

Cuba's COVID-19 medical brigades are not medical diplomacy — they are international solidarity at its finest

written by Struggle - La Lucha

April 28, 2020



Photo: Ismael Francisco Gonzalez

On April 26, the latest medical brigade from Cuba's Henry Reeves contingent arrived in South Africa to join the front lines with those saving lives in the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic. After a 14-day quarantine, the 216-member group, made up of family physicians, epidemiologists, biostatisticians, health technology engineers and biotechnology experts, will be deployed to all nine provinces in that country.

This makes the 24th Cuban medical brigade, so far, to be requested during this international medical crisis from 22 countries. Cuba has made no distinction in answering the call to every country that asked, no matter if they are rich or poor, if their government is led by progressives or neoliberals, socialist or reactionary. The virus does not recognize political borders, but the response to it is another matter.

The disastrous approach of the U.S. to the pandemic has unmasked the deep inability of the privatization of health care to meet the challenge materially or to muster any comprehensive and coordinated plan for the population, let alone participating in any collaboration with the community of nations. No, the U.S., in all of its exceptionalism, is only excelling in this crisis in intercepting personal protection equipment and ventilators meant for other countries. It excels in blaming other countries for the disease with wild unproven accusations. Instead of pitching in, the U.S. undermines the role of the World Health Organization by withholding funds and criticizes and pressures countries that are calling on the Cuban medical brigades to come to assist. There is an irrational desperation in all of this, one that begs the underlying question: what is in it for us?

Cuba is the quiet shining example of the exact opposite approach: giving not what they have leftover but sharing what they do have and that is a robust medical system accessible by all, blockaded for over 60 years but still able to produce world-class recognized medical biotechnical institutions that collaborate for the sake of humanity and not profit.

Cuba's approach is not to stumble and fumble opportunities waiting for the virus to arrive in patients who are already sick, but rather to send out electronic questionnaires to every home and, for those who don't have internet access, medical teams come to look for any evidence of the coronavirus and test all. Cuba, unafraid, aggressively goes out and finds the virus and applies the same measures to every person in the country while also sending their professional medical teams to any corner of the planet.

This world view of humanity first is ingrained in the soul and mind of every Cuban since the revolution in 1959, so when it comes to recruiting qualified medical workers to go on these dangerous missions there is never a shortage of volunteers.

Over 1,400 Cuban medical professionals currently make up these specifically COVID-19 brigades, and that number is expected to rise. The little island, 90 miles from the unfolding disaster in the U.S., has set the bar high when it comes to responding to the pandemic, and they have done it with no ulterior motives and expect little in return for their collaboration. This is not medical diplomacy we are talking about here. It is international solidarity at its finest. Cuba is simply holding up their piece of the struggle for humanity with humility and as much determination.

As a reference, Resumen is listing below all the details of Cuba's COVID-19 medical brigades to date.

1. Angola (219 health collaborators)
2. Antigua and Barbuda (26 health collaborators)
3. Barbados (101 health collaborators)
4. Belize (58 health collaborators)
5. Dominica (35 health collaborators)
6. Granada (5 health collaborators)
7. Haiti (22 health collaborators)
8. Honduras (20 health collaborators)

9. Italy, Lombardy (52 health collaborators)
10. Italy, Turin (38 health collaborators)
11. Jamaica (138 health collaborators)
12. Nicaragua (5 health collaborators)
13. Principality of Andorra (39 health collaborators)
14. Qatar (229 health collaborators)
15. Saint Kitts and Nevis (34 health collaborators)
16. San Vicente and the Grenadines (16 health collaborators)
17. Santa Lucia (113 health collaborators)
18. South Africa (216 health collaborators)
19. Suriname (51 health collaborators)
20. (11 health collaborators)
21. Venezuela (6 health collaborators) they have visited 23 states.

Technical Assistance

- São Tomé and Príncipe
- Mexico

Source: [Resumen](#)



Cuba's victory at Bay of Pigs made medical solidarity possible

written by Struggle - La Lucha

April 28, 2020

Fifty-nine years ago, on April 17, 1961, Cuba defeated a U.S-backed invasion at the Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón). The invasion's purpose was to destroy the Cuban Revolution. The CIA armed, trained and transported the right-wing Cuban force to Playa Girón. Because of the Cubans' strong political will and powerful leadership, the U.S. effort suffered a massive defeat. Fidel himself directed the military and worked alongside Cuban combatants to protect the Revolution.

