Pandemic explodes, economy tanks

BY JAMES FORTIN

[Editor's note: The following article has been significantly edited due to lack of space. For the full text see socialistaction.org.]

Now that the COVID-19 contagion has spread to the four corners of the globe, the unpreparedness of the corporate elite has become apparent, as evidenced by insufficient medical gloves, gowns and masks. But the Chinese government’s quarantine response was radical, massive and effective. Now the shoe is on the other foot and the ruling class is prepared to sacrifice lives – certainly not theirs! – to protect their system.

As of this writing (March 24), Trump has refused to implement the Defense Production Act, which he activated on March 18. The law would have given the government the authority to order any list of private companies to produce the protective items desperately needed by the doctors, nurses and others on the pandemic front lines. Instead, Trump says the private sector will voluntarily produce these items.

The U.S. Senate’s March 25, $2 trillion corporate bailout vote gifted the ruling rich an amount never exceeded in world history. The overwhelming portion went directly into the coffers of the billionaire elite for whom the lives of literally millions of Americans are subordinate to their horror at seeing their casino capitalism stock market and associated paper fortunes evaporate.

The Chinese government’s quarantine restrictions that aimed at seeing their casino capitalism stock market and associated paper fortunes evaporate.

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Bail out working people, not the corporate elite!

BY JEFF MACKLER AND JAMES FORTIN

The U.S. Senate’s March 25, $2 trillion COVID-19 corporate bailout vote gifted the ruling rich an amount never exceeded in world history. The overwhelming portion went directly into the coffers of the billionaire elite for whom the lives of literally millions of Americans is subordinate to their fear of appearing their casino capitalism stock market and associated paper fortunes evaporate.

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The American economy continued its free fall descent, an estimated 25 percent of or more GDP decline during the following quarter as the economy continued its free fall descent, the ruling class debated strategies to preserve their fortunes.

The initial orientation, represented by the Donald Trump wing, considered easing the increasingly stringent “shelter-in-place” restrictions that aimed at eventually slowing the spread of COVID-19. Sending workers back to work while the COVID-19 curve was on the rise in order to keep the wheels of their predatory system turning was initially their first choice.

The massive cost in millions of lives was but a secondary consideration, if at all. Said Trump, “We cannot let the cure be worse than the problem itself.” The “problem,” of course, was the massive evaporation of their profits. All capitalists understand that these are derived from the exploitation of human labor. Earlier versions of capitalism’s life and exploitation.

The demise of Bernie Sanders

BY JEFF MACKLER

Bernie Sanders, face to face on March 16 with his often-proclaimed “friend,” Joe Biden, could only assert that “Joe,” voted for the 2003 Iraq War.

True! Sanders scored a debater’s point that a well-scripted and lying Biden brushed off in a few words. Sanders left it at that. Televison debates are rarely meant for historical clarification of events long past, even if the subject is genocidal war. Following Biden’s “mistaken” vote, the U.S. imperialist war machine and its deadly sanctions murdered 1.5 million Iraqis. That, too, Sanders left unmentioned. Nor did he note that Iraq’s President Saddam Hussein never had “weapons of mass destruction” that he was supposedly planning to unleash against the U.S.

This demonizing and manufactured pretext, deployed with the entire corporate media in tow, was employed to launch the most intensive bombing campaign in world history.

Additional articles continue on page 6.
System Change, Not Climate Change!

CLIMATE CRISIS COMMENTARY

By James Fortin

Australia still has dinosaurs. We didn’t know what to make of this when we heard it. There was a battle between facts and fiction, mostly the latter. The “dinosaurs” are actually “dinosaur trees,” the very last remaining stands of prehistoric trees on that continent, heroically saved by fire-wildfires. But it isn’t the trees that are fossilized, it’s the Australian political leadership. They still deny that climate change exists. Dinosaur thinking.

Lighting up for climate.

A Colorado brewery is testing technology that would capture carbon dioxide emitted during malting and turn it into a liquid and delivered to pot-growing facilities where it would be reduced to release photons of the plants. Ultimately, the goal is to spread the use of the process to avoid spewing 1 billion tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere by 2030. Knowing this merrily many right-out. Bill McKibben, 350.org founder, on why fossil fuel divestment: “Because money is the oxygen on which the fires of global warming burn. We have done a good job fighting the fossil fuel industry head on, but it’s always going to be a tenacious battle. Exxon has a smokescreen: ‘We know how to do anything else, so they will fight to the last bridge. But the big banks, including asset managers, and insurance companies? They’re just trying to make a little more money off the destruction of their own.”

