

From the pen of the Editor

Ralph Scott, Editor

Almost just in time for the 2006 Banned Books Week (September 23-20) the *Economist* reports (8/11/06 p.29) that the Miami-Dade School Board voted 6-3 to remove what they believe is an offensive 32-page children's travel guide from area school libraries. The guide entitled *Vamos a Cuba* (the *Economist* translates this as *Let's Visit Cuba!*) features radical statements like "People in Cuba eat, work, and go to school like you do"...Cuba's beaches are 'good for swimming and boating.'" The cover features some kids laughing, unfortunately they are wearing the dreaded Castro Young Pioneers neck scarves. Some citizens in South Florida feel that the book is not an accurate portrait of life in Cuba. As of late July a court judge had ordered the book placed back on library shelves stating that the School Board had "abused its discretion in a manner that violated the transcendent imperatives of the First Amendment'."

This reminds me of the flap over the inclusion of the *Internationale* in the 1943 Office of War Information film "*Hymns of the Nations*." Even though we were still allies with the Soviet Union, the film omitted the *Internationale* conducted by Arturo Toscanini, and featured the Metropolitan Opera Chorus and the NBC Symphony Orchestra. (You can listen to the music clip here {it's the fourth clip on this web page}: <http://www.hymn.ru/internationale/index-en.html>). Later essentially the censorship battle was fought again in the 1950s over school libraries having copies of the magazine *Soviet Life* in school libraries. We seemed destined to repeat history here again with regard to Cuba.

According to OCLC WorldCat some 153 libraries hold *Vamos a Cuba*, (interestingly cataloged under the title *Cuba*) including two brave Public Libraries in North Carolina (Cabarrus County and Charlotte/Mecklenburg). Let's hope this flap encourages a few more NC libraries to purchase the book as an example of a 2006 banned book (ISBN: 1575723840) !

