NEWSLETTER
Amistad

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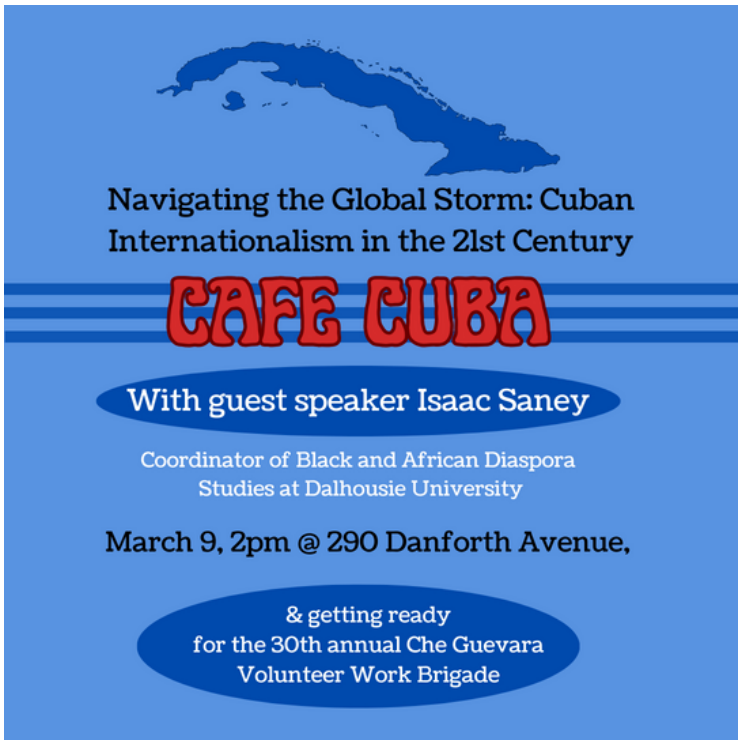
Coming soon...

30th Annual Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade, April 20 - May 5, 2024

"The Che Brigade was one of the most eye opening experiences of my life. There is a marked difference in theoretically talking about socialism and seeing an actual socialist project with your own eyes. Everywhere I looked I saw a society that truly put people before profits, and gave dignity to the downtrodden. I visited mutliple schools that made me wish my own family had the opportunities Cuban children have. From Viñales to Veradero I saw smiling faces, happy and resilient people who are proud of what they have achieved, despite the murderous blockade. Kilometers away from the belly of the beast, heroic Cuba is a shining beacon of what could be for the toiling masses. Cuba is not perfect, but after what I saw on the Brigade I will defend their revolution from afar for the rest of my life. Hasta la Victoria Siempre."

– Former Brigadista Jared Norris

***To apply for the Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade CCFA scholarship, see page 3**



Rally for Cuba Against the US Blockade

Protest in front of the U.S. Consulate

360 University Ave, Toronto; 1 - 2pm

Signs & flags encouraged

March 24 & April 28

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Cuba: Denounces US Complicity in Israeli Attacks on Gaza

February 16 2024

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel denounced today that Israel, with the complicity of the United States, is responsible for the extermination of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

In the social network X, the president said that he agrees with the thinking of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, who said that a new and repugnant form of fascism is emerging with remarkable force at this moment in history.

We see it every day in Palestine, the president stressed in his message, while calling for an end to the aggression.