No hopping around the facts. An environmental engineering professor at the University of California, Davis, says consuming fungicides has less of an environmental impact than drinking beer, mostly as a result of the refrigeration needed for beer but not for fungicides. The greenhouse gas emissions from producing one six-pack is about equal to driving a car eight miles. The professor’s conclusion: When you drink booze, you drive less. And there’s is enlightened Idaho. Boise, Idaho has been ranked 13th on the list of fastest-warming cities in the U.S. Climate Counterclockwise places like Houston and Minneapolis. Yet even as 97% of climate scientists agree that human-caused climate change is occurring, only 25 percent of Idaho Republicans concur. Little wonder that Idaho stands alone as the only state to strike climate change from its classroom teaching guidelines.

More Signs of the Times

A recent climate reporter in Seattle shared this poster advice to the town’s bankers: “U cannot breathe money.” And in Rio de Janeiro another climate defender provided an educational illustration: a sign that said “Rio 2050” and showing the city’s landmarks underwater with the ironic Chi-chon the Redeemer statue’s head poking out. Climate change is staring us right in the face with this “uncertainty.” Interior Department Deputy Secretary Indur Goklany was recently appointed by President Trump to “review” the agency’s climate policies. His simple plan? Judge the reports. His method? Insert misleading language into scientific reports casting doubt on many elements of climate change. In testimony, Republicans argue more accurately as “Golds uncertainty language.” Certainly appears to be climate denialism.

Embassadors win mistrail but struggle continues

By Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers

Last month, we along with Adrienne Pine and David Paul were unsuccessfully prosecuted by the Trump administration for our protection of the Venezuelan embassy in Washington, D.C., from April 10 to May 16, 2019. The jury was unable to reach a unanimous decision and so we remain innocent of the charge of “interfering with the protective functions of the U.S. Department of State.” The judge declared there was a mistrial. It was a partial victory. We appreciate the juries who were able to see through the closing arguments information in the courtroom and vote to acquit us.

After the trial, half the jury stayed behind to answer questions from the lawyers and the judge. What stood out in their answers was confusion. The jurors asked, “Why did you go there in May when the new president, Juan Guaido, came to power in January?” In the courtroom, the jury was told that Juan Guaido was the president of Venezuela. While many have criticized Judge Beryl Howell for her role in the trial, she was reflecting U.S. law, which says the U.S. president determines who is the leader of a foreign government. Taking judicial notice that Guaido is Venezuela’s president when in the real world he is not, made this a political case based on falsehoods.

The judge emphasized that “elections have consequences” as they grant this and other powers to the president. Judge Howell’s comment was ironic for Venezuelans because they also have elections as they did in May 2018 where President Maduro won 67 percent in a five-candidate field. That election had more than 300 international election observers who concluded it met all the requirements for democratic elections under international law. Kevin Zeese was in Venezuela for the election and reported it was a well-run election fair superior to many U.S. elections – especially the Iowa Caucuses.

The U.S. charade claiming Guaido is the president and the judge refusing to challenge that fiction exposed the closed courts and deadly consequences. The U.S. violated international laws when it invaded the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington, D.C. and handed it over to the leaders of a failed coup.

The U.S. signal to the countries that centuries of practice that upheld the inviolability of embassies no longer matter. It also signaled that elections don’t matter. The U.S. believes it can decide who is the leader of another country and hand over the assets of that country to whoever it chooses to.

A major goal of our action to protect the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington, D.C., was to raise awareness that the U.S. was escalating its lawless actions.

Interference in the elections of another country, threats of military invasion and the imposition of coercive economic measures (sanctions) are violations of the UN Charter. Failing to protect embassies violates the Vienna Convention on the Protection of Embassies in Washington, D.C. from being given to the coup-supporters. It is empty today.

April 24 has been set for a hearing wherein the government will decide to pursue a new trial, offer a plea bargain compromise for the consideration of the four defendants.

Socialist Action

Socialist Action is a national organization of activists committed to the emancipation of the workers and the oppressed. We strive to revitalize the antiwar, environmental, labor, anti-racist, feminist, student, and other social movements with a mass-action perspective. Recognizing the divisions that exist on the left and within the workers’ movement, we seek to form united front type organizations around specific issues where a wide range of groups have agreement. In this way we seek to maximize our impact and demonstrate the power and effectiveness of mass action.

In the process we hope to bring activists together from different backgrounds into a revolutionary workers’ party that can successfully challenge the wealthy elite – whose profit-based system is driving down living standards and threatens all life on this planet.

We are active partisans of the working class and believe in the need for independent working-class politics – not alliances with the bosses’ parties. That is why we call for workers in the U.S. to break from the Democratic and Republican parties to build a socialist party based on democratic fighting trade unions in alliance with the oppressed and exploited.

