

# NEWSLETTER Amistad



## Canadians' Campaign for the "Cuba Medical Brigade for Haiti"

The 'Cuba for Haiti' is a special account, ensuring that 100% of the donations received are sent promptly for medical support and aid to Haiti. [A lot of the money pledged by governments, including Canada, is still NOT in Haiti.] All those working for this campaign are volunteers.

Donations of \$232,956.98 have already been sent to Haiti via the Cuban Medical Brigade and we certainly are getting good value for the money donated to date.

You may donate and receive a charitable tax receipt

by mailing a cheque payable to:

### Mackenzie-Papineau Memorial Fund

Att: Sharon Skup 56 Riverwood Terrace Bolton ON L7E 1S4

Tel: 905.951.8499

email: [sharon@ccfatoronto.ca](mailto:sharon@ccfatoronto.ca) or [macpapbattalion@sympatico.ca](mailto:macpapbattalion@sympatico.ca)

Please write "Cuba for Haiti" on the memo line of the cheque.

If you wish to pay by credit card on-line, go to [www.CanadaHelps.org](http://www.CanadaHelps.org)

Then go to the Mackenzie-Papineau Memorial Fund page and follow instructions. Also write 'Cuba for Haiti' in the message instructions box.

**But please be aware** that Canada Helps **will deduct almost 4%** for administrative fees (although the charitable receipt to you from Canada Helps will be the full amount.) The balance is sent to the Mac-Paps.



## Hemingway On Stage: IN DEADLY ERNEST

(The Final Episode)

Written & Performed by Brian Gordon Sinclair  
A Special Preview Performance in advance of the  
World Premiere at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Colloquium Ernest Hemingway  
in Havana

*Proceeds to be donated to 'Cuba for Haiti'*

**Thursday, 2 June, 2011 at 7:30 pm**

**Great Entertainment and with a good sense of humor!**

**- even if you do not like Hemingway!**

**Tickets: \$10 in advance (\$15 at door)**

**Winchevsky Centre 585 Cranbrooke Ave**

(2 blks north of Lawrence, just east of Bathurst)

**For info/tickets: Liz 416.654.7105 or Sharon 905.951.8499**

In recognition of the

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of

**Playa Giron (Bay of Pigs)**

## Special Historical Program

& listen to or dance to Cuban Band:

**Los Clave Kings**

**Tuesday, 19 April, 2011 at 7:30pm**

**Admission: \$10**

### Lula Lounge

1585 Dundas Street West

(West of Dufferin, At Brock Avenue)

For Dinner reservations: 416.588.0307

With **Keith Bolender**, award winning journalist, former community newspaper editor, and freelance Toronto Star reporter. Keith is the author of numerous articles on American foreign policy and the recently published *Voices from the Other Side, An Oral History of Terrorism against Cuba*. Keith will give a **presentation with slide show** of the history of terrorism against Cuba, including the U.S. attack on at the Bay of Pigs and how it has affected Cuban society.

**For info: [www.ccfatoronto.ca](http://www.ccfatoronto.ca)**

**[info@ccfatoronto.ca](mailto:info@ccfatoronto.ca)**

**Sharon 905.951.8499**

## Mark Your Calendar!

### CCFA Toronto's AGM

Join us on Thursday,

**26 May, 2011 at 7:30pm**

**Free admission, Refreshments**

Program will be announced in the May/June issue of Amistad.

Location: AUUC Hall 1604 Bloor St W.  
(west of Dundas West subway station)

**CCFA Toronto has a New 'snail' Mail Address!**

*See bottom of page 8.*

## Cuban Coffee: A Win-Win

By John Richmond

Visitors to Cuba know that Cuba has some of the best-tasting, highest quality coffee in the world.

Although rarely mentioned in the global coffee business, Cuba produces several brands of coffee, including Cubita, Café Turquino, and Serrano.