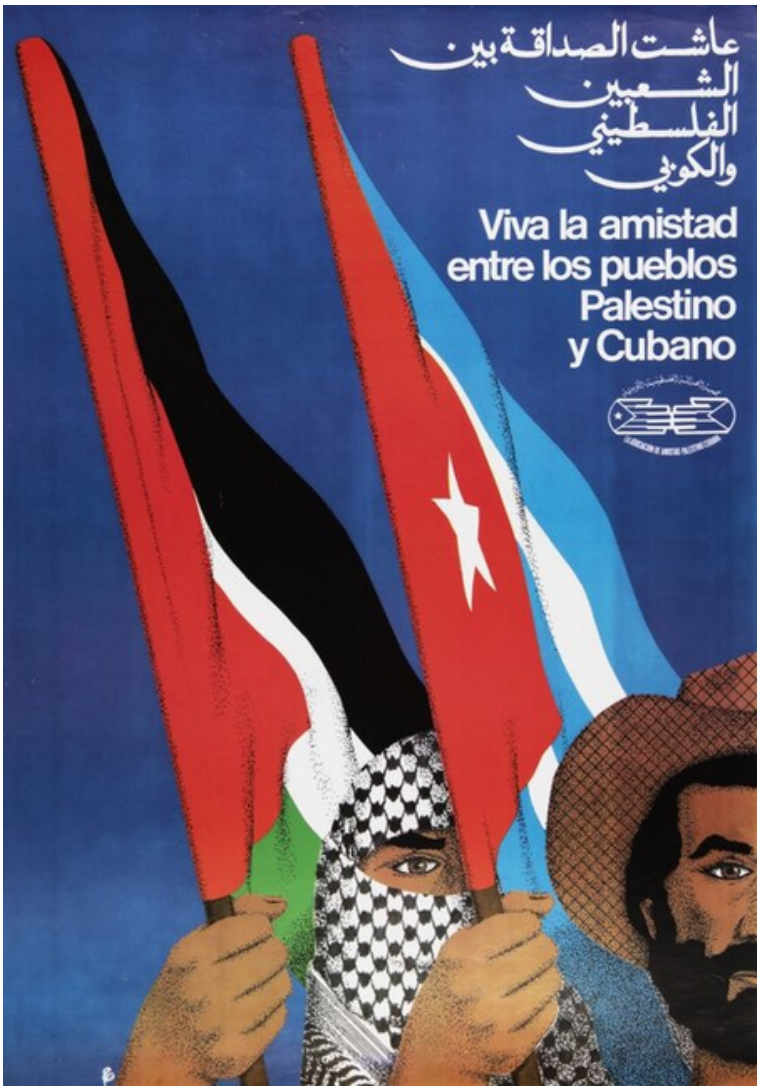
Cuba will soon present its arguments before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Israel's practices and activities against the rights of the Palestinian people and other Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories.

A statement issued by Deputy Foreign Minister Anayansi Rodriguez said that as part of the process requested by the United Nations General Assembly on December 30, 2022, the island asked for a pronouncement on the legal consequences derived from Israel's practices and policies against the Palestinian people.

Cuba legally reaffirms that both Israel and its accomplices should be declared responsible for the genocide that the Palestinian people have lived through for decades.

The Palestinian Health Ministry figures show that the number of victims of the current Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip has amounted to more than 28,700 dead and 68,500 wounded.

Source:
Network in Defense of Humanity



Courtesy of the Digital Archive of the Palestinian Museum



Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel hears testimony from Palestinian students studying in Cuba

PL: The Cuban Revolution is our greatest work of love, says President Diaz-Canel



Irais Maria García Portelles

On Valentine's Day, or the Day of Love and Friendship, as it's known in Cuba, Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel stressed that the Revolution is the island's greatest work of love.

On the social network X, the president stressed that love is the engine that drives Cuban revolutionaries. "#CubaEsAmor, and from here we also extend it to our beloved Palestine," he wrote on the platform.

The president of the National Assembly of People's Power (parliament), Esteban Lazo, sent congratulations to the Caribbean nation and recalled Jose Marti's premise that ¨the only force and the only truth that exists in this life is love. Patriotism is nothing but love, friendship is nothing but love."

The President of the Council of State also congratulated the children's company La Colmenita, which is celebrating its 34th anniversary. According to popular chronicles, the date of February 14 was chosen as Love and Friendship Day almost all over the world because it marks the anniversary of the death of St. Valentine, a priest related to romantic love, who performed clandestine marriages when it was outlawed in the Middle Ages.

When he was a bishop, Valentine disrespected the orders of the emperor who banned marriages during wartime so that his soldiers could fight better, and he continued to secretly unite passionate young couples. For this, he was arrested and sentenced to death.

30th Annual Che Guevara Volunteer Work Brigade Scholarship Application

Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association
Toronto Scholarship for Che Brigade

The CCFA Toronto offers a partial scholarship of $500 a successful applicant residing in the Toronto area to help offset the costs of joining the 30th Brigade to Cuba.

