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Cuba and Covid-19 pandemic

Lift the blockade against Cuba to strengthen the fight against Covid 19

- IV Online magazine - 2020 - IV543 - April 2020 -

Publication date: Tuesday 21 April 2020

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With access to education (public and free from kindergarten to university), health is one of the great conquests of the Cuban Revolution, which, despite the difficulties, mistakes and setbacks, is still in place. To get an idea of the strength of the Cuban health system, it is enough to compare some fairly conclusive data. In the United States, a country with a per capita GDP of 58,469 euros per year and where investment in health represents 14.32% of GDP, we are witnessing a real collapse in health that is not difficult to understand: there is a ratio of 3 doctors per thousand inhabitants (which gives a good idea of the brutal social inequality that characterizes this society). Cuba, a country with a per capita GDP of no more than 7,470 euros, invests 10.92% of its GDP in health and has 9 doctors per thousand inhabitants, according to official data for 2019, is not only capable of dealing with the pandemic at home, but also of providing aid abroad.

On 19 April 2020, Cuba had 1035 patients infected by coronavirus, 34 have died of since the beginning of the epidemic. The authorities warn of the danger of the epidemic spreading and do not adopt a triumphalist attitude.

The number of deaths is likely to increase considerably, and the blockade against Cuba is an aggravating factor because it hinders the import of certain equipment and medicines needed to respond to the epidemic.

It is clear, however, that the allocation of resources in Cuba is much more egalitarian and efficient than in other countries. Moreover, the tradition of internationalist solidarity of the Cuban people has been expressed, particularly in the area of health, thanks to a 100% public system. Recently, some European countries have had to resort to Cuba's help in combating the pandemic. Italy, which has around 4 doctors per thousand inhabitants and a per capita GDP of EUR 29 610 per year, or Andorra, with a per capita GDP of EUR 35 975, have been obliged to ask for help from the Caribbean country because of the inability of neighbouring countries to help them and the paralysis of the EU.

According to official data, in 2019, Cuban health personnel abroad exceeded 28,000 in 60 countries.

To date, Cuba has sent 21 brigades of health professionals to join national and local efforts in 20 countries that have recently requested Cuban medical assistance to combat coronavirus. These 21 brigades are in addition to or reinforce the medical collaboration brigades in 60 nations, where they were already providing services.

Over the past 50 years, Cuban medical personnel have carried out missions in 164 countries in Africa, the Americas, the Middle East and Asia.

Cuban health personnel have accumulated a great deal of experience in the fight against the dengue fever that periodically shakes the island, as well as the Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leone, Guinea Conakry and Liberia (2014-2015) and the cholera epidemic in Haiti. It has also intervened effectively to help the victims of several earthquakes in this Caribbean country as well as in Pakistan (2005) and Nepal (2015); against floods and hurricanes in Central America and the Caribbean. The World Health Organization has recognized the importance and quality of Cuban medical aid at the international level.

Cuba has also developed a production of highly effective medicines and treatments against several epidemics. Although there is currently no preventive vaccine or specific treatment for the new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, the Cuban pharmaceutical industry guarantees the production of proven and highly effective

drugs such as interferon alpha 2b, in addition to other drugs that are part of the treatment protocol for patients with this disease and all the complications that may arise.

The embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba is a criminal act because it attempts to hinder free health cooperation between Cuba and the various countries that have requested its assistance or that wish to strengthen collaboration with the Caribbean island.

The Cuban authorities stated correctly in a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 16 April: "If developing countries are not guaranteed access to technologies that are mostly available in highly industrialized nations, especially in the area of health, and if they fail to share science developments and their products in an unimpeded and selfless manner, the vast majority of the world's population will be as exposed or even more exposed than today in an increasingly interconnected world."

The same statement is also quite right in saying: "If politically motivated coercive economic measures against developing countries are not lifted and if they are not exempted from the payment of the burdensome and unpayable foreign debt and freed from the ruthless tutelage of international financial organizations, we cannot delude ourselves into thinking that we will be in a better position to respond to the economic and social disparities that, even without a pandemic, kill millions of people every year, including children, women and elders." (Official Ministry website in English [here](#).)

The coronavirus crisis has shown that the backbone of an adequate response to the coronavirus epidemic is the public health system. The neo-liberal policies of the last 40 years in general, and the last 10 years of austerity in particular, have been responsible for heavy loss of life. Where the cuts have been most severe, the collapse of the health system has been most dramatic. In the United States, the chaos is greater than in other countries, not only because of the ultra-reactionary nature of the government, but also because of the absence of anything resembling a free, universal public health care system.

Moreover, the United States has not only rejected Cuban aid in a criminal act - which will cost hundreds or thousands of lives - but it is also pressuring countries that have asked for help from Cuba to give it up. The reactionary governments of Brazil, Ecuador and Bolivia, for their part, have expelled Cuban medical missions.

As if all this was not enough, Trump decided on 15 April 2020, to end the U.S. contribution to the WHO, at a time when the U.N. agency is playing an important role in the fight against coronavirus.

In view of this, Cuba maintains that an international effort, without political prejudices, is absolutely necessary to develop and share scientific research and to exchange the experiences of various countries in the areas of preventive work, protection of the most vulnerable and social conduct practices. That will make it possible to reduce the duration of the pandemic and the rate of human losses.

Therefore, the Fourth International calls on all revolutionary, progressive and democratic forces to strengthen the struggle against the blockade of Cuba and to intensify solidarity with the Cuban people. We fully support the foreign aid provided by Cuban health workers. The only way out of the crisis is international solidarity and the development of internationalism among peoples. Down with reactionary governments that despise the lives of their own peoples and promote nationalism, racism and war as a way out of the crisis.

Let us intensify the struggle to lift the blockade against Cuba!

Solidarity, self-determination and internationalism!

Our lives are worth more than their profits!

20 April 2020

Executive Bureau of the Fourth International

PS:

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