In Cuba, where small cups of strong espresso coffee are an important part of the culture, coffee is grown in agricultural co-operatives using some of the most sustainable and environmentally friendly methods in the world.

“Cuban coffee is a rare find in Canada,” says Kirsten Daub, of Café Etico in Vancouver, “It has unique flavour characteristics that make those who love it dedicated and loyal customers. The slightly sweet, smoky notes and dark roast create a deep earthy flavour.”

CCFA Toronto and Karma Food Co-operative (Toronto) are pleased to be bringing Café Etico’s Cuban coffee to Toronto. The coffee is sold at Karma and by CCFA Toronto at events.

Café Etico was established by CoDevelopment Canada in 1996 and works with grassroots organizations in Latin America to provide a fair market for coffee cooperatives and net benefits to coffee growing communities.

“We purchase Cuban coffee for many reasons,” says Daub, “we buy our beans from CubaExport – the government agency that controls all exports in Cuba. CubaExport sets the price for the beans, which is always well above the world price and the price set by Transfair Canada – the group which certifies fair trade coffee in Canada. The proceeds benefit the farmers but also a program called “Plan Turquino” – a Cuban government program that invests in improved living conditions for rural Cubans. This is the kind of policy we have been promoting in other coffee growing countries like Guatemala.”

But Café Etico sells Cuban coffee for another reason as well: “We buy Cuban coffee because we support Cuba. As you know, Cuba lost many of its export markets after the Revolution because of the US embargo [blockade]. Coffee is an important source of income for Cuba and as I mentioned, the proceeds go to improve the standard of living in Cuba.”

CCFA Toronto and other solidarity groups around the world work for an end to the US blockade but you can help break the blockade yourself every day with a cup of fresh, delicious Cuban coffee from Café Etico. It’s a win-win!

Café Etico: [www.etico.ca](http://www.etico.ca)

Karma Co-operative, Toronto: [www.karmacoop.org](http://www.karmacoop.org)

## José Martí Dinner a Resounding Success!

By Elizabeth Hill

On a cold January 29<sup>th</sup> night, participants at the Annual José Martí Dinner and Dance enjoyed a delicious hot dinner, a night of live, hot music and warm friendship.

The birthday of Cuba’s national hero was celebrated with a power point demonstration of quotes from Martí’s prolific writing. **Master of Ceremonies, David Warner** welcomed everyone and introduced the speakers and prominent guests who included Yuleyvis Valdes Alvarez from ICAIC, the Cuban Film Institute.

**Cuban Consul General, Jorge Soberón** outlined some of Martí’s ideas and their importance to the Cuban people. **Professor Julio Fonseca** brought warm greetings on behalf of the Juan Gualberto Gómez group of Cubans living in Canada (GTA area). **Elizabeth Hill**, President of CCFA Toronto, thanked the guests and volunteers for their efforts to make the event such a memorable success.

Special surprise guests – both Juno award winners - **Jane Bunnett, well-known Canadian saxophonist and flautist,** and **Cuban-born pianist, Hilario Duran** wowed the audience with presentations from their upcoming compact disc

The evening continued with Salsa dancing to the high energy live band **Los Clave Kings**.



Doug Oyler, CCFA Toronto and musicians Jane Bunnett and Hilario Duran



Listening to musicians Bunnett and Duran

## Annual Book Fair in Havana

**Was Packed** by Elizabeth Hill, CCFA Toronto

The historic fortress of San Carlos de la Cabaña hosted 158 exhibitors, 106 international publishers from 27 countries and 52 Cuban publishing houses. The event attracted a huge crowd.

Taking a last minute package to Cuba with my friend Sara, I was fortunate to be there for the opening of the annual Book Fair in Havana on February 11<sup>th</sup>. I love browsing for books at the annual Toronto Word on the Street, as well as in garage sales, second hand stores and even small local stores.