The Che Brigade is a project of the Canadian Network on Cuba. Please check out for details and requirements for participants, email CheVolBrigade@gmail.com. To be eligible applications must be received by March 31, 2024.

Special consideration will be given to CCFA members, but all potential Brigadistas in the Greater Toronto Area are welcome to apply. Financial need of applicants will be considered.

Applicants must be willing to use their experience to help build the Cuban solidarity movement upon their return to Canada.

Submit your application to: ccfatoronto@sympatico.ca, Or mail to CCFA Toronto, PO Box 99051, 1245 Dupont St. Toronto, On. M6H 4H7

Application Form

Full Name.....

Address.....

Telephone(s).....

Email.....

Age.....

Profession.....

Have you been to Cuba before?.....

Are you a member of the CCFA Toronto? Yes..... No.....

What labour, solidarity or social justice groups are you involved in?.....

Please confirm that you have a valid passport.....
Submit a short essay (200 word maximum) indicating why the Brigade is important, what particular interests you have in visiting and learning more about the Cuban experience, and a commitment to help build the Cuban solidarity movement upon your return to Canada.

African American writer Alice Walker receives recognition in Cuba

Beatriz Montes de Oca
Havana, January 31 (RHC)

The renowned African American writer Alice Walker today received the Haydée Santamaría medal by presidential decree, in an event held at Casa de las Américas in Havana.

Alice Walker attended the event accompanied by some family members and as part of a delegation of 70 American writers and culture promoters belonging to the group "Busboys and Poets" which brings together writers, activists, dreamers, and thinkers who support solidarity with Cuba.

Several personalities from Cuban culture participated in the award ceremony, including the president of Casa de las Américas Abel Prieto; poet and literature award-winner Nancy Morejón; Minister of Culture Alpidio Alonso; as well as researchers and directors of various cultural and research programs such as Zuleica Romay, Luisa Campuzano, Jaime Gómez and Víctor Fowler.

The Haydeé Santamaría medal is awarded to citizens and groups of Cuba and other countries who, with a useful life and high-quality intellectual work over the years, have contributed to the objectives to which Casa de las Américas aspires, the enrichment of the genuine culture of our America and its integration through cultural means.

Walker received the decoration from the Cuban Culture Minister Alpidio Alonso, in recognition of her support and deepening of her country's relations with Cuba based on brotherhood and solidarity, as her work has been known to address racial and gender inequality issues, and also of her consistent and unrelenting demand to lift the cruel and unjust economic, commercial, and financial blockade imposed by the U.S. Government on Cuba.

Walker expressed her gratitude for the decoration, the works of art presented to her, and the welcoming she once again received from the Cuban people and government during her visit to Cuba.

She praised Cuba's firmness ahead of adversities and the impact of the hostile U.S. blockade, and also recalled Haydeé Santamaría's influence on Cuban history and culture, as well as the revolutionary legacy of her brother Abel Santamaría, one of the historic assailants of the Moncada Barracks.

Alice Walker has a vast literary work, in which she has addressed the issues of racial and gender inequality, among which her novel The Color Purple stands out.



Alice Walker recieving the Haydée Santamaría medal

For Halifax's failing healthcare, Cuban doctors may be the answer



John Kirk & Stephen Kimber

Premier Tim Houston was elected on one major commitment: to improve Nova Scotia's disastrous healthcare situation. So far, he has failed badly.

More than 140,000 Nova Scotians seeking a family doctor can't find one. That's more than 5.5 times the number on the province's Need a Family Practice registry when it launched in 2017. We also recently learned we are 1,100 nurses short in the province.

Several recent high-profile deaths in provincial emergency rooms have only highlighted another grim statistic: one in every 666 Nova Scotians seeking care in an emergency department will end up dying there — a number that has been steadily increasing over the past six years.

The Houston government's solutions have tended to be either scattershot — providing pop-up clinics in underserved areas — or not likely to provide desperately needed relief in the short term, like its commitment to create a new medical school in Cape Breton.

We need bold, innovative actions to ease this crisis to provide time for longer-term solutions to be developed and implemented. So what about bringing in medical personnel from Cuba?

On a per capita basis, Cuba has three times the number of doctors we have in Canada. Cuban medics are extremely experienced working abroad — some 26,000 are working in 60 countries.

