

Lula tells Cubans to be very proud of their doctors



Havana, December 16 (RHC)-- Former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has sent a letter to the Cuban people to assure them they can be very proud of their doctors and their medical schools.

"In Brazil, you won millions of admirers, the gratitude of millions of people," he said.

The letter, written from the Curitiba prison where he has been arbitrarily held since last April, was published in Sunday's edition of *Juventud Rebelde*.

In the text Lula assured his "dear friends of Cuba" that health is not private property. "Health is life, the first condition to be able to do anything in this world. Health services cannot be treated like any other business. The job of the one who watches over the health of others will always be one of the most beautiful, it will always be a mission, an act of generosity and affection for one's neighbor."

He added that "in Brazil, Cuban doctors went to places where there were no Brazilian doctors. To many poor, distant communities, some of them indigenous, that had never been attended by a health professional."

"Many criticized the government of President Dilma Rousseff for bringing them. How good it would be to be able to do without them! That Brazil had enough doctors to cover all the squares of the interior and the

poor peripheries of Brazil. How good it would be if, like Cuba, we had enough doctors even to export to other countries!" the former leader of the Brazilian Workers' Party stressed in his letter.

And he added: "It's very nice to see how a Latin American island exports doctors to the whole world. Much better than what rich countries do, they export soldiers, they drop bombs on poor communities. Cuba, for its part, exports life, affection, health."

"It so happens that we don't have so many doctors. Brazil was the last country in South America to have a university, inaugurated in 1922. And that's because it had to be created in order to grant the title of Doctor to the King of Belgium! Brazil and Cuba lived centuries of slavery and colonial exploitation. But of the two, only Cuba has enough doctors to export to the world," he noted.

The former president went on to recall that before the Workers Party took power, medicine in Brazil was an exclusive career for the rich man's son. Before the PT came to power, the poor man's son did not even have the right to dream of becoming a doctor.

"We created quotas for Blacks and public school students in federal universities, we expanded the mechanisms so that young people could study for free in private schools, or instead, pay low interest once they finished their studies. We opened new universities, including medical courses, in the interior of the country."

"When, in 2016, the coup d'état took place, with the aim of taking the PT out of government, one of the first measures adopted was to prevent the creation of new medical courses in the country. Prohibit the training of more health professionals. An absurdity." said Lula.

"But Michel Temer's own government, at the request of the mayors of the cities, aware of how difficult it was to find doctors for health units, maintained the More Doctors program from 2016 to 2018."

"When the Cuban doctors arrived in Brazil, there were attempts to discredit them in many ways. But they won because of the quality of the service they provided to the Brazilian people. For their dedication, for their medical care, for their knowledge and professionalism, for the human and preventive medicine they put into practice. They earned the affection and gratitude of millions of Brazilians who now fear losing the medical care that saved so many lives in Brazil," he said.

"I regret that the new government's prejudice against Cubans has been more important than the health of Brazilians living in the most distant and needy communities."

"I thank the Cuban doctors who overcame criticism and prejudice, and taught us that a more humane medicine is not only possible, it is also more efficient in improving the health indicators of our communities,".

In concluding his letter, Lula pointed out that the bonds of fraternity between peoples are stronger than the irrational hatred of some representatives of the elite.

"It is the lesson given by Cuban doctors in so many countries of the world and also here in Brazil."

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