But here was a major book fair, celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, taking place at the historic San Carlos de la Cabaña Fortress, at the harbour of old Havana. The site itself is beautiful, with several food kiosks near the entrance to provide sustenance for the body, while the eyes searched for sustenance for the soul.

Sara's Cuban friend, Thomas, came along and helped us find our way around and carried our bags. Although we are not fluent in Spanish, we could make out most of the titles, organized in neat piles by subject and author. We found a large section of children's books for all ages with stacks of beautifully illustrated picture books of stories by José Martí. The prices of the books were very affordable - such as just 8 Cuban pesos for the Martí picture books. We found books of Canadian children's author Deborah Ellis translated into Spanish. There was a large section of books by and about Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén with reissues of many of his works.

We found a kiosk of the Group of Solidarity from Germany displaying pictures, posters and magazines of their work. Fortunately I had with me a copy of our CCFA newsletter Amistad to give to them. They were happy to meet with another solidarity group and eagerly read our Amistad. They were selling "Cuba Si" cotton shopping bags which came in handy to carry our books.

Outside in the grounds, a large stage was being prepared for the great evening events. But we were tired of walking and did not stay.

I found out afterwards how extensive the book fair is, with several smaller venues across Havana. Over 4.5 million books were available, and 200 special guests presented at forums and lectures. The Book Fair also honoured countries which comprise the Bolivarian Alliance of the Peoples of Our America (ALBA).



## Annual Reel Cuban Film Festival A Huge Success

by Paula Larrondo

"I never knew Cuba had such great films!" exclaimed an audience member as he was leaving the Annual Cuban Film Festival (Feb. 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>) at the Royal Theatre in downtown Toronto. Seven feature films and documentaries were shown over the two-day Festival.

Similar sentiments were expressed by many of the more than 1,100 people who attended the Annual CCFA Toronto event. "It's difficult, if not impossible, to see Cuban film in North America" said organizer Paula Larrondo of the CCFA Toronto. "That's one of the many reasons we work so hard every year to put this festival on. It's like we are doing our little bit to break the political, cultural and economic blockade against Cuba."

Thank You to Geoff Pickering and the Royal Theatre and other supporters and sponsors like Turtle Island Recycling, Latin America Solidarity Network, Juan Gualberto Gomez Association, UFCW, Havanarte Productions, and most importantly ICAIC (the Cuban Film Institute) which provided the films free of charge, and to the volunteers.

Yulevis Valdés Alvares, the ICAIC International Representative who attended the Festival and answered questions after the event, said, "I think we did a good job of showing a variety of international quality feature films like *Dioses Rotos* (a drama about the reality of life on the margins of Cuban society) as well as great documentaries like Estela Bravo's *Quien Soy Yo?* - the story of children abducted by the military dictatorship in Argentina from activist families and put up for adoption."

"This year we raised over \$1,000 for the Cuban Medical Brigade in Haiti," said organizer Paula Larrondo. "The CCFA Toronto arranged the invitation and air ticket of the ICAIC rep. The Festival itself was free thanks to Geoff Pickering of Royal Theatre and the Cuban Film Institute, so we asked people to make a donation for the Cuban Medical Brigade. Everyone was very generous!"

The Festival will happen again next year – possibly in conjunction with other progressive Latin American countries such as Venezuela and Ecuador.



**Reading and education for all helps create the country's most valuable resource: educated and creative people**

photo: E.Hill

## Gross vs. Sovereignty

*excerpts: by Luis Sexto (Progreso Weekly) 9 Mar/11*

In the case of Alan Gross, the Academy of (political) Language may have to convene a congress to decide whether the word “subversion” should have two different entries meaning the same, or if there is more than one dictionary to judge or qualify all acts related to politics, according to the place where the language is spoken.

In the United States, specifically Miami, Gross is a well-meaning citizen who only wanted to improve communications abroad for certain groups of Cubans.