Almost 500 provide care at the Cuban Hospital in Qatar, 600 are working in Mexico (with a further 600 contracted) and a similar number are in Italy. In March, a hospital in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland invited Cuban doctors to come work due to a shortage of medical staff.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Cuba sent 4,000 medical personnel to work in 42 nations, including almost 500 in eight Caribbean countries. The Jamaican government interviewed — in English — hundreds of Cuban medical personnel, offering contracts to 212 nurses, 108 doctors (mainly in primary care) and 24 technicians.

"We have had a long tradition of recruiting, particularly from Cuba," said Jamaican Health Minister Dr. Chris Tufton, noting that Cuban healthcare professionals have run an ophthalmology program in Jamaica since 2010, treating over 35,000 patients. There are some 300 Cuban doctors and nurses in Jamaica. "The Cubans have proven to be an important and invaluable part of the network of professionals."

Why not consider hiring some of these well-trained medics for underserved areas of Nova Scotia?

Dr. Noni MacDonald, former dean of medicine at Dalhousie University, visited Cuban hospitals and clinics several years ago, and attests to the quality of training medical professionals receive. "Cuba's healthcare system is impressive, with one of the highest average life expectancies in the world," she noted.

"Long wait times are almost unheard of; same-day referrals to specialists and health personnel are the norm." Cuba, she adds, "provides better care than the U.S. for about one-tenth of the cost."

There is no doubt that the COVID crisis, combined with punishing policies of the Trump administration, took its toll on the Cuban medical system. That said, the medical training provided in Cuba remains excellent. Cuba has the largest medical school in the world, the Latin American School of Medicine, which has trained 30,000 doctors from all over the world — especially the developing world — since its founding in 1998.

Some 200 of these graduates are Americans, with another 42 currently studying in Cuba. After passing qualifying exams in the U.S., they have gone on to work in American hospitals and clinics.

No doubt the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia, which has a reputation as an old boys' network, will raise concerns about the quality of medicine those Cuban-trained doctors might provide to the public. But the evidence around the world seems clear: while trained with a different emphasis on preventive medicine and focus on the grassroots community, Cuban healthcare professionals are as well trained — and well regarded — as any in the world.

We are facing a medical crisis in Nova Scotia. We need to think outside the box, to be proactive, and to seek pragmatic solutions. Waiting for the traditional approach to produce sufficient medical personnel has proved a disaster, and worse is to come with the impending retirement of scores of doctors. We need to improve the health and lives of Nova Scotians now.

Medical and government bureaucrats will also hesitate at the optics of seeking help from a developing socialist nation. Perhaps they should ask residents of Glace Bay or Yarmouth County whether they'd prefer well-trained professionals serving their health-care needs in their own communities today, or wait for a new medical school to open and for doctors eventually to be trained there.

John Kirk is a retired Dalhousie University professor whose work for the past decade has been on Cuban health-care issues. Stephen Kimber is a journalism professor with an interest in Cuba

http://canadacubafriendshiptoronto.ca/

January 2024 CCFA Rally

On January 28, our signs carried the message of Cuban solidarity in front of the U.S. Consulate on University Avenue in Toronto with the U.S. Flag waving in the background. For more than two years, several organizations have gathered on the last Sunday of each month to oppose the immoral U.S. blockade of Cuba.

This blockade for over 60 years has made life very difficult for the Cuban people and has no justification or moral basis. Check the CCFA website for details of future rallies.

*QR code above



Members of CCFA and supporters of Cuba at the January 28 rally in front of the U.S. consulate

Joint Initiative between the UAE, Brazil and Cuba to Enhance Food Security - MINREX

The UAE, Brazil, and Cuba have agreed to launch an initiative to improve collaboration for food security, during the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28), which took place at Expo City Dubai, (Nov. 30 to Dec. 13 2023.)

The tripartite cooperation initiative aims to deliver $50 million USD worth of food aid, which will be shipped from Brazil. The initiative is part of joint efforts aimed at developing resilient food systems, sustainable agriculture, and encouraging climate action.

Through the initiative, the UAE will provide financial support to enhance the resilience and adaptability of food systems, and increase investments in projects specializing in the production, distribution, and support of nutritional, healthy, and sustainable food systems, in addition to strengthening food security in collaboration with Brazil and Cuba.

