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Cuban workers caring for Nepal quake victims

By W. T. Whitney Jr.

A new chapter in the story of Cuba's outreach to the peoples of the world began on May 12, 2015 with the arrival in Katmandu, Nepal of 49 Cuban health care workers - 25 are physicians - to care for wounded and distraught victims of the earthquake that hit the region on April 25.

They are members of "Brigade 41" of the Henry Reeve Brigade which has long experience in providing emergency, follow-up, and rehabilitative care in situations of natural disaster or epidemics. This was the 41st time since its formation in 2005 that Brigade surgeons, medical doctors, nurses, and technicians have gone abroad to 24 different countries where these conditions were playing out.

A native of Brooklyn, New York, Henry Reeve, in 1869, joined rebels in Cuba fighting for independence from Spain. He was 27 years old and a brigadier general when died in battle in 1876.

Upon their arrival, the Cubans set up a fully-equipped emergency hospital in Katmandu's Kirtipur district next to a Nepalese medical center, where 50 recovery beds were made available for their patients. They assembled translators, met with Nepalese health officials, and coordinated efforts with World Health Organization representatives and other international teams.



Encouraged by Katmandu's Cuba solidarity organization, a contingent of the Brigade moved to the hard-hit Bhaktapur district where over the five initial hours the Cubans saw 512 patients, mostly for triage, minor injuries, and pre-existing illnesses.

A strong secondary earthquake on the day the Cubans arrived added to the flood of injured people needing care; many required surgery.

The Henry Reeve Brigade was hardly the only

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international group caring for earthquake victims in Nepal. Others teams include those of the Doctors without Borders organization, and several physician-nurse groups from U.S. and Canadian hospitals. Included in the U.S. aid package are the services of 120 U.S. Marines, four Osprey tilt-

Forty-nine Cuban health care workers went to Katmandu, Nepal to help quake victims.

rotor aircraft, and one helicopter.

Only the Cuban health workers, however, were there as the result of national planning, budgeting, and experience extending over decades.

And on May 22, the last of the 256 Henry Reeve Brigade physicians returned to Cuba from West Africa where for six months they had been treating Ebola patients. As the People's World reported recently, the Annual Conference of Norwegian Trade Unions on Feb. 4 nominated the Henry Reeve Brigade to receive the Noble Peace Prize for its work against the epidemic.

Canadian Professor John Kirk, an expert on Cuba's medical internationalism, supports the nomination. He cites Operation Miracle, the Cuban-Venezuelan program that has surgically restored sight to more than three million people, Cuba's medical care for thousands of children sickened by the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster, and the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) that in ten years has graduated over 20,000 physicians from 84 countries.

Kirk could have mentioned 124,000 Cuban health professionals who've worked in over 154

countries since 1960 and also 50,000 of them working in 67 countries now.

Argentinian ELAM graduate Emiliano Mariscal in 2011 reported on his work in Haiti as a medical student after the earthquake there. He discusses the future role ELAM graduates might play in international medical outreach and elaborates upon principles motivating such efforts.

He has in mind a "health organization whose members will be health professionals graduated in Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America who identify with principles of internationalism, solidarity, brotherhood, humanism, and love to the neighbor without distinction of creed, race, sexual orientation, or social condition - and thus improve the quality of life of the community with concrete results." For, as Fidel says, "the consciousness of being human creates objective conditions."



W. T. Whitney Jr. writes for Peoplesworld.

Cuba is off the "terror" list; now overturn Helms-Burton!

By Richard Grassl

The State Department's removal of Cuba from its "terrorism list" marks another huge step towards true normalization of diplomatic relations between our two nations.

The US move follows the recent America's Summit in Panama where the depth of the US isolation from the rest of the hemisphere came into sharp relief, and the Obama administration was forced to back away from its March assertion that Venezuela posed a threat to our nation's national security.

The US blockade of Cuba has been a tool of foreign policy since February 7, 1962 through Executive Order 3447 by JFK. Though economic warfare was designed with the intention to destroy the Cuban revolution, it failed to achieve the desired result.

A State Department directive placed Cuba on a spurious list of nations supporting terrorism, a convenient excuse for continued intervention in Latin America.

Throughout the decade of the 1990's, an intensive lobby campaign directed by rightwing politicians in alliance with the Bacardi Corporation succeeded in passage of Helms-Burton. This legislation usurped political power from the U.S. executive branch for the narrow self-interest of anti-Cuban extremists. Essentially, Helms-Burton is a remnant of the Cold war era.

Cuba earned its right to co-exist as a sovereign, independent nation when it defeated US imperialism at the Battle of Giron. Its ability to withstand the longest blockade during peacetime has captured the imagination of the entire international community.

US recognition of Cuban sovereignty on equal terms requires that the socialist character of the Cuban revolution not be a pre-existing condition endangering the success of talks. Therefore, the demand that the US Congress overturn Helms-Burton is an idea whose time has come. Any injury to one is an injury to all.

The US blockade of Cuba has been a tool of foreign policy since February 7, 1962.

Coalition says Rauner's compassion extends only to his rich buddies

By Amisha Patel

Community and labor groups that are part of the Grassroots Collaborative have been lobbying at the Illinois Capitol here against budget cuts proposed by the Republican governor, Bruce Rauner. The coalition includes unions like the Chicago Teachers Union and SEIU and organizations like the Action Now Institute, American Friends Services Committee, Enlace Chicago, and the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless.