At first, the Jews were included in the generous action. When the leaders of the Jewish community refused to be the recipients of such advanced means of satellite communications, the allegations pointed to (this time accurately, apparently) the so-called dissidents who, in a strict lexicographic definition, **are** proactive and “foreignizing” foes of the Cuban Government.

**On behalf of a U.S. law that legitimizes the [US] struggle for democracy in Cuba – the Helms-Burton Act – a U.S. citizen can violate Cuban laws if his purposes adhere to the ideals of a champion of freedom in an island nation that, in his view, denies the democratic values defined in Washington’s dictionary.** The official U.S. viewpoint does not consider Alan Gross as an agent, although he is called a subcontractor for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). It does not see that the simple action of handing out ‘candy’ in Cuba without permission from the Cuban government ... is a violation of Cuban sovereignty.

Doesn’t performing the same act in the United States, that is, working for another country in U.S. territory without registering on the federal government’s books, constitute a crime that is severely punished, even though the alleged agent entered the country legally? Therefore, don’t blame this writer for taking sides. I’m only trying to point out that reason cannot be parsed in such a way that: an action I dislike [or is illegal, can be] lawful when committed against someone else if I am the perpetrator.

And so we see world politics remove its decent garments to assume, in tatters, the role of what in Cuban Spanish is called “the neighborhood bully.” Therefore, “arrogance” would be the word in the dictionary of politics that would sum up the White House demands for Alan Gross’ release.

**Whatever may be speculated, what appears to be real is that the trial just ended contained enough legal arguments to justify its convening.** And it is also true that the team of Cuban lawyers defending the USAID subcontractor waged “a vigorous defense,” according to Miami’s El Nuevo Herald of

March 5. This trial, with nearly 14 months of preparation after Gross’ arrest on Dec. 3, 2009, has a meaning that rises above the shrieks of the Miami “exiles” and the threats of Mrs. Clinton and conditions the future improvement of U.S.-Cuba relations to Gross’ release.

**But a basic factor must be considered: by trying Alan Gross, Cuba defended its sovereignty and integrity.**

Because, after all, the U.S. Congress has given tens of millions of dollars to USAID so that the organization can – among other efforts – fund the groups and trends that seek, within and outside of Cuba, to overthrow the legitimate Cuban government and restore Washington’s hegemony on this island, which for centuries has been called the Key to the Gulf.

Neither Obama’s intellectual background nor his eloquence has been able to change this policy, whose victim, right now, is also Alan Gross himself.

### The Gross Case: Why Not Cuba?

*by Arnold August, Québec\**

The United States citizen Alan Gross was sentenced to fifteen years in prison. The sentencing took place soon after his trial in Havana which proved without any doubt that he was working illegally and under false pretexts in Cuba with the US State Department’s USAID program. The latter finances the contract company Development Alternatives, Inc. Gross worked for this company. His defense even admitted this in his trial.

USAID has an explicit goal to destabilize Cuba from within to foment the overthrow of its constitutional order. Gross was found guilty of accusations including acting against the territorial integrity and independence of Cuba as part of this US program.

As soon as the sentence was announced on Saturday, March 12, the establishment media, and US officials both in Washington and at the US Interests Section in Havana, went on the offensive once again in a new disinformation campaign and media war against Cuba. For example, US officials in Havana claimed that Cuba “criminalized what most of the world deems normal, in this case access to information and technology.” (Associated Press, March 12, 2011)

Who is Washington to determine Cuba’s policy with regards to information and technology? **By making such a declaration, the US officials only confirm that the accusations against Gross are just: he was attempting to establish a parallel information and technological network on the island.** This constitutes a flagrant violation of the inalienable right of all nations to self-determination and sovereignty. How would the US react if say China sent an operative into the US to distribute communications equipment to those who the foreign agent deemed favorable to organize an oppositional movement in the US against the US government and in support of China?

