



Australia-Cuba Friendship Society
Melbourne NEWSLETTER
December 2018

Next Meeting
Monday 3rd
November
7.30pm
Unitarian Church
110 Grey St,
East Melbourne

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Dear Comrades

25 November, 2018

Matthew Guy's been done like a dinner so it's over to Labor to deliver. There's lots of other things to write about, none of them particularly Christmassy I'm afraid, but that's the way things are. Once a time of celebration, now a time of reflection and wondering what the devil 2019 will throw at us. I'd rather not talk about Trump, but he's still mindlessly bunging off tweets full of exclamation marks and slogans about 'America First' and crap that Iran is the world's leading sponsor of terrorism when it's Saudi Arabia and Israel and his very own US of A. A man bereft of either integrity or justice, although even he might have gone a bit beyond the pale for defending Saudi Arabia in face of their horrific act of violence in dismembering a journalist while he's still alive, even if it was a typical Tuesday afternoon for Saudi's rulers. Amid media outrage, a less publicised story didn't seem to cut it in the same way. About 85,000 Yemeni children under the age of five died of starvation between April 2015 and October 2018 as a direct result of Saudi's blockade and relentless violence

Who really matters in our world? 9/11 saw 2,996 human beings die in a blaze of publicity. Horrible. But is it worse than the deaths of more than a million Iraqis in a war based on lies? A war engineered by government secret agencies and Washington insiders and sold to the public and rammed through without any public accountability. No-one was tried for war crimes. No-one was sacked. No changes were made to prevent such horrors ever happening again. You don't need a conspiracy to understand the nexus between plutocratic thugs and elements of the government. Julian Assange's eight-year ordeal is another case in point. Incarcerated under British house arrest by a servile UK government and then holed up in the Ecuadoran Embassy under the protection of former president Correa, despite the absence of any charges filed against him. **The current president of Ecuador, the brutal, ultra-right, pro-torture, thoroughly evil Lenin Moreno** who wants to privatise everything, including the Amazon, is rescinding Assange's asylum so that he will be handed over to Washington where a secret indictment and a Grand Jury stands at the ready and where a large number of Democrats and Republicans reckon he should be executed. His crime? Telling the truth like Daniel Ellsberg, whose Pentagon Papers were published in the New York Times and the Washington Post and helped bring about the end of the Vietnam War and who was treated like a hero by the rest of the world. As an Australian, Julian Assange is not subject to US law. Tell that to the grovellers in Canberra. If he was an Israeli citizen?

We live in a rich country, except the wealth isn't shared. Ross Gittins used statistics to highlight the inequalities regarding our education system, with Gonski jettisoned to avoid a row with private schools. And

when Catholics put the frighteners on, governments buckle. Australia is now in the shameful position of being equal fourth with the most socially stratified education system among the OECD's 35 nations. Only Mexico, Hungary and Chile have a more class-segregated set-up. 95% of our most disadvantaged are in the state sector. It matters because it shows what happens when schools are funded on the basis of religion and powerful lobby groups rather than need.

But some articles really pull you up in your tracks and one that got to me was by George Monbiot who describes a press conference held by climate activists last week called Extinction Rebellion. Asked by journalists if aims to reduce UK carbon emissions to zero by 2025 were unrealistic, a young woman stepped forward full of fury and grief. *'What is it you are asking me as a 20-year old to face and to accept about my future and my life?... This is an emergency. We are facing extinction... what is it you want me to feel?'* No-one responded. Tinkering at the edges got us into this mess and will not get us out. Public figures talk and act as if environmental change will be linear and gradual, but the earth's systems are highly complex and complex systems do not respond in linear ways. **Only one of the many life support systems on which we depend - soils, aquifers, rainfall, ice, winds and currents, biological abundance and diversity - needs fail for everything else to slide.** It was pointed out that 50bn tonnes of resources used per year is about the limit the Earth's systems can tolerate, but our world is already consuming 70bn tonnes and is on target to use 180bn tonnes by 2050 making 'green growth' physically impossible.

The problem is political. **The oligarchic control of wealth, politics, media and public discourse explains the comprehensive institutional failure now pushing us towards disaster.** Think of Trump and his cabinet of multi-millionaires; the Murdoch empire and its massive contribution to climate science denial; the oil and motor companies whose lobbying prevents a faster shift to new technologies. And it's not just governments failing us. Public broadcasters have shut down environmental coverage while allowing opaquely funded lobbyists masquerading as think tanks, to shape the debate and deny what we face. Academics, fearful of upsetting their funders and colleagues, bite their lips. But growing numbers of people understand that continued economic growth is incompatible with our precious Earth. **And we must not allow the Earth's despoilers to tell us what we can and cannot do. It's our world, not theirs. And we're running out of time.** But we still need a break. Enjoy the company of family and friends and as always, take extra care on our roads...

Joan Coxsedg, Commentator-in-Chief, Melbourne ACFS (03) 9857 9249

Subtle Reminder – Subs are due by February...please help keep the flags flying

Mariel is consolidated as an attractive investment site

Five years after its creation, the Mariel Special Development Zone has 41 approved users, of which 17 have begun operations, as interest grows in opportunities for foreign investors in Cuba



The people as a constituent body

For over almost 60 years, Cuban citizens have agreed that the state directs, foments, and promotes education, the sciences, and culture in all its manifestations



A one percent worth millions



Funds now available from provincial tax revenue allow municipalities to autonomously launch projects to meet the population's needs and promote local development