Her Excellency Reem Bint Ebrahim Al Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation, said: "This initiative will contribute to safeguarding the environment and limiting climate change's repercussions that affect food producers. It also affirms the mutual commitment in addressing the critical global challenges and supporting sustainable solutions in the realm of food security."

HE Al Hashimy added: "This initiative embodies the UAE's commitments to confront global challenges, especially those related to climate change and food security, and emphasizes the country's commitment to sustainability and renewable energy, in recognition of the importance of collective action on climate change and sustainability at bilateral and multilateral levels."

The Director of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency, Ambassador Ruy Pereira, stated that "thanks to this concerted operation, Brazil, the United Arab Emirates, and Cuba make public their strong willingness to collaborate to support the food and nutritional security of the Cuban population."

Notably, the COP28 UAE Declaration on Food Systems, Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Action was approved by 150 countries. The conference succeeded in raising and stimulating more than $85 billion USD of funding and launched 11 pledges and declarations that received historic international support.

Cuba re-elected to the UN Special Committee on Decolonization

Cuba was re-elected today as vice-chair of the Bureau of the UN Special Committee on Decolonization, which confirms the renewed confidence placed in it, according to the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gerardo Peñalver.

In his speech during the meeting for the formation of that body, the also permanent representative of the Caribbean nation to the United Nations ratified his country's commitment to that responsibility.

"Like the Cuban ambassadors and representatives who preceded us, we will work with great commitment, with great determination to make every effort to carry out the mission assigned to us by the General Assembly in the area of decolonization," he said.

Peñalver recalled that more than 60 years after the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, there are still territories subject to this type of domination.

In this regard, he ratified Cuba's claim for the right of the people of Puerto Rico to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

It also confirmed Cuba's decision to continue working to advance decolonization and to banish from international relations the scourge of colonialism and the practices of colonialism that still persist.

The Special Committee on Decolonization was created in 1961 by the UN General Assembly to deal with issues related to this process.

It also examines the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

The body has 29 members and its Bureau is composed of the Chairman (Saint Lucia), the Vice-Chairmen (Cuba, Sierra Leone and Indonesia) and the Rapporteur (Syria).

CCFA Toronto Statement

The Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto is active in promoting friendship, respect, and co-operation between Canadian and Cuban peoples. We work with other Canadian groups and international organizations. Our activities are directed to:

- provide info/events to do with Cuba to the public and media--such as culture, health, education, sports, Canada-Cuba relations
- end the illegal U.S. blockade of Cuba and defending Cuban and Canadian sovereignty from U.S. interference
- Counteracting the deliberate misinformation about Cuba spread by the U.S.

About Amistad

Amistad is the newsletter of the CCFA Toronto, posted six times a year with volunteer labour. The Editorial Committee reserves the right to edit submitted material. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Editorial Committee. Amistad is printed by union employees.

We encourage everyone interested to submit media articles, editorial ideas, and letters or to join the Editorial Committee in person or online. Deadlines are the 10th of even months.

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@CCFA4TO



Time to Renew? If you think it's time to renew your membership, but you are not sure if it has expired, check your mailing label. The month/year when your membership expires is on the label. Help keep the CCFA going by keeping your due up to date.

CCFA Toronto Application & Renewal Form

Membership includes a subscription to the bi-monthly Amistad Newsletter (6 issues annually).

☐ New member ☐ Non member

☐ I only want the Amistad newsletter

Annual Fees

You can pay by cheque, cash, or e-transfer.

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☐ $30 Couple/Family ☐ $30 Foreign address

☐ Optional: Instead of mailing a black/white copy, send me the colour version by email

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The United States' unilateral designation of States as Sponsors of Terrorism negatively impacts human rights, warn UN experts

UN experts, including special rapporteurs on the right to food and the native impact of the unilateral coercive measures, today urged the United States to review its domestic framework that triggers specific sanctions against States designated as Sponsors of Terrorism (SST).

Currently four countries – the Republic of Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Syrian Arab Republic – are named on this U.S. Department of State list, with additional restrictions imposed on them because of the designation.