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**Furthermore, most of the world including the United States have laws which prohibit this type of activity. And so why not Cuba? Why, in the eyes of the US, does Cuba not have these rights?**

I would even say that Cuba, in a manner of speaking, has more right to fight for its self-determination and sovereignty than any other country in the world. This is so because no country on the planet has been the victim of a continuous blockade, of terrorist and subversive activities for more than fifty years. The US is the author of these criminal activities.

This is the same US who today is attempting once again to undermine Cuba's sovereign right to shield itself so that Washington can continue and even increase its activities to overthrow the constitutional order in the island.

Cuba has the right to defend itself. It is also important that people around the world support this right and oppose US pressures and disinformation against Cuba. Whether one fully supports Cuba's path of updating its economic socialist model as I do, or if one has other opinions about Cuba, everyone should stand as one person in supporting Cuba's right to determine its own economic, political and social path.

One should not underestimate the challenge being thrown at Cuba at this time. Any vacillation on this principle would only encourage the US in its offensive against Cuba.

The Cuban Five are unjustly imprisoned for more than twelve years in the US for defending Cuba against terrorist activities which violate in the most flagrant, violent and cruel manner Cuba's sovereign right to be a nation on its own. This world-wide demand for the freedom of the Cuban Five is thus also part of Cuba's right to self-determination and sovereignty.

*\* Author/journalist/lecturer. Cuba specialist. Upcoming book- "Cuba: Participatory Democracy and Elections in the 21st Century". Member of the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five and the "Comité Fabio Di Celmo pour les Cinq of the Table de concertation de solidarité Québec-Cuba."*

## The Posada Trial Takes a Historic Turn

*Excerpts: By Peter Kornbluh | February 9, 2011*

February 9-In El Paso, Texas, the perjury trial of the infamous violent Cuban exile Luis Posada Carriles took a historic turn today. For the first time in a long dramatic history dominated by hostility and aggression, US government prosecutors formally presented evidence of terrorism committed against Cuba in a court of law-against one of its own former CIA operatives. Even more extraordinary, the evidence comes in the form of a Cuban Ministry of Interior investigator explaining photographs and police reports to the jury relating to a series of explosions in Havana hotels, including the Hotel Copacabana which killed a young Italian businessman Fabio Di Celmo [resident of Montréal] on September 4, 1997. "Cuba Cooperating in US case against ex-CIA agent," read tomorrow's news headlines.

The godfather of anti-Castro Cuban violence over the last four decades, Posada is being prosecuted for immigration fraud relating to how he illegally entered the United States in March 2005.

But the Obama Justice Department added three counts of perjury relating to a far more important crime: Posada's role in a series of seven bombings that rocked Havana hotels and other tourist sites between April and September 1997. "The defendant is alleged to have lied about his involvement in planning the bombings in Havana," state court filings by the Justice Department's Counterterrorism Division. "The United States intends to prove that the bombings in Cuba actually occurred."

This week marks the first time that concrete evidence is being presented to the jury on how those bombings took place and the damage they wrought. The jury has been shown photographs taken by Cuban authorities of the bloodstained floor of the hotel. Portions of a Cuban investigative study, known as the "Volcan report," which discusses the cause of, and circumstances surrounding Fabio Di Celmo's death [a Montréal resident], are due to be introduced as evidence during the testimony of Major Roberto Hernandez Caballero-he was Cuba's lead detective on the hotel bombing investigation-who took the stand today.

**The importance of this moment in US-Cuban relations cannot be overstated.** Posada was originally trained in demolitions by the US military and put on the CIA payroll in 1965 to train and supervise other exile groups in sabotage, explosives and violent operations. Declassified CIA and FBI intelligence reports, posted on the website of the National Security Archive, identify him as a mastermind of a mid-air bombing of a Cuban jetliner that took the lives of all 73 men, women and children on board in October 1976. Most recently, Posada was arrested in Panama with a carload of C-4 and dynamite in what he admitted to U.S. officials was a plot to assassinate Fidel Castro at the Ibero-American summit in November 2000. By prosecuting him on charges related to his acts of terrorism, even if they are only perjury charges, the United States is effectively repudiating a dark past that its own Cold War officials and covert operatives set in motion.