Cuba-Russia cooperative economic ties

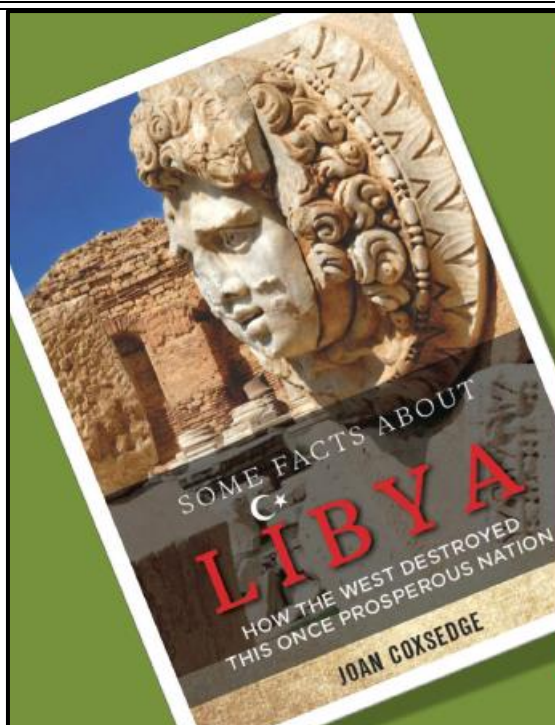
Commerce between Russia and Latin America reached 14.5 billion dollars in 2017, while the country's investments in Cuba have an important impact on key sectors of the economy



A new milestone in Cuban biotechnology



Experts at the Havana International Fair emphasized the significance of the recent establishment of a joint venture enterprise by prestigious research centers in Cuba and the United States



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SORRY...NO POSTAGE due to cost

Cuban doctors in Brazil: How can conditions be placed on lives?

The More Doctors program currently has 18,240 posts in 4,058 municipalities. Close to 8,400 of these are occupied by Cubans, distributed over 2,885 municipalities

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november 20, 2018 12:11:35



Photo: Araquém Alcántara

Boticario is a town lost in the vast northeast of Brazil, in the municipality of

Santo Amaro de Brotas, close to the Aracaju coast in the State of Sergipe, more than 1,600 kilometers from the capital, Brasília.

It is hard to say if the President-elect of the country, Jair Bolsonaro, has been here, or if he knows where this town is located on the map. It is even more unlikely that he knows the story of María, a humble, young woman, 29 years of age, to whom a Cuban doctor provided relief.

Without the diagnosis of Dr. Reymeri Valderrama Pimentel, she would never have been able to fight the lymphatic filariasis she suffered, a chronic, very debilitating disease also known as elephantiasis.

"We Cuban doctors who work in this municipality, will never forget María's face, before and after the diagnosis, and those of her family and neighbors, who everyday

placed their confidence in us and allowed us to enter their lives, despite the language and cultural barriers, that only love, professionalism, and humility can overcome," said specialist Dr. Valderrama, who gave this testimony at the Central Medical Cooperation Unit in Havana, on the occasion of the 55th anniversary of Cuba's international medical cooperation.

It was in 2012 that the Brazilian Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) announced terrifying findings: doctors were in short supply; waiting times for appointments were long; and the quality of assistance was poor. At that time, the ratio of doctors per inhabitant was 1.8 per 1,000, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBEG), far below other countries on the continent and around the world. Thus the analysis concluded with the proposal to raise this ratio to 2.7 doctors per 1,000 inhabitants.

Considering these statistics, it is evident that the More Doctors program, launched in August of 2013, was an urgent necessity. According to former President Dilma Rousseff, initiator of the effort, the goal was not to bring more foreign doctors to Brazil, but to take health care to the country's interior.

The declaration released by the Cuban Ministry of Public Health, announcing its exit from the program, stated, "The work of Cuban doctors in places of extreme poverty, in the favelas of Río de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Salvador de Bahía, in the 34 Special Indigenous Districts, especially in Amazonia, was widely recognized by federal, state, and municipal governments of the country, and by the population, who supported their presence at a level of 95%, according to a study which the Brazilian Ministry of Health requested of the Federal University of Minas Gerais."

This reality was emphasized during the 2015 International Health Convention in Cuba, when Arthur Chioro, Brazilian Health Minister at the time, said, "Brazil has an official history of more than 500 years, and this is the first time we have doctors in all indigenous villages. This people, some 800,000 brothers, were never guaranteed access to a health team."

The More Doctors program reached populations in Amazonia, in semi-arid regions, remote rural areas, and the outskirts of large cities, Chioro noted, adding, "Millions of people live in Sao Paulo, and in its periphery, thousands of them have no medical assistance."

Brazilian authorities, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), and the population expressed their satisfaction with the program many times.

"We are very satisfied because 90% of the Brazilian doctors participating in this experience tell their Brazilian colleagues to come to the program, that it is worthwhile. This environment of success, credibility, and quality, we are morally obliged to share with the Cuban government, the PAHO, and with doctors from 30 countries who also responded to our call and make a contribution to allow Brazil to provide universal health coverage," Chioro said at the gathering.

At the same time, he expressed the necessity of strengthening primary care with the opening of more medical schools and scholarships for residencies, "We are transforming the structure of our health system so that in ten years we have the capacity to provide this program more Brazilian doctors. We always count on the cooperation of Cuba, because we know that this sister people takes a position of great solidarity and commitment with Brazil," he said.

What occurred with the More Doctors program in Brazil went beyond supporting the family health strategy and guaranteeing primary care. The greatest contribution in this nation, in which Cuban doctors played an exemplary role, was a new way of taking care of the people's health – that of disease prevention, of conceiving the individual as a bio-psycho-social being, not removed from the surrounding environment. Cuban doctors were healing, without neglecting the causes that determine the disease. Dr. Maritza Gómez Hernández told **Granma International** that she worked three years in Río Grande del Sur, the country's southernmost state, "I worked with another Brazilian doctor and it was a wonderful experience to exchange knowledge, and

that professionals from other parts of the world could see our point of view, the way of doing Cuban medicine and why it has prestige,” the doctor recalls, arriving in Havana at dawn on November 15, with her mission accomplished, as part of a group of 196 health collaborators who had been in Brazil, working in the More Doctors program.