Amisha Patel issued the following statement for the Grassroots Collaborative.

"To say Illinois legislators are not for the middle class, but for the political class is disingenuous on the part of Gov. Bruce Rauner. Especially, when he could look in the mirror and say the same thing about himself.

"From the beginning, Rauner told taxpayers his goal was to 'shakeup Illinois.'" What the self-described 'compassionate conservative' didn't tell us is that his compassion wouldn't extend any further than his rich buddies and billionaire donors. Once again, low-income and working class families find their worlds about to be turned upside down due to budget cuts that take financial support, resources and programs from them rather than requiring those who can afford it to pay their fair share.

"Grassroots Collaborative, along with a coalition



of workers, retirees and social service agencies, spent last week in Springfield. Our Revenue Truth Squad demonstrated how cuts would hurt working families. We advocated on the need to support progressive revenue solutions to balance the state's budget, we held workshops and news conferences and prodded the governor to do the right thing by all taxpayers throughout the state, whether they live in Cairo, Peoria, or Chicago.

"Fortunately Rep. Chris Welch (D-7th) gained support for his resolution, HR0531, urging the General Assembly not to make cuts from services without equally proportionate cuts to big bank fees for financial services. Grassroots Collaborative supported this resolution. It passed unanimously.

"We can avoid cuts in all areas of the budget if the governor would sit down and talk revenue. We must have new revenue to have a budget that makes Illinois families and communities strong," said Welch.

Bold leadership is required for making the wealthy pay their fair share, closing corporate loopholes, and ending bad bank deals immediately. The people of Illinois deserve a fair shake. That can only happen when all classes-low-income, middle-income and the wealthy work together to make sure no one is left out by those elected to represent us.

It is this kind of bold, creative leadership that Illinois taxpayers want from their elected representatives in Springfield.

A second look at FDR's "Second Bill of Rights"

By Norman Markowitz

In 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, preparing to run for a fourth term, proposed a "Second Bill of Rights" for post World War II U.S., one that would update and complement the first Bill of Rights which accompanied the U.S. Constitution. The press called it an "Economic Bill of Rights."

Below from Roosevelt's address are the major points

- The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the Nation;
- The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation;
- The right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living;
- The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad;
- The right of every family to a decent home;
- The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health;
- The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment;
- The right to a good education.

Those rights remain a decent standard to judge both social progress and the quality of life for the masses of people.

That is what capital fears most and that is what we must represent in both theory and practice.

Trabaja para cerrar prisión de Guantánamo

Prensa Latina

Base naval de Guantánamo. Las torturas a los prisioneros en la ilegal base naval de Guantánamo han sido motivo de múltiples cuestionamientos internos y externos a la administración de Obama.

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El secretario de Defensa estadounidense, Ashton Carter, aseguró que trabaja hoy junto a la Casa Blanca en una propuesta dirigida al Congreso, referida al cierre de la prisión en la base naval de Guantánamo, en el sur-este de Cuba.

Carter informó sobre el plan a los periodistas que le acompañaban el viernes en el avión de regreso a Washington después de su gira por Singapur, India y Alemania, detalló la televisora Fox News.

Estoy trabajando con la Casa Blanca para preparar un proyecto que después entregaremos al Capitolio para discutirlo con los legisladores, indicó Carter, según una transcripción de sus palabras proporcionada por el Pentágono.

A su juicio, resulta una buena oportunidad para encontrar un camino que permita solucionar esos problemas de conjunto con el órgano legislativo.

La Cámara de Representantes rechazó el 3 de junio una propuesta para eliminar las actuales provisiones legales que impiden al Departamento de Defensa transferir detenidos en esa prisión hacia territorio norteamericano.

Por su parte, el Senado analizará en los próximos días una legislación similar, cuyo lenguaje permite al presidente Barack Obama cerrar la prisión -inaugurada en enero de 2002- y trasladar a los detenidos a este país, solo si el mandatario presenta un plan y este es aprobado por el Capitolio.

Aunque la propuesta de ley daría a los congresistas la autoridad final, algunos republicanos se oponen con fuerza a cualquier medida que implique el cierre del reclusorio, ubicado en dicha instalación naval, que Washington mantiene en territorio cubano contra la voluntad del pueblo y gobierno de la isla.

En los pasados 18 meses se han trasladado cerca de 40 prisioneros fuera de la instalación, donde ahora quedan 122 -el nivel más bajo desde su apertura en enero de 2002- y de ellos 57 están autorizados para ser transferidos a otros países, después de pasar por un proceso de revisión entre varias agencias federales.

Obama aceleró en 2014 los traslados antes de que el Congreso -dominado por los republicanos tras las elecciones de medio término de noviembre de ese año- pudiera impedirlo, pero el proceso se detuvo a principios de 2015 y según el sitio digital estadounidense Defense One, pudiera reiniciarse a finales de junio.

Tras su toma de posesión en enero de 2009, el gobernante prometió cerrar el centro de internamiento, pero la oposición republicana y otros grupos conservadores, han bloqueado todos los esfuerzos del mandatario en ese sentido.

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