I visited Playa Girón in 2019. While there, I learned that the U.S. supplied an advanced and deadly arsenal of weapons for the invasion. At the historical museum, a worker pointed out a Fortune 500 corporation's logo on a U.S. artillery piece. Imperialist war lines the pockets of all big business.

The accomplishments of the Cuban government and people should not be understated. The revolutionary leadership of Cuba drastically reduced illiteracy,

homelessness and joblessness in less than a decade. Cuba nationalized all U.S. properties on the island in 1960 to provide for its people. Fidel initiated the Latin America School of Medicine (ELAM), which has trained doctors from all over the world.

Cuba has sent medical brigades to at least 59 countries to fight disease and poverty worldwide. There may be no better example of heroic medical internationalism than Cuba's. Every person in Cuba receives free medical care for their entire life. Despite the brutal U.S. blockade that prevents Cuba from trading with many foreign partners, the island has made important contributions to global health care.

Right now, Covid-19 is ravaging Black, Brown and Indigenous communities across the United States. Meanwhile the U.S. government refuses to protect the people and instead prioritizes bailing out massive corporations. The wealthy have near-unlimited access to testing and other health care resources. All the while, tens of thousands of working-class people with symptoms cannot get access to testing or proper care.

While the U.S. is letting its people die and spreading racist myths about China's response to Covid-19, Cuba has made heroic efforts to fight the virus all around the world. The Cuban government has dispatched medical brigades to more than 37 countries to fight Covid-19. During the pandemic's peak in Italy, Cuban doctors arrived on the scene immediately.

Over 40 countries have requested use of an antiviral drug that Cuba has been using to treat Covid-19. Cuban doctors developed the drug, interferon alfa-2b, working with a Texas doctor in 1981. Combined with other antivirals, alfa-2b has proven to be an effective treatment when given at the beginning of an infection and as a prevention method. Both China and Cuba have been using it to fight the virus, and it is produced by a joint Cuban-Chinese venture, Changheber. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration should immediately approve distribution of alfa-2b in the U.S. to save

peoples' lives during this crisis.

Fifty-nine years after the revolutionary victory at the Bay of Pigs, U.S. aggression toward Cuba continues. The U.S. has relentlessly tried to destroy socialism and progress in Cuba. Yet Cuba continues to prioritize improving the lives of its people and of people around the world.

There is no better example of this than Cuba's heroic efforts during the Covid-19 crisis. It's time to end the blockade on Cuba and start using interferon alfa-2b in the U.S. to save peoples' lives.



ICAP message to the World Movement of Solidarity with Cuba in the time of Covid19

#BlockadeNoSolidarityYes

written by Struggle - La Lucha
April 28, 2020



Havana, 9 April, 2020

To the World Movement of Solidarity with Cuba.

Dear friends,

With deep humanistic conviction, the government and people of Cuba offer the world, once again, the example of militant Solidarity at a time when the planet is facing the global pandemic of the new Coronavirus Sars Cov-2, Covid-19, which has already claimed the lives of more than 70 thousand people in the world in a very

short time.

In the time of Covid-19 the eyes of the world look with hope to Cuba and Cuba, in the midst of an inhuman and genocidal blockade, did not hesitate to respond that with an army of white coats made up of more than 593 health professionals, of them 338 Women, organized in 15 brigades of the Henry Reeve Contingent, already provide their services in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, faithful to the Martian and fidelity maxim, ratified by our President Miguel Diaz Canel Bermudez. "Cuba does not go around begging, sisterly".

Contrary to our humble gesture, President Trump encourages insulting anti-Cuban campaigns to try to discredit the principles of humanity and solidarity on which our medical collaboration defending health care as a human right rests.

This is the time in which the inefficiency of consumer societies of the capitalist system is reveled, as a result of the anti-popular policies of neoliberal governments subordinated to big capital and US imperialism. Humankind demands solidarity as never before. It is urgent to unite and promote international cooperation.

Our institute proudly recognizes the support of the friendship associations, political organizations, members of Parliament, trade unionists and other political forces that make up the World Movement for Solidarity with Cuba, to our collaborators in the countries where they are already campaigning against Covid 19, as well such as the messages of appreciation sent to the government of Cuba and its people for the solidarity, humanist and altruistic dimension of the Revolution.