They landed at José Martí International Airport shortly after the Ministry of Public Health issued its statement announcing the end of Cuban participation in the Brazilian program.

The replacements they were to have will not be available to the Brazilian people, “given the actions of the new President who has not even taken office, but is taking ultra-right measures to place conditions on the medical mission in Brazil, and Cuba will not accept these conditions,” Dr. Anabel Mariedo Oropesa told **Granma International**.

“We return today, as our colleagues will, with all the dignity in the world, leaving behind a beautiful history written by all of us for this people, that so much needs it, and who learned to love Cuba and its doctors,” said the specialist who worked in the north-eastern state of Tocantis.

“We welcome to the homeland, a bastion of courage and principles, all the doctors and internationalist professionals who completed their mission in Brazil and other countries,” said Deputy Minister of Public Health Regla Angulo Pardo, who congratulated the group for their commitment and effort, in the name of the ministry, the Party, and the Cuban people.

For Dr. Lisván Cala Rosabal, the attitude of Bolsonaro “shows that he has no knowledge of the reality of Cuban medicine and that of thousands of Brazilians for whom the More Doctors program allowed access to a right like health care. At the same time, he disregarded the dignity of the Cuban people.

“More Doctors was a great experience that allowed for the reduction of inequality in the Brazilian population and made access to a fundamental right possible, that is to health and life. More than 80% of the primary care doctors, in the municipality where I was placed, are Cuban,” said the Comprehensive General Medicine specialist.

And as they listened to the notes of the National Anthem, and were reminded of the explicit support given by doctors to the Revolution, no one could doubt that no conditions can be placed on integrity, health, or life.

THE BRAZILIAN PEOPLE WILL SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES AND THE WORLD KNOWS IT

“With dignity, great sensitivity, professionalism, dedication, and altruism, Cuban collaborators have provided valuable service to the Brazilian people. Attitudes with such a human dimension must be respected and defended.”

These were the words tweeted by Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel referring to the decision by the Ministry of Public Health to end Cuba’s participation in the More Doctors program, in the wake of comments by Brazil’s President-elect indicating that he would make changes to the terms under which the program is organized.

In another tweet, he added, “With your heads held high, you are an unsurpassable example of humanism and dignity. Those who vainly think only in themselves cannot understand the essence of our internationalist convictions.

#SomosCuba.”

Similar condemnations of the President-elect’s position have been made in the Latin American, Brazilian, and international media, and on social media. Brazilian institutions, political figures, intellectuals, movements, and social organizations within and beyond the country have expressed their support for the work done by Cuban doctors over the program’s five years.

Gleisi Hoffmann, national president of the Workers’ Party (PT), denounced “the disrespect, threats, and violence with which Bolsonaro addresses Cuba, that have led to Brazil losing access to Cuban medicine, recognized by the World Health Organization as an example for the world.”

“In some time, with our struggle, we will return to being the country you, Cuban friends, came to know through your contact with our people. And I am sure that Cuba will not fail Brazil, as it has never failed any people of the world in need of Cuban solidarity,” said Manuela D’Ávila, running mate of Fernando Haddad, the PT candidate for President in recent elections.

D’Ávila, a member of the Communist Party of Brazil, described the end of Cuban participation in the More Doctors program as the first tragic victim of the ideological extremism and persecution against the left that is rampant in Brazil today.

Likewise, the President of the Brazilian chapter of the Network of Intellectuals and Artists in Defense of Humanity, writer Marília Guimaraes, stated that she was greatly pained by the news, saying, “We don’t have any way now to change direction. But we have plenty of hope that new possibilities exist. I am very sad for the Brazilian people.”

The Landless Movement (MST) and the National Network of People’s Doctors referred to the work of Cuban medicine and the human, professional quality of its doctors, emphasizing that they are “an example of what medicine can be for all. An example that favelas and Amazonia can have doctors. An example that the poor and Black can be doctors. An example that the state must guarantee health as a right. An example of Latino love.”

But no doubt, those who will most feel the departure of Cuban doctors are the men and women, the children and elderly, who are indignant over the authoritarian, incoherent position of their future President, and will now be abandoned.

According to statistics from the Brazilian Ministry of Health, the More Doctors program currently has 18,240 posts in 4,058 municipalities. Close to 8,400 of these are occupied by Cubans, distributed over 2,885 municipalities.

More than 1,500 municipalities, the majority with less than 20,000 inhabitants, have only Cuban doctors, because they are located in remote, extremely poor areas, where Brazilian doctors do not want to work.

The Australia Cuba Friendship Society
invites you to
**An End Of Year Supper
& Film Night**



“Venezuela, the Shadow Agenda”

director Hernando Calvo Ospina challenges the prevailing
corporate media storylines attacking Bolivarian
Venezuela and Nicolás Maduro, its president.

DATE: Monday 3 December 2018.

TIME: 7.30pm.

VENUE: Melbourne Unitarian Church.

110 Grey St - East Melbourne 3002.

DONATION to our projects in CUBA: \$10

We will also have a Raffle during
our renowned Supper Time.