For Cuba, where Posada is public enemy number one, having its day in court is also a turning point in a longstanding effort to collaborate with US officials to put Posada behind bars.

**Continued on page 6**

## Venezuela, Cuba Outfox U.S. Blockade with Fiber Optic Cable with Help from France and China

excerpts <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/18/us-cuba-internet-idUSTRE70H5ZZ20110118>

HAVANA (Reuters) - Venezuela connected Cuba to a high-speed fiber optic cable in February undermining U.S. sanctions prohibiting Cuba's access to nearby underwater lines, the head of the project said on Tuesday.

A French ship began laying the 995-mile submarine cable in January and was expected to reach eastern Cuba by February 8, Wilfredo Morales, president of Telecomunicaciones Gran Caribe, the Venezuelan-Cuban joint venture that owns the line, said. On February 9<sup>th</sup>, the connection between Cuba and Venezuela was made. [And will continue on to Jamaica which will boost the exchange among Latin American/ Caribbean countries and co-operation for eliminating social and economic differences.]

"This is a project that we consider of high strategic importance in the region ... It will be operated by technicians from our countries and we are not going to be dependent on any economic or other interest of another state ...," Morales said in an interview with Radio Rebelde. [The next step is the installation of equipment in the stations and the testing of the system for beginning the operation in July 2011.]

Venezuela and Cuba are close allies and share a common enmity toward Washington. They have formed some 50 joint ventures. Venezuela has financed various projects to gain "telecommunications sovereignty" in the region, such as Telesur, a regional television channel, and software for industrial uses. Plans call for extending the cable to Jamaica and other countries.

Cuba is one of the least connected societies in the Latin American region, with Internet access limited to officials, companies, academics and some other professionals...[since] U.S. sanctions prohibit use of the many underwater cables in the area, forcing it to use a costly and slow satellite connection to the Internet.

The \$70 million cable project, expected to be fully operational by July, will give Cuba a data transmission speed of 640 gigabytes, 3,000 times more than the present dial-up system. Nevertheless, officials have said financial and technological problems will not allow for the extension of Internet use in the short term, and most residents will have to continue to rely on local computer clubs [that have been created across the country], their work places and schools [to put computers in all schools was an educational priority].

A Chinese subsidiary of French company Alcatel-Lucent is supplying the cable. French vessel Ile de Batz will lay the line which contains less than 10 percent U.S. product, thereby meeting U.S. embargo specifications. However, under the US embargo the ship will not be able to dock in the United States for six months after putting up in Cuba. [ So much for Free Trade Practices!]



photo: cubanews.ain.cu

## Posada's Trial *continued from page 5*

Cuban authorities have been forced to set aside their understandable suspicion that the trial is all for show, not for justice. (After all, how can the United States, which purports to be the leader in the campaign to fight international terrorism, prosecute one of the world's most infamous terrorists only on perjury charges?) Since Posada popped up in Miami some six years ago, Cuban authorities have repeatedly welcomed teams of FBI investigators and Justice Department lawyers to Havana. They turned over almost 1,500 pages of investigative records for use in the trial and made Posada's accomplices, now in prison in Cuba, available for interrogation. And they have sent three witnesses to El Paso, another police investigator and a forensic doctor to present the autopsy of the murdered Italian [from Montréal] to the jury. They have been waiting for over a week to testify.

**If this unprecedented level of Cuban judicial support helps convict the 82-year old Posada and he spends the rest of his natural life behind bars, the United States and Cuba will have arrived at a new level of cooperation and collaboration on fighting terrorism.** More importantly, together Washington and Havana will have turned a page on the dark history of US-sponsored violence against the Cuban revolution and Washington can begin what President Obama refers to as "a new chapter" in US relations with Cuba.