For our doctors also our special recognition, respect and admiration wherever they are. They are confronting this pandemic with altruism inside and outside Cuba, as a response of the call of the Cuban government to spread the humanitarian seed of

Marti and Fidel, in opposition to actions like those of the United States and other NATO countries, which they spend huge military budgets to the detriment of the living conditions of their populations, fostering fear, hatred and hopelessness.

In the same line, we appreciate the permanent solidarity of the entire Movement that, now in the times of the new Coronavirus, has not stopped acting to demand the lifting of the blockade against Cuba, much more criminal in the current circumstances, also demanding the full application of Resolution "Necessity to end the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America", approved in 2019 at the UN by the vast majority of its members.

Together we generate this battle that today tests solidarity between peoples and governments and when it happens, we will embrace with great joy for the victory against the pandemic that is striking us today, to give life to life and celebrate in brotherhood the 60th anniversary from our ICAP.

Fraternally,

Fernando González Llort
President

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Mensaje del ICAP al Movimiento de Solidaridad con Cuba en tiempos de Covid19 #BloqueoNoSolidaridadSi

written by Struggle - La Lucha
April 28, 2020



Estimados amigos y amigas:

Con profunda convicción humanista, el gobierno y pueblo de Cuba ofrecen al mundo, una vez más, el ejemplo de solidaridad militante en momentos en que el planeta se enfrenta a la pandemia global del nuevo coronavirus Sars Cov-2, la Covid-19, la cual ya ha cobrado la vida a más de 70 mil personas en el orbe en muy poco tiempo.

En época de Covid-19 los ojos del mundo observan con esperanzas a Cuba y Cuba, en medio de un bloqueo inhumano y genocida, no ha dudado en responderle: un ejército de batas blancas integrado por más de 593 profesionales de la salud, de ellos 338 mujeres, organizados en 15 brigadas del Contingente Henry Reeve, ya prestan sus servicios en Europa, América Latina y el Caribe, fieles a la máxima martiana y fidelista, ratificada por nuestro Presidente Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez: “ Cuba no anda de pedigüeña por el mundo, anda de hermana”.

Contrariamente a nuestro desinteresado gesto, el Presidente Trump fomenta injuriosas campañas anticubanas para intentar desacreditar los principios de humanidad y solidaridad sobre los cuales descansa nuestra colaboración médica, defensora de la atención a la salud como un derecho humano.

Este momento pone al descubierto la fragilidad de las sociedades de consumo del sistema capitalista y las deficiencias de su sistema sanitario; resultado de las políticas antipopulares implementadas por los gobiernos neoliberales subordinados al gran capital y al imperialismo yanqui. Como nunca antes la humanidad demanda solidaridad. Urge unirnos y fomentar la cooperación internacional.

Nuestro Instituto reconoce con orgullo el apoyo brindado por las asociaciones de amistad, organizaciones políticas, parlamentarias, sindicalistas y demás fuerzas que conforman el Movimiento Mundial de Solidaridad con Cuba, a nuestros colaboradores en los países donde ya laboran en campaña contra el COVID 19, así como los mensajes de agradecimiento enviados al gobierno de Cuba y a su pueblo por la dimensión solidaria, humanitaria y altruista de la Revolución.

Para nuestros galenos también nuestro especial reconocimiento, respeto y admiración donde quiera que se encuentren. Ellos están enfrentando esta pandemia con altruismo dentro y fuera de Cuba, respondiendo al llamado del gobierno cubano y esparciendo la semilla humanista que nos legaron Martí y Fidel, en contraposición a las acciones como las de Estados Unidos y otros países de la OTAN, que gastan enormes presupuestos militares en detrimento de las condiciones de vida de sus poblaciones, fomentando el miedo, el odio y la desesperanza.

Asimismo, **apreciamos la permanente solidaridad de todo el Movimiento que, ahora en tiempos del nuevo Coronavirus, no ha dejado de accionar para exigir el levantamiento del bloqueo a Cuba**, ahora más criminal en las circunstancias actuales, demandando también la aplicación plena de la Resolución “Necesidad de poner fin al bloqueo económico, comercial y financiero impuesto por

Estados Unidos de América”, aprobada en el 2019 en ONU por la inmensa mayoría de sus miembros.

