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by María Josefina Arce

December 3rd is the Day of Latin American Medicine, more than enough reason to recognize the dedication of Cuban health professionals who for decades have been at the forefront of the fight against various diseases, protecting the population and making their knowledge available to citizens of other nations of the world.

Every day, Cuban health workers, distinguished by their high ethical and humanistic values, dedicate themselves to their daily work, overcoming the material limitations imposed by the U.S. blockade.

Their performance during the COVID 19 pandemic was commendable. Day after day, they were exposed to the coronavirus, and even under the difficult conditions of the blockaded imposed on the country, the fatigue and uncertainty of facing an almost unknown disease, they never stopped fighting for the lives of their compatriots.

And although the confrontation with COVID 19 required the greatest number of workers, many others maintained various services so as not to neglect the essential programs of the Cuban health system.

But our health professionals also went to other latitudes to help in the fight against the virus. They were even in Italy, the epicenter of the pandemic at one point, where they fought an intense battle against death shoulder to shoulder with their Italian colleagues.

Our collaborators deserve great recognition and gratitude, as Cuban President Miguel Díaz Canel pointed out, Cuban doctors represent the victory of life over death, of solidarity over selfishness.

Professionals from the Greater Antilles had already faced other difficult situations, such as the fight against the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, which began in March 2014.

They have also been present in countries hit by natural disasters. In Haiti, they were the first to help victims of the devastating 2010 earthquake and subsequent cholera outbreak.

Five years earlier, their work in Pakistan was equally admirable after the 2005 earthquake, which measured 7.6 on the Richter scale and left more than 86,000 dead and 106,000 injured.

For eight months, Cuban doctors treated nearly two million people and performed highly complex surgeries. As the British newspaper The Independent pointed out, they were the first to arrive and the last to leave.

Our health workers have also helped improve health indicators in many villages around the world.

Cuban health professionals deserve respect, admiration and gratitude throughout the world.

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