For more information contact:
Maree: 0448 121 397 or delloram@hotmail.com



The defeat of democracy in Brazil

Many wonder how it is possible, following the democratic governments of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Lula, and Dilma Rousseff, that Brazilians have elected as President a shady federal deputy and die-hard defender of the military dictatorship that ruled the country 1964-1985

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november 20, 2018 16:11:57

In 1933, Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany through the democratic vote. In 2018 – 85 years after the electoral victory of the Nazi leader – former army captain Jair Bolsonaro was elected President of Brazil with 57.5 million votes from an electorate of 147 million. His rival, professor Fernando Hadad, secured 47 million votes. There were 31.3 million abstentions, 8.6 million null votes, and 2.4 million blank ballots. Consequently, 89.3 million Brazilians did not vote for Bolsonaro.

Many wonder how it is possible, following the enactment of the Civil Constitution of 1988, and the democratic governments of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Lula, and Dilma Rousseff, that Brazilians have elected as president a shady federal deputy, openly in favor of torture and summary execution of prisoners, a die-hard defender of the military dictatorship that subjugated the country over 21 years (1964-1985).

Nothing happens by chance. Multiple factors explain the meteoric rise of Bolsonaro. Brazilian democracy has always been fragile. Since the arrival of the Portuguese to our lands, in 1500, autocratic governments have predominated. Under colonial rule, we were governed by the Lusitanian monarchy until November 1889, when the Republic was decreed.

The first two terms of our Republic were led by military men. Marshal Deodoro de Fonseca governed from 1889 to 1891, and General Floriano Peixoto from 1891 to 1894. In the 1920s, President Artur Bernardes governed for four years (1922-1926) through the semi-dictatorial State of Siege. Getúlio Vargas, elected president in 1930, became a dictator seven years later, until he was deposed in 1945.

Since then, Brazil has seen brief periods of democracy. Marshal Dutra succeeded Vargas who, by direct vote, returned to the Presidency of the Republic in 1950, where he remained until right-wing forces induced him to commit suicide in 1954. Power was provisionally occupied by a Military Junta, that transferred authority to Ranieri Mazzilli and, immediately, admitted the inauguration of João Goulart (Jango), vice president of Janio, who governed from 1961 until April 1964, when he was deposed by the military coup that imposed the dictatorship, which lasted until 1985.

In the last 33 years of democracy, one president died before taking office (Tancredo Neves); his vice, José Sarney, took over and brought the country to bankruptcy; an avatar, Fernando Collor, was elected as the “maharajah hunter” and two and a half years later was impeached for corruption, with the Presidency occupied by his vice, Itamar Franco. This was succeeded by two presidential terms for Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2003), two for Lula (2003-2011), one complete term for Dilma (2011-2014) who, re-elected, was also subjected to a clearly coup-driven impeachment after a year and eight months in office, replaced by her vice president, Michel Temer, who will hand over the presidential sash to Bolsonaro January 1, 2019.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND MISTAKES OF THE PT

How can it be explained that after 13 years of PT (Workers’ Party) government, 57 million Brazilians, among 147 million voters, within a population of 208 million, choose as president a low-ranking officer, federal deputy throughout 28 years (seven terms), whose notoriety doesn’t result from his parliamentary activity, but from his cynicism in praising torturers and lamenting that the dictatorship didn’t execute at least 30,000 people?

How to understand the victory of a man who, in his campaign speech in São Paulo, broadcast online, proclaimed loudly and firmly that, should he be elected, his opponents should leave the country, or they would go to prison?

This is not the time to “beat a dead horse.” However, even though the social advances promoted by PT governments carried considerable weight, such as lifting 36 million Brazilians from poverty, it is necessary to highlight errors that the PT has not yet publicly acknowledged and which, nonetheless, explain its political erosion. Of these, I highlight three:

- The involvement of some of its leaders in proven cases of corruption, without the Party’s Ethics Commission having penalized any of them (Palocci distanced himself from the Party before he was expelled).
- Neglecting the political literacy of the population and media favorable to the government, such as community radio and television stations, and the alternative press.



Photo: TELESUR

- Not having implemented any structural reform during 13 years of government, except for that altering the social security contributions system of federal operations. The PT is today a victim of the failure to promote political reform.

Dilma was re-elected with a small margin of votes over her opponent, Aécio Neves. The PT did not understand the message at the polls. It was time to ensure governability by strengthening social movements. It chose the opposite path. The economic policy of the opposition’s government program was adopted.

With Temer, the crisis deepened with millions unemployed; false GDP growth; labor reform contrary to elementary workers’ rights; 63,000 murders per year (10% of the world total); military intervention in Rio de Janeiro to attempt to subvert drug trafficking control over the city. And corruption running rife in politics and among politicians, without even the President of the Republic being exempt, with photos and video evidence broadcast on prime time TV.

All this has contributed to deepening the political vacuum. Of the parties with the most seats in Congress, only the PT had a representative leader: Lula. Even when imprisoned, he enjoyed 39% support in the polls conducted at the beginning of the election campaign. However, the judiciary has confirmed the obvious: he was detained without evidence so that he would be excluded from the presidential race.

Then came Bolsonaro. How can the meteoric rise of the candidate of a tiny, insignificant party who, wounded during the campaign, abandoned the streets and didn’t participate in the televised debates, be explained?

I repeat, nothing happens by chance. The former captain received the support of three important segments of Brazilian society:

First, of the only sector that, in the last 20 years, has obstinately devoted itself to organizing and serving as the leadership of the poor: conservative evangelical churches. The PT should have learned that it never had as much national capillarity as when it had the support of the Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBS). But no grassroots work was carried out to expand this capillarity and train the party branches, unions, and social movements, except movements such as the

Landless Workers' Movement (MST) and the Homeless Workers' Movement (MTST).

Bolsonaro was also supported by a section of the military police that is nostalgic about the days of the military dictatorship, when it enjoyed broad privileges, its crimes were covered up by censorship and the press, and it enjoyed total immunity and impunity. Now, according to a promise of the president-elect, it will have a license to kill.