# Why We Should Applaud Cuba's Progress Towards the UN's Millennium Development Goals

**Cuba's commitment to prioritize health and education regardless of economic circumstances is one that other countries should emulate.**

By Foreign Minister of Cuba Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla during the millennium development goals Summit in New York.

As we discuss how well countries are progressing on the [millennium development goals](#) (MDGs), South America's left-leaning governments are coming out of it all quite well. And while their mix of policies more closely resembles modified liberal capitalism than revolutionary socialism (yes, even under the radical governments of Chavez, Morales and Correa), it is to [Cuba](#) that most still look for political inspiration. Ask [the late] Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the moderate social democratic president of Brazil and the world's latest favourite leader, for his political heroes, and I bet [Castro will be in the top three](#).

So it is worth looking at how Cuba itself is doing on the MDGs. Of course, the very fact that I am mentioning the C-word will produce harangues from some quarters that I am a Marxist-Leninist apologist who turns a blind eye to human rights abuses. I am not, and I don't. But the evidence suggests that Cuba has made excellent progress towards the MDGs in the last decade, building on what are already universally acknowledged to be outstanding achievements in equitable health and education standards. So it is important for researchers to check the figures, and reflect on the reasons for them, just as we do with other countries in the world, and without denying the serious political and economic problems in the country.

According to a new [MDG Report Card](#) by the Overseas Development Institute, Cuba is among the 20 best performing countries in the world. The key question for development experts who want to learn from this success is this: How is progress being made when the economy appears to be in such turmoil?

I posed this question to a young Cuban economist friend of mine and his answer is worth reflecting on ...

"How is it possible to sustain spending despite economic difficulties? Good question!"

"The Cuban economy is planned and we redistribute income from the most dynamic sectors, which generate most foreign exchange, towards those that are less dynamic but necessary for the country. That's how we maintain a budget to keep health and education high quality and free of charge to the user."

"Although many see this as "social spending",

some economists, of which I am one, see it as a long-term (if costly) investment. It is part of the country's economic strategy in the long run to have human capital which can easily adapt to new economic conditions, including the development of trade in services. So costly investments are made, and wages in these sectors are kept relatively high. Since 2004 Cuba has indeed increased exports of services in precisely these sectors (health and education), mainly to Latin countries."

"You ask why health and education levels do not match the country's economic development, and that's exactly where the paradox lies. There are some economists, of which I am not one, who think that if more resources were devoted to productive areas, the national economic outlook would improve, and who therefore call for forms of cost recovery. Given the current economic crisis it has been necessary to review subsidies, eg: a small percentage decrease in social assistance, which was very generous. But only to have the resources to maintain healthcare free at the point of use."

**"The reason it is possible to sustain the health and education levels is simple: political will,** which has been the basis of 50 years working to improve social welfare. Although it is difficult to believe, in our island the economic sphere is actually quite distinct from social achievements in health, sport and education. All this is due to a determined government and decades of political will, which is bearing fruit."

I wouldn't agree with my friend on all of his views, but they give pause for thought. What happens to the Cuban economy in the short-term, let alone the long-term, is something we watch with interest. But the kind of political will that sees health and education as a priority whatever the economic circumstances, and as an investment in economic growth rather than a cost to society, is one that other countries should emulate.

excerpts from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2010/sep/30/millennium-development-goals-cuba>

# Cuban Medics in Haiti Put the World to Shame

**Excerpts:** John Kirk is a professor of Latin American studies at Dalhousie University in Canada who researches Cuba's international medical teams. He said: "Cuba's contribution in Haiti is like the world's greatest secret. They are barely mentioned, even though they are doing much of the heavy lifting."

This tradition can be traced back to 1960, when Cuba sent a handful of doctors to Chile, hit by a powerful earthquake, followed by a team of 50 to Algeria in 1963. This was four years after the revolution, which saw nearly half the country's 7,000 doctors voting with their feet and leaving for the US. And it continued.