Juntos ganaremos esta batalla que hoy pone a prueba la solidaridad entre pueblos y gobiernos y, cuando suceda, nos abrazaremos con gran alegría por la victoria contra la pandemia que hoy nos azota, para darle un viva a la vida y celebrar en hermandad el 60 aniversario de nuestro ICAP.

Fraternamente,

Fernando González Llort

Presidente

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Cuba fights illicit drug trafficking and the United States knows it

written by Struggle - La Lucha

April 28, 2020

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounces accusations of drug trafficking by Cuba and Venezuela, published in Newsweek magazine and attributed to a high-ranking official in the U.S. Department of Defense

Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Minrex) sent a communiqué to the United States embassy in Havana, denouncing a claim published in Newsweek magazine, in an article dated April 3, 2020, by a "senior official" of the United States Department of Defense, according to which the U.S. intelligence community has evidence "that drug shipments have taken place between Venezuela and Cuba."

The text of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs states, "This statement, if it was made, contrasts sharply with the content of the 2020 "Report on the International Narcotics Control Strategy," published by the State Department, in which it is recognized that "Cuba is not a major consumer, producer or transit point for illicit drugs," that "domestic production and consumption ... continue to be low due to active surveillance, strict sentences and national prevention and public information programs," and that "Cuba dedicates significant resources to reduce the availability of illicit drugs and their use, and regional traffickers generally avoid Cuba."

Minrex adds that the same report recognizes the positive results of efforts by Cuban authorities to reduce the supply of drugs and prevent traffickers from establishing a foothold in the country.

The communiqué cites Cuba's international cooperation in combating illicit drug trafficking and the many official bilateral agreements signed, including one with the United States, emphasizing that, under this agreement, authorities in the two countries regularly share information and coordinate responses in this arena.

"The U.S. government and its specialized agencies have more than enough information to deny the defamatory claims made by a "senior official" of the Defense Department, plenty of evidence to reaffirm that the Newsweek report is untrue, fully aware that Cuba has a zero tolerance policy against drug trafficking and actively participates in regional and global initiatives and programs to confront the consumption of narcotics," the communiqué dated April 13, 2020, concludes.

Source: [Granma](#)



Message from Cuba's ambassador to China

written by Struggle - La Lucha
April 28, 2020

Message from Cuban Ambassador Carlos Miguel Pereira Hernández originally posted on April 3 on [Representaciones Diplomáticas de Cuba en el Exterior](#) website.

Things are always harder for Cuba. We Cubans don't even get a break during a pandemic. When Jack Ma, the founder of Chinese electronics giant Alibaba and the foundation that bears his name announced to the world his intent to donate 500,000 COVID-19 rapid tests to the U.S. and a million masks, overlooking the xenophobic and racist slurs of the current Present, he had already done so for countries such as Japan, South Korea, Italy, Iran, and Spain. These were then considered to be the most at-risk countries. It was an expression of his transparent call to join forces during this tough and unequal battle.

A second shipment of donations to support preventive work in Europe was scheduled to arrive at the Belgian airport of Liege on March 16. That same day it was reported that another shipment was arriving in Ethiopia for 54 African countries. One day later, a flight from Hangzhou to Rome was bringing in medical supplies for the Italian Red Cross, and there was an announcement that test kits and masks were on the way.

That same day, another plane was scheduled to arrive in Zaragoza, Spain, with another valuable shipment of 500,000 masks and other medical equipment to help the fight against the new Coronavirus. That day, a post on Ma's Twitter account stated in Spanish: #Estevirusloparamosentretodos (we will all stop this virus together). And one day later, another shipment arrived in Liege to support the efforts of Belgium and France. The Chinese agency XINHUA pointed out that the Jack Ma Foundation was stepping up its efforts to provide more support to the affected countries, especially Italy, Belgium, Spain, Slovenia, France, Austria, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, and the Netherlands.

On the 19th the beneficiaries were China's Asian neighbors of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand.

On the 21st more emergency supplies went to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. A few days later, similar shipments arrived in Azerbaijan, Butan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam, for a total of 23 Asian countries.

On March 22, as the pandemic continued to grow, it was Latin America and the Caribbean's turn.