And he was also supported by sectors of the Brazilian elite that complain about the legal restrictions that prohibit their abuses, such as the agricultural business, and mining companies that covet indigenous reserves, and must respect environmental protection, especially of the Amazon.

There is also a new factor that favored the election of Bolsonaro: the powerful lobby of digital networks monitored from the U.S. Millions of messages were sent directly to 120 million Brazilians with Internet access, almost all voters, since in Brazil voting is compulsory for all citizens between 16 and 70 years of age.

Bolsonaro exploited this new resource that seriously threatens democracy, and was used successfully in the election of Donald Trump in the U.S., and in the referendum that decided the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union (Brexit).

FUTURE CHALLENGES

What to do now? Progressive movements and what remains of the left in Brazil will

surely promote marches, demonstrations, petitions, etc., in an effort to avoid a fascist government. None of that seems enough to me. We have to return to the grassroots. The poor voted for the project of the rich. The left fills its mouth with the word "people," but is not willing to "lose" its weekends to go to the favelas, to the villages, to the rural areas, to the neighborhoods where the poor live. These are the priorities at the current Brazilian juncture: that the PT conducts a critical self-evaluation and recreates itself; that the left resumes its grassroots work; that progressive movements redesign a plan for Brazil that is a viable political project. Otherwise, Brazil will enter the dark ages for a long spell.

Peace Boat brings anti-war message to Cuba

The danger posed to the world by nuclear weapons was the focus of a forum held on the Peace Boat, which docked in Havana earlier this month

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Author: [Chavelis González Suárez](mailto:Informacion@granma.cu) | [informacion@granma.cu](mailto:Informacion@granma.cu) - november 19, 2018 17:11:11

The danger posed to the world by the existence of nuclear weapons marked the focus of the debate in the Forum for Peace and Revolution, organized by the Japanese Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), Peace Boat, which this November docked at the port of Havana for the nineteenth time, and the second this year.

A message, signed by several civil society organizations, including the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples, the Cuban Movement for Peace, and the Cuban Association of the United Nations, reiterated Cuba's firm commitment to strengthening and consolidating international treaties on disarmament.

"Seventy-three years have passed since the criminal atomic bombings of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and humanity continues to be threatened by the existence of more than 14,400 nuclear weapons, of which 3,750 are deployed and almost 2,000 are on operational alert," read the text released in the presence of two survivors of the 1945 attacks on Japan.

In addition, young people were called on to join this struggle, raise awareness regarding the threat of a nuclear disaster, and defend humanity's right to a future of peace. "Together with the nations that long for an end to all wars, and with the power of civil society at the international level, we will continue to demand that nuclear weapons prohibition agreements be complied with until their total elimination, and we will contribute to the construction of a culture of peace around the world," highlighted the Cuban message.

The heartbreaking and eloquent testimony of those who experienced the horrors of the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, known as hibakushas, moved those present in the forum, as they described horrific images of walking among a multitude of corpses and burned people, whose faces no longer resembled those of human beings, screaming desperately for water.

Michiko Tsukamoto and Tamiko Sora were just girls at the time of the explosion, but it remains present in their memory. They suffered the loss of their loved ones, and today are among the few remaining survivors. They continue to talk about the tragedy because they recognize that the magnitude of the atomic attack has not yet been fully understood by all.

The Forum was also attended by Mako Ando, a Japanese youth representative committed to a world free of nuclear weapons, who works to raise awareness of the dangers posed if humanity fails to denuclearize. Referring to the hibakushas, she noted: "They suffer

when they tell their stories, but they do so again and again because they do not want anyone else to experience such barbarism."

Speaking on the panel, D.Sc Leyde Rodríguez Hernández condemned

the atrocities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: "We live in a time of enormous threats to international peace and security. The United States, the same power that has imposed an unjust and illegal economic, commercial, and financial blockade on the Cuban people, causing enormous human and material damages, has taken the initiative to destroy multilateralism in international relations and, with its devastating policy, dismantle the system of international treaties and agreements that served as a foundation for peace and security after WWII."

He explained that nuclear weapons and missile defense systems today represent a serious threat to humanity, and the fight for their prohibition and total elimination should be of the highest priority, as a duty and a right of the peoples.

"The maintenance and modernization of nuclear weapons consumes much of the resources that could and should be destined for economic development, job creation, the reduction of poverty and hunger, health, education, and to prevent and combat natural disasters caused by global climate change. These resources should be redirected toward the development and fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals included in the 2030 Agenda," the vice-rector of the Higher Institute of International Relations added.

The Forum for Peace and Revolution was dedicated to commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Cuban revolutionary triumph, the 73rd anniversary of the criminal U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and to the memory of Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro, who received members of the boat twice (in 2010 and 2012).

Natsue Onda, director of this Peace Boat trip, condemned the interventionist policy of the U.S. blockade against Cuba, and said she was pleased to hold the event aboard the ship, in the presence of so many Cubans. She highlighted the friendship between Cuba and the organization, who share the same commitments in this field.



Departure of the Peace Boat, November 4, 2018, with 1,200 passengers from 22 countries on board. The Boat headed to Jamaica after its stay in Havana. **Photo:** Orlando Perea

The Peace Boat has been visiting Cuba since 1989, and this is its 99th voyage around the world, carrying a message of peace and friendship. On this occasion, the ship was carrying 1,200 passengers of 22 nationalities (most of them Japanese), who toured different historic and tourist sites of Havana, and exchanged with community organizations related to senior citizens, culture, and with students.