...The best-known programme is Operation Miracle, which began with ophthalmologists treating cataract sufferers in impoverished Venezuelan villages in exchange for oil. This initiative has restored the eyesight of 1.8 million people in 35 countries, including that of Mario Teran, the Bolivian sergeant who killed Che Guevara in 1967.

The Cuban Henry Reeve Brigade, rebuffed by the Americans after Hurricane Katrina, was the first team to arrive in Pakistan after the 2005 earthquake, and the last to leave six months later.

Cuba's constitution lays out an obligation to help the worst-off countries when possible, but international solidarity isn't the only reason, according to Professor Kirk. "It allows Cuban doctors, who are underpaid, to earn extra money abroad and learn about diseases and conditions they have only read about.

A third of Cuba's 75,000 doctors, along with 10,000 other health workers, are currently working in 77 poor countries, including El Salvador, Mali and East Timor. This still leaves one doctor for every 220 people at home, one of the highest ratios in the world, compared with one for every 370 in England.

## Cuba Explores Aboriginal Traces in Westernmost Province Pinar del Rio

*Excerpts: PINAR DEL RIO, Cuba, Feb 21 (acn)*

Cuban & Basque scientists are exploring mountains in the westernmost Cuban province of Pinar del Rio to have graphic evidence of pictographs and petroglyphs created by aboriginal communities.

Experts of the Speleological Committee of the province, who also take part in the expedition, talked about the complexity of the work, which begins by locating and registering cave samples and assessing their state of preservation. Resulting drawings and photographs contribute to creating an archive of those symbols which might be damaged by sun, rain, and human's actions and also to try to decipher motivations and meanings.

Documents at CITMA confirm previous findings of pre-Columbian art manifestations in Pan de Azucar, in the mountains of Minas de Matahambre. La Solapa de los Pintores, in the same municipality, is one of the most popular findings given the magnitude of its pictographic murals. Forty similar places in Pinar del Rio are attributed to natives that lived in the archipelago millennia ago. Concentric circles predominate possibly a culture venerating the sun.

**CCFA TORONTO STATEMENT** The Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto is active in promoting friendship, respect and co-operation between Canadian and Cuban peoples. Our activities are directed to providing info/events about Cuba to the public in areas such as culture, health, education, sports, etc., to defend both Cuban and Canadian sovereignty from U.S. interference and to end the illegal U.S. blockade of Cuba.

### Amistad

is the newsletter of the CCFA Toronto produced six times a year with volunteer labour. The Editorial Cmte reserves the right to edit submitted material. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the editorial staff. We encourage everyone interested to submit media articles, editorial ideas or letters.

**Deadlines the 10th of every even month.**

*Produced with volunteer labour: Ardis Harriman, Brien Young, Diane Bell, Doug Oyler, Sean Smith, Sharon Skup. Printed by union employees.*

 **CCFA APPLICATION** Times to Renew? If you think it's time to renew your membership but you aren't sure if it has expired, check your mailing label. The month and year when your membership expires will be indicated. Help us keep the CCFA going by keeping your membership dues up to date.

**MEMBERSHIP**  
Membership includes subscription to the bimonthly Amistad Newsletter (4 issues/annum)

- I wish to join the CCFA.
- I wish to renew my membership
- I only want the Amistad Newsletter

- ANNUAL FEES**
- \$15 INDIVIDUAL
  - \$25 COUPLE
  - \$5 UNEMPLOYED MEMBER/STUDENT
  - \$25 Family/Other

- I wish to donate \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help the CCFA Toronto projects.
- I wish to donate \$\_\_\_\_\_ for medical/educational projects or supplies. Data will require a tax receipt for joint projects with the "Make a Difference" campaign. Please attach.



**CCFA has a New "snail" Mail Address! as of Jan/11 See below!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Provide complete name for tax receipt in donations)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
(area code)

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_