Jack Ma's next tweet announced a shipment of 2 million masks, 400,000 rapid test kits, and 104 ventilators to 24 countries in our region, including Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Dominican Republic, and Peru. On March 24 a publication by the Chinese ambassador in Panama confirmed the arrival of 100,000 masks and 10 diagnostic kits in that country, while his colleague in Havana confirmed the same.

As of yesterday, March 30, they were still announcing additional shipments of donations such as ventilators, gloves, and personal protective equipment. The hashtag #OneWorldOneFight was trending.

However, amidst all these news reports and announcements, one of those shipments could not reach its final destination.

Apparently the U.S. transport company that was hired to carry the donation rejected it at the last minute arguing that the rules of the economic, commercial, and financial blockade against the destination country, heightened by the current U.S. administration, barred it from doing so.

The noble, massive, and commendable effort by the founder of Alibaba and the Jack Ma Foundation that had reached some fifty countries around the world could not touch Cuban soil. It didn't matter how necessary those resources were for the fight the small, besieged, and blockaded Caribbean island nation was waging. Once again, the unjust, arbitrary, and illegal blockade ruined everything.

We thank Mr. Ma for having thought of us and for the efforts he is still making to bring his Foundation's efforts to our shores. Things are always harder for Cuba. That is why every achievement, every little step forward, becomes a colossal triumph against the devil.

Translated by Jill Clark-Gollub



A new humanity, a new world

written by Struggle - La Lucha
April 28, 2020

Owei Lakemfa is the former secretary general of the [Organization of African Trade Union Unity, \(OATUU\)](#), a coalition of trade unions in all the 54 African countries, with a total membership of about 25 million.

Imagine. Imagine you are on a cruise ship with 681 others and then discover that some of them have contacted a highly infectious virus that has neither cure nor vaccine. Even if there were a cure, it was not within reach as you are afloat in the ocean and no country wanted you to berth. So your ship becomes not just a prison but a virus-infected laboratory with no escape except to leap into the roaring waves.

Therefore, you are condemned to wait and live in fear of the highly contagious virus spreading. It is a nightmare, but not one you can wake up from, as it is a reality running into weeks.

That was the nerve wracking experience passengers on board the British cruise ship MS Braemar underwent. The passengers were 668 from the United Kingdom and the rest from Italy, Colombia, Australia, Canada, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Japan. On board, five had coronavirus Covid-19 while 28 other passengers and 27 crewmembers had been isolated after experiencing coronavirus-like symptoms.

The ship was denied docking by the Dominican Republic, Barbados and the Bahamas. The mighty United States was not offering any assistance, but the small island of Cuba, which is also experiencing the virus, beckoned on the ship to dock at its port of Mariel as an act of solidarity.

The relieved passengers, throwing kisses at a country they were not scheduled to visit, were transported in a caravan of buses and ambulances to a Havana airport terminal and flown to the U.K.

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab joined in the appreciation: "We are very grateful to the Cuban government for swiftly enabling this operation."

The Cuban action to the passengers and their loved ones is an unforgettable act of bravery which saved lives. That, in international diplomacy, is called soft power diplomacy. But knowing the Cubans, that was not their intention. Rather, it is in their character and tradition to come to the assistance of people in need even if it would cost them lives. That was what they did in the anti-cholera fight in Haiti, and in 2014 during the Ebola scourge that threatened to wipe out countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone.

We Africans can also not forget that in the 1980s, when apartheid held South Africa

and Namibia in a strangulating grip and marched across Angola to seize that country, it was only Cuba that came to our aid, pouring in some 55,000 troops, losing thousands of their youths in battle, but effectively crushing the apartheid military, leaving the racists with no option but to dismantle their evil system and grant Namibia and South Africa independence. In the last 56 years, Cuba has sent over 400,000 health professionals to work for free in 164 countries.

Italy is now the epicenter of the Covid-19 pandemic, with deaths in the past one week averaging four hundred. Almost all countries in the world are protecting just themselves and conserving their finances, health workers and medical supplies for their citizens. In contrast, tiny Cuba is mobilizing and sending thousands of its medical professionals to countries ravaged by Covid-19. Just this Saturday, it sent 52 doctors and nurses to Italy, a developed European country, to help battle the virus. Italy's Permanent Representative to the European Union (EU) Maurizio Massari, had complained that his country's cry to EU member countries for medical help to combat coronavirus had gone unanswered.