In a press conference, travel coordinator Adrián Godínez stressed that passengers were very interested in visiting the island, thanks to the stories of previous participants, who highlighted the warm welcome received. Other motivations to visit include the popularization of Cuban culture on the Asian continent, especially salsa music, and interest in the history of the Cuban Revolution and its leaders.

The Peace Boat promotes its voyages online, on posters in public spaces, and through the 11 friendship with Cuba organizations that operate in Japan. The NGO Peace Boat received the Order of Solidarity awarded by the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba in 2009.

As a result of the first meeting with passengers of the ship in 2010, the historic leader of the Revolution, Fidel Castro, wrote a reflection titled “We will never forget,” in which he noted: “Now, as for your slogan – which, in my view has very special value, ‘Learn from past wars to build a future of peace,’ will undoubtedly always have meaning – at this moment it is more relevant than ever. I would dare say, without fear of being mistaken, that never in the history of humanity was there such a dangerous moment as this...”

California fires are crises of capitalism

Posted in [Class struggle](#), [Prisoners](#), [Spotlight](#)

By Gloria Verdieu and M. Matsemela-Ali Odom - November 19, 2018



Nov. 16 — Over the past two decades, forest fires have become a problem that increasingly impacts the health and lives of Californians. Currently, there over 20 active fires blazing in California according to the CAL FIRE website, fire.ca.gov/general/firemaps.

Some are referred to as National Forest fires, which are a natural, annual occurrence in California after a long, dry summer.

The abundance and frequency of the current spate of fires, however, can be seen as the result of anarchic capitalism and the drive for profits in real estate. And the serious consequences in death and destruction can be blamed on the lack of social planning to confront emergencies, complicated by an ultraright president.

The fires themselves are the direct result of overdevelopment of formerly unsettled parts of California — for divergent yet related reasons. In Southern California, the Woolsey Fire has largely consumed high-priced real estate in beautiful, pristine areas sold to people with money.

The Northern California Camp Fire, on the other hand, has affected many poorer and older Californians — some of whom have been pushed out of overpriced urban areas: in other words, due to gentrification.

The Camp Fire, one of the deadliest fires in California history, has proven tragic. As of the evening of Nov. 16, its official death toll was 71, but the number of people reported missing was 1,011 — given that many of the

elderly or disabled people have no way to escape. Located about 60 miles north of Sacramento, the Camp Fire has incinerated the entire town of Paradise, destroying more than 12,000 structures and 150,000 acres.

The strong, extremely dry, downslope “Santa Ana winds” that originate inland have spread the fire’s smoke, which can be seen hundreds of miles in multiple directions and has made the already poor air quality much worse.

People living hundreds of miles away from the fires are breathing smoke-laden air, which is dangerous especially for people with heart disease, asthma or other respiratory ailments. The authorities advise people to stay indoors or limit outdoor activity.

Trump’s irresponsible tweets

Thousands of people are living in tents, after having to evacuate from their homes, distraught, losing everything they own. They do not know when they can return to their homes to salvage what is left, if anything.

In the midst of all this suffering, the president tweeted that the state of California has mismanaged its forests, which caused the fires. Undoubtedly, Donald Trump is jabbing at California’s government, which is progressive compared to him. The federal government, however, owns 98 percent of the forestland in California and is responsible for its mismanagement.

As usual, the Trump administration wants to avoid paying the federal emergency funds for disasters of this sort. Instead he uses the funds to deploy federal troops to the now-militarized Southern border.

Social activists and even politicians ask why Trump has not sent more firefighters, rescue and health care workers to help people devastated by the fires. Instead, much of the firefighting is left to the most alienated sector of Californians, its incarcerated population.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation program pays inmates \$1 to \$2 a day to fight active fires, plus time off their sentences. Over 2,500 prisoners are risking their lives battling fires across the state. (tinyurl.com/ydbus2at and tinyurl.com/ydy9colb)

By using this “volunteer” prison labor, the state says it saves \$90 million to \$100 million a year. It also claims to help inmates learn new skills while working in a team environment. Of course, no jobs in this field are guaranteed for ex-prisoners.

Trump continues to deny that human behavior produces global warming and that this is a major cause of more incidences of drought. The vegetation becomes dry and flammable, providing more fuel for fires. Poorly laid electrical lines may start a fire and then Santa Ana winds spread it.

California wildfires are symptoms of a crisis in capitalism. Exploitation and disregard for the land and resources and for poor and working people have created this annual terror residents experience.

Yet, the most oppressed have already provided the answers. In California, vacant homes outnumber the homeless population. Activists demand that we fill the homes we have instead of feeding the real estate bubble.

Activists also call for paying the workers — the poor and incarcerated firefighters — the wages they deserve instead of exploiting their labor and costing them their health and ultimately their lives.

Lastly, activists want to create an infrastructure that is sustainable and lowers our carbon footprint, instead of creating more landfills that fill our atmosphere with methane gas, which increases the likelihood of these fires.

Venezuela reiterates that no one, nothing, will detain the Bolivarian Revolution

The Maduro government is implementing a comprehensive plan and coherent strategy for economic recovery

Author: [Bertha Mojena Milián](#) | internet@granma.cu - november 21, 2018 15:11:23



Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro announces Gold Savings Plan. **Photo:** EFE

The Bolivarian government has moved forward implementing a comprehensive economic recovery plan since the beginning of the year, establishing a coherent strategy directed by a coordinating committee that includes the country's highest leadership, specialists, and researchers chosen by President Nicolás Maduro as his Economic Team.

The increase in domestic production; the reorganization of natural resources and their distribution – including some basic food items; the conducting of energy surveys; support to small and large businesses; as well as openings created for foreign investment, in alliance with important suppliers and investors in friendly countries, have allowed for recovery and stabilization despite the ferocious economic war to which the nation is subjected.