"The unilateral designation itself goes against the fundamental principles of international law, including the principle of sovereign equality of states, the prohibition to intervene into domestic affairs of states, and the principle of peaceful settlement of international disputes," the experts said. They recalled that these principles constitute universally recognized peremptory norms of international law.

"Fundamental human rights, including the right to food, right to health, right to education, economic and social rights, right to life and right to development, are negatively affected by the additional restrictions and prohibitions triggered by SST designations," the experts said.

"Furthermore, the process through which the designation is made is unclear and non-transparent. Relevant U.S. legislative acts exacerbate fear and uncertainty, establish or reinforce over-compliance among humanitarian and other actors who may wish to engage with or operate in the territory of the designated country," they said. "The designation particularly affects countries already subject to other unilateral coercive measures and has potential catastrophic humanitarian and human rights impacts."

The experts have previously raised concerns on the negative impact of over-compliance with the U.S. Government. Additional restrictions and unilateral sanctions from the SST designations create a chilling effect, blocking access to designated countries. "This all-encompassing isolation of the State designated as a sponsor of terrorism may negatively affect the delivery of essential goods, including food, medicine, medical equipment and other supplies, including humanitarian goods under UN Security Council humanitarian resolutions," the experts warned.

"We urge the United States to comply fully with its international obligations, also extraterritorially," the experts said.

They called on the U.S. government to review fully the current SST designations framework, leaving it within the authority of the UN Security Council as set forth in the United Nations Charter. Pending their rescission, the U.S. must take action to prevent negative humanitarian impacts, the experts said.



Cuban Biotechnology, Pride of a Caribbean Island

16 February 2024

Five years ago, when the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged the world, the country was in a leading position in the development of five candidate vaccines to combat the disease. Cuba, a small Caribbean island, holds one of the world's greatest achievements in the field of biotechnology, and developed countries have signed collaboration agreements with the island's research centres.

It all began in the 1980s at the initiative of Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro. Initial steps were the creation of important biomedical research institutions, included in a coordinating council called Frente Biológico, created in 1981. Among its first tasks was to obtain interferon, a group of proteins with antiviral properties.

In 1986, the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB) was founded. At that time, developed countries were beginning to develop some projects in the field of biotechnology while Cuba was laying the foundations for large-scale industrial development in this field.

Strategies were devised and thus, at the beginning of the island's economic crisis in the early '90s (or the Special Period), the Finlay Vaccine Institute was founded in 1991. The need to modernize and increase the production of vaccines in the country led to the creation of this centre, thus becoming the scientific organization responsible for their research, development, production, and commercialization.

An important part of the success of Cuban biotechnology today is because of the model the country chose for its industry, different than that of developed countries.

Companies in this sector in developed countries have the resources to innovate. They achieve great results, which they then promote on the world market, resulting in competition between companies, each striving to obtain a product with the greatest impact. This phenomenon can often end up violating ethical standards in their quest to be better.

Cuban companies do not suffer from this inconvenience, which allows them to maintain a constant exchange, always up to date with the main advances in their respective fields. According to some researchers, "policy was generated for the development of science, technology, and environmental protection, steeped in ethical values, with a humanistic sense and teamwork, inter-institutional collaboration, international solidarity and promotion of the various fields of scientific research, including basic sciences, technical and nuclear sciences, and the field of social sciences and humanities."

In this way, Cuba was in a leading position to create five candidate vaccines to combat the COVID-19 pandemic that ravaged the world four years ago. Eventually, three were produced on a large scale: Abdala, Soberana 01 and Soberana 02.

After meeting the needs of the national population, the Cuban government decided to export the vaccines and patents so that other countries could manufacture them on a large scale, since their efficacy was proven. Iran is one of the countries that manufactures the vaccine, which they've named Pasteur, under Cuban license from Soberana 02.

At present, there is a whole network of companies on the island working on the development of vaccines and treatments against diseases that are a worldwide scourge, such as AIDS. All of them are grouped under the BiocubaFarma corporation, certainly the best of the country's industries, Cuba's prestige in the world.

*see back of newsletter for a QR code

CCFA Toronto Facebook

Check us out on Facebook to stay up to date on Cuban news and life, and our events here at CCFA! Join over 2000 members at **Canadian-Cuban Solidarity Association (CCFA) Toronto**