The Cuban deployment of its "armies of white robes" to Italy, was the sixth international medical brigade it was sending out to fight Covid-19. It had sent them to Grenada, Nicaragua, Suriname, Venezuela and Jamaica.

When the 140 Cuban medical professionals arrived in Kingston, Jamaican Health Minister Christopher Tufton greeted them thus: "In a time of crisis, the Cuban government, the Cuban people ... have risen to the occasion, they have heard our appeal and they have responded."

The Cubans are dogged fighters who, no matter how bad the situation becomes in those countries, will not turn their backs. For them, no matter the battle field — military, medical or humanitarian — neither retreat nor surrender is an option.

Watching a video of the Cubans' arrival to the applause of grateful Italians, was

quite emotive for me. It was a definitive statement that all human beings are one, irrespective of ideology and colour, and even level of development. The acts of the Cubans in rescuing the passengers of the British ship, MS Braemar and sending doctors to Italy, is also a lesson that a financially poor, underdeveloped country can come to the rescue of rich and developed countries.

It is instructive that Cuba, an island that is just 110,860 square kilometres with a population of 11.3 million, relying over the decades on raw sugar and tobacco export, has been under U.S. economic, commercial and financial embargo since Oct. 19, 1960. Yet, it has an almost 100 percent literacy and one of the most developed health systems in the world. In fact, one of the main medicines China used successfully to treat Covid-19 patients is Interferon Alpha 2b, a drug Cuba produced in 1981 to fight the dengue virus.

For many years, Cuba stood alone and isolated in the Organisation of American States. But through commitment, willpower, consistency and development paradigm, it won over most of the states to its side.

Cuba teaches us in Africa, particularly Nigeria, that there is no alternative to being self-reliant; to building basic institutions and investing in the people. It teaches the Nigerian elites who appropriate the country's resources to themselves and their Western masters, that there is no alternative to building local capacity. That if they had built the health system rather than think they can always go abroad for medical treatment, they would not be patients in the dilapidated hospitals, now that the coronavirus has shut out the outside world to all Nigerians irrespective of status.

The Cuban example is no fluke. It is built on the foundations of its founding fathers, like the poet José Martí, 1853-1895; Gen. Antonio Maceo 'The Bronze Titan' 1845-1896; and the later generations like Fidel and Raul Castro, Camilio Cienfuegos, Haydee María and Celia Sánchez, who taught that humanity is one and that its resources must be deployed for common good, particularly in favour of the poor, the

weak and marginalized.

The Cuban philosophy is embedded in the thoughts of a man like Ernesto Che Guevara, who taught that: "The life of a single human being is worth a million times more than all the properties of the richest man on earth." The Cubans are living Che's advice that: "We must strive every day so that this love of living humanity is transformed into actual deeds, into acts that serve as examples, as a moving force."



'Ending blockade of Cuba would strengthen world science and health'

written by Struggle - La Lucha
April 28, 2020



Graduates from Cuba's University of Medical Sciences. *The following letter was sent to H. Holden Thorp, editor-in-chief of Science magazine, by marine biologist and Cuba solidarity activist Mark Friedman.*

Hello editor Thorp,

I write to you as a subscriber for 15+ years of Science magazine and a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). I have appreciated the high quality and professionalism of the magazine and use it regularly in my honors Biology and Physio-anatomy classes. I urge you to print this — think outside the box from your “traditional” letters.

I call attention to an omission in your comprehensive editorial [“Do Us a Favor.”](#)

We know that this Washington administration, as well as others past, operates on

the basis of politics, often religion and not science. As scientists, we must become more active in politics, using our knowledge to inform the public and galvanize ourselves into action beyond legislation and lobbying. This is particularly true as the world enters a new stage with the coronavirus.

Although a vaccine does not yet exist, Cuban scientists and physicians developed Interferon Alpha 2B, which is now being produced and distributed in millions of doses in China due to its effectiveness in reducing the duration of and mortality of the coronavirus. The success is widely known among medical professionals.

Initially developed in response to the U.S.-CIA introduction into Cuba of the swine flu to kill thousands of pigs — an effort to starve the Cuban people — they developed this medicine, which is also effective against other diseases.

An omission in your editorial was not only the existence of this medicine that mediates Covid-19, but the fact that Cuban doctors have been requested and sent to more than 50 countries, including Italy, France and throughout the Caribbean, to assist their often-meager health care systems in responding to the virus.