The launching of the Petro cryptocurrency, its recognition and use internationally, the control and management of the country's finances, and at the same time, sustained investment in social projects and defense of the gains made by the Bolivarian Revolution, continue to be critical and allow the government to assert that 2019 will be the year of the economic prosperity.

Nonetheless, the U.S. government recently announced a new package of sanctions to attack Venezuela, this time directed toward companies and citizens of both countries interested in investing or trading with the developing gold industry here – not surprising since this administration is bent on destroying the Bolivarian process, with economic war as its main weapon. The question remains: Why the gold industry? What does the U.S. really fear?

THE GOLD PLAN & ITS IMPLEMENTATION

All evidence indicates that Venezuela possesses the world's second largest gold reserves, with 32 certified fields, allowing the government to advance its Gold Plan that will allow for development of the Orinoco Mining Arc in 2019, and generate income on the order of five billion dollars.

Within the framework of this plan, the Sarrapia gold ore processing plant was recently inaugurated in the state of Bolívar, which, according to experts, will be able to process 90 kilograms of gold a month next year, as part of a plan for 54 such plants that will allow for better organization and development of the industry in Venezuela.

During a recent meeting of the Economic Team, President Maduro stated that this effort will contribute to gradually diversifying the economy, and is being implemented through “an eco-sustainable, eco-socialist plan to move forward in the Orinoco Mineral Arc, so that, with national and international capital, these goldfields are put to the service of *vivir viviendo* (better living conditions for the population).”

He announced that the entire world will be able to invest in Venezuelan gold, and that a third production line at the new plant is projected, which should generate 370 new jobs directly, and 580 indirectly.

In this regard, this past October 31, just hours before the new U.S. sanctions were announced, Maduro held a meeting which included economic experts, the country's deputy minister of Finances, Russian advisors, and invited guests from the Center for Development Research affiliated with the People's Republic of China's Council of State, to share ideas on how strategies to perfect the country's new productive model can be strengthened, and economic independence consolidated.

Shortly thereafter, Maduro noted that the U.S. sanctions are part of Washington's hostile policy directed toward the Venezuelan people, and affect everyone, including the private sector, saying, “If anyone is hurt by the sanctions it is businesspeople... They are pursued, their accounts closed, transactions and financial activity hampered.”

He insisted that the Venezuelan people and state defend themselves and will continue to do so, and that businesspeople may be pursued and threatened, but the determination to overcome these difficulties will not be stymied.

GOLD & NEW WORLD TRENDS

Much has been said recently about the use and sales of gold, especially the recent worldwide trend to employ it in transactions and to hold savings. According to experts, it appears that a new stage of global economic instability is developing, in which the U.S. economy and the dollar will be among the most affected.

Beyond speculation on the issue, it is known that for several weeks now, world banks have increased their reserves in gold at an unprecedented pace, some even preferring it to the dollar. Although this is a new development, information from the World Gold Council indicates that over the last three months, central banks have acquired more than 148 metric tons of the metal (worth 5.82 billion dollars) 22% more than in the same period last year.

Russia was the country buying the most, 92 tons, reaching total reserves of more than 2,036, with a market value of 78 billion dollars.

Among the most active buyers during these months were Turkey and China, countries whose relations with the U.S. have deteriorated, while their ties with Venezuela have been strengthened.

According to **Russia Today**, in mid-October, economist Ulf Lindahl, chief operating officer of A.G. Bisset Associates, a specialized company that conducts research of the currency market, said that the dollar is about to collapse, and that over the next five years could depreciate 40% with respect to the euro. When the fact is added to the picture that the U.S. stock market is at risk - as a result of the trade war the Trump administration has unleashed against Russia and China - the assertions made by analysts appear increasingly credible, and the reason Venezuela is being targeted with sanctions and distortions increasingly clear.

WHAT IS A CRYPTOCURRENCY?

These are virtual currencies that can be exchanged or used like traditional currency, but are beyond the control of financial institutions. There are many available that use cryptography techniques to protect their security. With each unit having a key that allows for its use, falsification is practically impossible.

THE PETRO, A VENEZUELAN CRYPTOCURRENCY

- The first sovereign cryptocurrency backed by the nation's natural resources.
- Sales began March 25 this year.
- It began to operate as a currency in commercial transactions related to the Bolivarian Republic's international activities on October 1, 2018.

WHAT IS ITS PRICE?

- Its price is based on the sales value of the country's resources, raw materials, and primary goods on the international market. In the case of Venezuela, this means energy resources.
 - Oil is the country's most important raw material and accounts for the greatest portion of exports. The remaining 50% includes gold (20%); iron (20%); and diamonds (10%).
- Given this combination, the value of the Petro should not vary significantly, thus assuring the country's economic stability
- As of October 31, the Petro was valued at 3,600 Bs.S (sovereign bolivars), equivalent to 418.09 yuan (People's Republic of China); 3,975.70 rubles (Russia); 52.78 euros; or 60 U.S. dollars.
 - President Nicolás Maduro called on Venezuelans to join the Petro savings Plan, a mechanism created to improve the economies of families and strengthen the nation's public accounts.

(Prensa Presidencial de Venezuela)

My Health Record - As the profits churn

Anna Pha

The My Health Record (MHR) web-site crashed and its telephone lines were in melt-down in the lead-up to the November 15 deadline for opting out of the system. As more and more information becomes available about MHR and its likely uses and security risks, the number of people seeking to opt out has increased.

Under immense public pressure, the government agreed to an extension of the opt-out deadline to January 31, 2019. The two-and-a-half month extension, which runs over the Christmas/holiday shutdown, was supported by a number of cross-benchers.

