U.S. invasion of Vietnam in international forums and lending support to its people during the conflict.

After Vietnam won the war, hundreds of its young people traveled to Cuba to study a wide range of university degrees.

The trade union leader presented the island with a 25,000 USD donation to help recovery efforts following Hurricane Irma, with workers laboring day and night to repair damage caused by the storm.

"We believe that the amount is not much but expresses our empathy and solidarity for the damage caused by this great meteorological catastrophe," stated Van Cuong, speaking at the headquarters of the Cuban Workers' Federation (CTC) in Havana.

The Vietnamese naval engineer with a Masters in Maritime Security added, "We Vietnamese shall never forget the words spoken by Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro during the war, when he stated that the Cuban people would give their very last drop of blood for Vietnam." Van Cuong went on to note that his trip will also serve to strengthen the special ties of fraternity between the two peoples, and above all, between

workers; expressed in the signing of a memorandum of understanding for the exchange of experiences and cooperation between the CTC and VGCL directed toward maintaining and expanding solidarity at a time when both countries are implementing social and economic change.

The document, signed by the Vietnamese official and CTC Secretary General Ulises Guilarte de Nacimiento, is focused on promoting exchanges to discuss the functioning of trade unions in the new forms of economic management, membership, and collective debate and action, as well as key sectors for bilateral trade, such as tourism, agriculture, construction, and energy and mines. Also included is the training of trade union leaders and a donation of office equipment and supplies to the Cuban organization.

"We wish," stated Van Cuong "to continue contributing to the strengthening and development of socialism in both countries, which is why we have come to exchange our positive and negative experiences with our Cuban counterparts, in order for the two labor organizations to continue contributing their very best to the socio-economic development of their respective nations."

Vietnam has some 54 million workers, 17 million of which are affiliated with different trade unions, while 10 million are members of the VGCL, the country's only national trade union organization. The VGCL's ties with the CTC date back over 50 years and both are members of the World Federation of Trade Unions.

Bin Van Cuong expressed his organization's willingness to share Vietnam's experiences in developing trade union bases within non-state entities, where the VGCL works to



Bui Van Cuong, president of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor (left), presents Ulises Guilarte de Nacimiento, CTC secretary general, with a donation to help recovery efforts following Hurricane Irma. Pictured in the center, Carmen Rosa López, CTC second secretary.

defend employees' interests, such as protecting their rights to social benefits, decent wages, job security, environmental protection, and vacation.

The Vietnamese delegation, which also included members of the organization's secretariat: Hoang Thi Thanh, director of the VGCL's International Department; as well as division coordinator and officials Le Cu Tan, Nguyen Ngoc Phuong, and Duong Xuan Hieu, respectively, undertook a program of activities, which began with a tribute to Cuba's National Hero José Martí, at the memorial erected in his honor in Havana's Plaza de la Revolución. The delegation met and spoke with Communist Party of Cuba Central Committee member, José Ramón Balaguer Cabrera.

Speaking at the donation presentation ceremony, Bin Van Cuong called on Cuban citizens and workers to continue in their just and successful efforts to build socialism and achieve socio-economic development, in order to raise the population's quality of life, stating, "We express our utmost support for the continued strengthening and development of the ties of friendship between Cuba and Vietnam." •

Young Italians building cultural bridges with Cuba

• TO honor the legendary Heroic Guerrilla Ernesto Che Guevara on the 50th anniversary of his death in Bolivia, young Italians formed the 3rd Gino Doné Brigade and are currently touring Cuba through October 9, visiting some of the cities most affected by Hurricane Irma including Morón, Baracoa, Santiago de Cuba, Santa Clara and Havana.

The 35 brigade members will hold an Evening of Solidarity in each of the places they visit, where they will exchange with locals on the basis of traditional dance and food, to build cultural bridges and friendship.

Carlotta Proserpi, aged 23, participating in the Brigade for the second time, told Granma International that they are eager to talk to Cubans and learn of the experiences that inspire them to continue their social struggles.

"Cuba is building a model of a society different from Western European capitalism, with an economic, political and social system to which we aspire, and which we consider very useful for the improvement of human relations in our country," the law student of the University of Torino stressed.

Proserpi noted that the main concerns of young people in Italy are job instability, unemployment, and uncertainty regarding the future, with very few possibilities to develop their political ideas and change the current situation, which she described as "frustrating, very frustrating."

She belongs to the Papaveri Rossi youth organization, which two years ago occupied a barracks with a huge historic connotation, as it was used by fascists to torture and kill progressive Italians. The building, with high architectural value, was abandoned. The group turned it into a cultural and recreational center, where its history is explained and young people gather to talk about the main social problems of the country, and propose protest actions and means to solving them.

Proserpi added: "There we dedicated a space to Cuba, and we have held several talks about the history of the Cuban Revolution. We maintain permanent exchanges with the Cuban embassy and a delegation visited to explain the process of transformations being implemented to perfect Cuba's socialism. The idea of visiting the island emerged there."

Her friend Paolo Pacicchio, aged 31, is president of the Train of Memory Association. This organization, founded 13 years ago, coordinates trips to the main historical sites related to the crimes of fascist Italy, in order to remember victims and work to prevent the rise of the extreme right.

Pacicchio lives in Lecce municipality, in the province of Puglia, to the south of Italy. "In our association we organize several camps each year, where young people meet and discuss different topics. We are inspired to learn about the life and work of Fidel Castro Ruz and Che. They are present in the youth's imagination, we try to follow

their commitment, because they represent a symbol for our generation," he stated, noting that he is passionate about the figure of Camilo Cienfuegos.

The coordinator of the Brigade, Michele Curto, explained that three years ago a group of young people showed an interest in learning more about the construction of Cuban socialism, having received information regarding the process of updating the Cuban economic model, based on agreements approved at the 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, in 2011.

They decided to adopt the name Gino Doné to recall the Italian who joined the Granma yacht expedition led by Fidel in 1956, to start the armed struggle against the military dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. Following the first Brigade in 2015, many more young people from all over Italy joined the initiative, offering an opportunity to meet with Cuban communities.

As Curto noted: "The Gino Doné Brigade emerged as a means of guaranteeing knowledge for progressive young people who are active in the struggle against capitalism. They look to Cuba as a point of reference and embrace the dream of accelerating social change in their country, following the example of Cuban internationalism."

He emphasized that some members of last year's Brigade, on hearing news of the death of Comandante en Jefe Fidel, unfurled a 30-meter banner with the



From left to right: Michele Curto, Paolo Pacicchio and Carlotta Proserpi, members of the 3rd Gino Doné Brigade.

words "Until forever Fidel" from the top of the tallest building in the city of Torino.

The activist noted that as part of the tours of the island, brigade members carry out an initiative entitled "Italy Street," in which they set up food stalls offering Italian gastronomy to the local population. Last year, this event was held in the neighborhood of Tivolí, in front of the Museum of the Clandestine Struggle, in Santiago de Cuba, and over five days they distributed more than 10,000 portions of food.

"In this edition," he added, "the Brigade will repeat that experience in the cities that were most affected by Hurricane Irma, like Morón and Baracoa. We will also visit Santiago de Cuba again."

Curto emphasized the importance of organizing this type of brigade. Young participants carry out social work in their respective communities back home, and visiting Cuba offers new inspiration for their daily work and political struggles to transform their own society. •

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