Why Cuba? They have a robust pharmaceutical industry and they sent hundreds of doctors to West Africa to defeat the Ebola virus (the only country to do so). The U.S. government should end the Cuban blockade so we have access to this medicine and others that the Cubans have developed to substantially reduce lung cancer and leg amputations resulting from late stage diabetes.

World science and health would be stronger with normalized relations between the two countries.

Mark L. Friedman
Marine Biology instructor, L.A. Maritime Institute
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Cuba Saves

written by Struggle - La Lucha
April 28, 2020

The cruise ship MS Braemar, with five confirmed cases of Covid-19 and a thousand people on board, docked shortly before dawn this Wednesday in the Port of Mariel, 40 kilometers from Havana. The airport evacuation corridor to the runway of the José Martí International Terminal, from where four United Kingdom planes moved the evacuees, left with the precision of a clockwork.

While the world holds its breath and it is impossible to predict the consequences of the pandemic, Cuba was in the news yesterday because of the transfer of more than a thousand passengers and crew members of the Braemar who, since March 8, were confined to being a ghost ship in the Caribbean.

The odyssey began when the British company Fed Olsen's cruise ship arrived in Cartagena, where a woman from the U.S. disembarked and was diagnosed shortly

afterward with coronavirus. From that moment on, five Caribbean ports denied entry to the ship and the families of the cruise passengers turned to the media to express their fears for the fate of their loved ones and the possibility that they would be forced to make the long journey back to Europe, exposed to massive contagion and perhaps death on an industrial scale before the ship could reach Britain.

The scaremongering and media hype surrounding the new coronavirus turned the passengers and crew into a kind of plague. Anthea Guthrie, a passenger on the Braemar and a retired gardener, showed a video on her Facebook page of the time when the cruise ship was being supplied 25 miles from one of the ports where they were unable to dock. A ship towed a second rudimentary barge, without engine or crew, to bring sacks of rice and bunches of bananas to the Braemar, where members of the British crew came aboard in the middle of the night, like fugitives in a kind of pirate expedition.

The testimony of that moment was shared by Anthea after she heard the good news that Cuba would receive them. She published another video in which the passengers, relaxed on deck, thanked the island's gesture of solidarity and raised glasses to the health of the Cubans. Like a veteran of the networks, she has not only been reporting from the ship but included the label #DunkirkSpirit, which alludes to the evacuation of 330,000 allied soldiers - mostly British - from the French coast in May 1940, at the beginning of World War II, when Adolf Hitler seemed invincible.

"For us, Dunkirk does not only speak of heroism, but of humanity. It means that there are solutions in the worst of circumstances, and this time we will have Cuba to thank for it", said Anthea, relieved after the news that the cruise ship would dock on the island.

Havana's decision to allow entry to MS Braemar, following a request from the governments of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, did not surprise the Cubans, who have a long tradition of medical and humanitarian collaboration. Since

the beginning of the sixties, thousands of health workers have collaborated with almost all the poor countries in the world. Over 35,000 medical students from 138 countries have studied for free on the island. Following the devastating earthquakes in Pakistan (2005) and Haiti (2010) or during the Ebola fever in Western Africa, in 2014, Cuban doctors were the first to arrive in the territories marked by devastation.

Cuban collaboration in health with its unquestionable scientific results, particularly in the field of biotechnology, have provoked poisonous anger in the usual privileged people and sympathy and warmth in the usual unprivileged. But the truth of Cuba, a life vest for many during the Covid-19 pandemic, has tipped the balance toward expressions of affection directed at the army of white coats. The Latin American governments that, under pressure from Washington, expelled the doctors today live the double ordeal of the coronavirus and the claim of their people for such an act of arrogance and stupidity. A line of nations are calling for medical collaboration and the island's drugs, which have proven their effectiveness in treating the sick.

The great paradox is that, while the ships with oil and food contracted by Cuba are harassed by the United States, the ships with the sick that nobody wants in their ports receive solidarity and respect in Cuba. The Trump regime, by the way, refused to receive the Braemar, according to an article published yesterday in The UK Independent.

The two most repeated words since yesterday on Twitter are Cuba Saves. This is no coincidence.