It falls far short of the 12-month extension recommended by the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee's report on the MHR and being called for by various medical, privacy, political and other organisations. It is far too short a time.

The Communist Party of Australia recommends opting-out as it is always possible to opt-in at a later date. Once in, it will be possible to opt-out, but the data in the system will not be destroyed.

According to Health Minister Greg Hunt, more than six million people already had a My Health Record and over 14,000 healthcare professional organisations were connected. These included general practices, hospitals, pharmacies, diagnostic imaging and pathology practices.

The privacy risks have been well debated. Serious breaches are inevitable.

The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner – which is the independent regulator of the privacy aspects of the system – in a recent submission to a Senate inquiry reported nearly 100 breaches. Asked how this fitted with Hunt's statement, his office said these were either Medicare breaches or breaches where human error was involved – they were not cyber attacks on the platform.

By October 19, more than one million Australians had opted out.

Cannot be trusted

Some of the amendments to the legislation on the MHR system are still before Parliament and Health Minister Greg Hunt has signalled that more are to come. It is an evolving system.

The scheme was launched under the Labor government in 2012 as the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record. Towards the end of 2015, a Coalition Health Minister quietly presented legislation to rebadge e-health as MyHealth and to change the system from opt-in to opt-out

We already have a punitive social security system which seeks to control how recipients spend their income with the basics card and penalties for substance use. There is the possibility of the government withholding payments from people whose medical records reveal substance abuse or other "undeserving" behaviour such as allegedly related to sexual activity. The promise was that it would only ever be an opt-in system. That means that anyone joining it, with the exception of minors, would be giving their permission, making a conscious decision and hopefully a well-informed one.

But there are no such things as guarantees when it comes to legislation. Laws can and are changed. Promises are made and broken. In the case of

MHR, Labor made the original commitment that it would always be an opt-in system, and the Australian Greens supported changing it to an opt-out system in 2015.

The scheme collects information on people's health in a national data base. The concept that such data could be accessed by health professionals is good in theory. In medical emergencies, for example, having access to details of medications or medical conditions could save lives.

But, in practice, access and use will be much wider, extending far beyond medical purposes. Serious doubts have also been raised about the accuracy and usefulness of MHRs with GPs not willing to spend the time updating them, MRI scans not being recorded, but rather an individual's report on them, and so on.

The government is also keeping quiet on such important questions of access by intelligence agencies, military, police and other non-health related outfits.

Private sector interests

The private health, travel and life insurance companies are lobbying hard for access. At present the government says they will not be given access. But for how long? It would be like

gold to them to be able to rate people's risk based on such personal data.

The person responsible for designing MHR also set up the British version which was almost identical to Australia's version. It had to be abandoned in 2016 when the on-selling of personal data to pharmaceutical and insurance companies became known publicly.

The Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA) is responsible for the delivery of digital healthcare systems and the national digital health strategy for Australia. It is a statutory authority in the form of a corporate Commonwealth entity, set up by the Coalition and commenced operations in July 2016.

Fairfax media have revealed that its chairman, Jim Birch, has been privately advising a global healthcare outsourcing company Serco, a fact not listed on his curriculum vitae on ADHA's website. Serco is a UK-based global corporation with numerous contracts for health and other services with government agencies. The Herald discovered this after obtaining internal documents through Freedom of Information that detail Birch's conflicts of interest. He has

since officially resigned from his advisory role to Serco.

Another director, Rob Bransby, has held a full-time role as managing director of the private health insurer HBF, since 2008. In all he spent 12 years at HBF. He is also the immediate past-President of the private health industry lobby group, Private Healthcare Australia.

Privatisation

There is also the real danger that the government will privatise the management of the centralised data system for recording medical information. Then there will be no control, no accountability or transparency as to how that data is used or on-sold. The government previously called for tenders for the privatisation of the management of the Medicare, Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and aged care payments systems. It was forced to pull back when this became public, but it has not abandoned its privatisation agenda.

MHR is not about improving health outcomes, but about new avenues of profit-churning for private operators.

<https://www.cpa.org.au/guardian/2018/1849/01-my.html>

We are Fidel!

November 25 marks the second anniversary of the death of Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz and celebrations of his life have begun, with a focus on reaffirming Cuba's commitment to continuing his legacy

Author: Granma | internet@granma.cu - november 23, 2018 10:11:48



Photo: Claudia García Martínez

November 25 marks the second anniversary of the death of Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz and celebrations of his life have begun, with a focus on reaffirming Cuba's commitment to continuing his legacy

Keynote address by Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, closing the Constituent Session of the National Assembly of People's Power 7th legislature. Havana, February 24, 2008, Year 50 of the Revolution:

Fidel is Fidel; we all know it very well. Fidel is irreplaceable and the people shall continue his work when he is no longer physically with us; his ideas will always be with us, the same ideas that have made it possible to build the beacon of dignity and justice our country represents.

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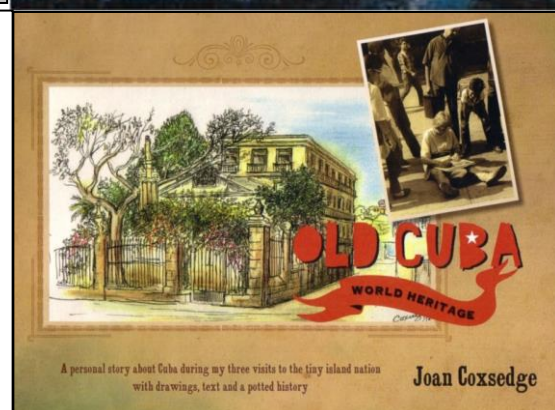
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