Source: [Resumen](#)



Cuba: Better than 'not all bad'

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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March 10 was election day in Michigan. One of the major issues brought forward in the Sanders campaign among many important ones like eliminating cash bail and racist mass incarceration, is Medicare for All.

Sanders has been vilified for daring to say that Cuba is “not all bad.” The return to Cold War stereotypes about socialism and communism is a relic that has lost its punch with the younger folk.

As we experience the chaos reigning across the U.S. as the capitalist economic system and neoliberal government structures deal with the Covid-19 virus epidemic, let's reflect on how Cuba's medical system might handle this differently.

First, of course, health care is a human right in Cuba. Everyone is covered for everything up to and including heart transplants. The U.S. blockade has made it difficult or impossible to get some equipment, replacement parts, medicine and more, but everyone is covered.

This is the aspect that compares with Medicare for All. The health care systems in all imperialist and former colonizer countries reportedly have this universal health coverage — with the lone exception being the United States.

Cuba better than 'not all bad'

But Cuba also has family doctors who live in the neighborhood — every neighborhood, urban and rural. They know the health challenges faced by the human beings in their community. They are the first line in preventing sickness, together with the Committees in Defense of the Revolution block organizations.

Why does Cuba have fewer infant and maternal deaths than in the U.S. per capita? The key is prevention before cure.

If we had Cuban-style health care, our local doctors and nurses would be knocking on doors in New York, Washington, Maryland, California and other centers of the outbreak to test and interview everyone. Are you sick?

A general announcement in the U.S. has now declared that everyone over age 60 should stay indoors. But what if they work? Need to use a bus or subway for transportation? Who will tell their employer? Will they be paid even if they have no sick time? Will their job and income be there when the threat passes? How will they get food? In the U.S., the only safety net is the one we create for ourselves with our families and neighbors, our union and co-workers. But that isn't enough.

What should you do if you are feeling sick? We are told "call your doctor," but don't go there. Most people don't have a doctor, just an urgent care clinic run by a variety of drug stores or other companies or their health plan center. Visiting these centers potentially brings more people into contact with the virus, increasing the epidemic. How many places do you call before you get the contact number you need? How do you do this if you are sick and scared that a potentially deadly virus is attacking your

body?

This kind of question and insecurity do not stress the lives of Cubans because the responsibility to deal with social crises is not left to each individual to navigate. Solidarity and unity are their key to a life better in many ways than that in the U.S., although with fewer material things.

An ounce of prevention

An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure, except in the capitalist system, where the pound of cure rakes in megaprofits from Big Pharma and the corporate medical industry.

Cuba's lower infant and maternal mortality and life expectancy equal to or better than that of the U.S. highlights the human improvement due to prevention-focused health care. And at a fraction of the cost spent in the U.S., where the cost is more than \$10,000 per capita.

Medicare for All and a prevention focused health system is not the end of the story. Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parilla called for international solidarity to defeat Covid-19. The foreign minister's tweet reported by Cuba News Agency "expressed the need to strengthen cooperation among the world's nations, as well as the need to see health as a human right for all and not as a business in the hands of a few."

The article pointed out that "Cuba has already defined strategies to contain the risk of entry and spread of the virus in the country." But also, according to the press conference statement, "Dr. Manuel Romero Placeres, director of the Pedro Kouri Institute of Tropical Medicine (IPK) in Havana, warned that Covid-19 is one of the most virulent coronaviruses and is genotypically stronger, and if protective measures are not taken properly, the consequences of the epidemic could be

disastrous."

On a March 9 television program explaining Cuba's special health preparations, Cuban Prime Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz reiterated ["that Cuba is standing beside the Chinese government and people, mentioning \[Cuba's\] modest contribution in providing Interferon Alpha 2b, with proven results."](#)

In addition to following health procedures, U.S. residents must uplift the call to end economic warfare against Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, Zimbabwe and all other countries blockaded by U.S. imperialism. Medical and pharmaceutical research on a vaccine will benefit from open collaboration. China recognized this by internationally sharing the entire genome sequence for public health authorities, laboratories and researchers.

According to Dr. Trevor Bedford, quoted on Seattle's Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center website, ["Basically, a week after registering that there's this new thing, the amazing scientists in China have a genome for the novel virus that had never been seen before. ... That first genome has been amazing for people developing rapid tests to be able to actually confirm cases."](#)