We support the struggle of those who are specially oppressed under capitalism – women, LGBTIQ people, national minorities, etc. We support the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities, including Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Rican. We are one of the 10 international anti-capitalist, and hold that workers of one country have more in common with workers of another than with the Fourth International.

Socialist Action believes that the capitalist state and its instruments are institutions of the ruling class, and that therefore they cannot be used as tools of the working class but have to be abolished and replaced with institutions of direct democratic class rule. That is why we fight for revolution, when we fight for specific reforms, we do so with the understanding that in the struggle for revolution we may come about with the real social capitalism, the development of a workers’ government and the fight for socialism. Our ultimate goal is a truly democratic, environmentally sustainable, and egalitarian society organized to satisfy human needs rather than corporate greed. We invite you to join us in the struggle to make the world a better place!

For info about Socialist Action and how to join: Socialist Action National Office, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610 or call (510) 298-9429, socialistactionnews@gmail.com

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demise of Bernie Sanders

(continued from page 3)

paing in world history.

That the U.S. continues to occupy Iraq also went unmentioned. Biden, and in
defeat, as they pulled out of the primar-
Warren, as they pulled out of the primar-


about this obvious hypocrisy. Sanders declined
to comment, even to make a debater’s point about this obvious hypocrisy.

Sanders’ list of issues to score points against Biden did include the latter’s
mass-merger-oriented 1994 crime bill, the Private
Law Enforcement Act. But Biden blithely
dodged that debater’s point because Sanders

Bernie emerged uncathed because Sanders accepted his “authoritarian” red-
hating and pro-death penalty propaganda on
national television while the imperialist
warmer and Vice Presidential accom-
plish in Obama’s seven wars pilloried him for refusing to denounce Cuba and
Nicaragua. Sanders was at a lost for words when Biden demanded that he re-

That revolutionary Cuba, under Fidel
Castro, defeated and removed that gov-

There was no Sanders rage against the
terrorist-backed Castro. Seth Rich, the

demagoguery. Leaving aside that any

petition to tax the wealth of the super-rich at the rate of one
percent, and impose this tax only on their
wealth that exceeds $32 million! Sanders

All are dedicated to the imperialist sys-
tem and its wars against working people
at home and abroad. It has never been otherwise.
To think otherwise is pure utop-
By John Pottinger

Faster than a speeding bullet. More powerful than a locomotive. Able to leap tall buildings in a single bound? Superman? No, it’s the U.S. and the world capitalist economies. Or is it?

As more states and more counties mandate stay-in-place orders, more and more people are out of jobs to the tune of perhaps 13 to 20 percent, compared to ten percent unemployment at the nadir of the 2008 Great Recession.

In a record-setting economic retreat, over 3 million laid-off and furloughed workers applied for unemployment benefits the first week after the shelter-in-place order was announced.

Additional millions were rendered partially employed. As for the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), an optimistic forecast (optimistic is a relative term) by Warwick McKibbin, an economist at the Australian National University who modeled the SARS pandemic, estimated that the coronavirus might kill 236,000 Americans in the U.S. while shrinking the GDP by 2 percent.

But if the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention numbers are correct, 1,000,000 people could die and the GDP could drop by 4.4 percent.

Proofs before people

Goldman Sachs, not to be outdone, said GDP could drop 24 percent for the second quarter. (Goldman Sachs counts dollars not lives.) Donald Trump suggests the same. Restart the economy by Easter, he states (NYT, March 25). Profits before people!

For now, millions of people are staying home with no paycheck checks. It means schools, libraries, restaurants, bars, all sporting events, concerts, dentist offices, barbers, hairdressers and many more are closed. Better this, of course, than Trump’s unhinkable back to work solutions— at the peak of the curve!

The pandemic also brought on a stock market crash which means among other things that people who were going to buy a house or a car or SUV, won’t be able to do so because their down payment had been invested in the stock market—and pity the workers and retirees who are depending on their 401ks for future income.

What’s the response from the federal government? The Democrats and Republicans knee-jerk response is to throw money at the big banks.

So what’s the response from the federal government?

The Democrats and Republicans knee-jerk response is to throw money at the big banks. The Fed is also buying $500 billion in Treasury bonds and snapping up mortgage-backed securities—all with printed paper money, as usual. Meanwhile on Capital Hill, Congress approved a $2 trillion stimulus package; $500 billion for “distressed companies,” like airlines, cruise lines and hotels; $100 billion for hospitals; $150 billion to state and local governments; $350 billion in loans for small businesses, oh, and yes, a $2,000 to workers who make up to $75,000, plus $500 per child. Don’t spend it all in one place.

Does stimulus mean inflation?

So quite unlike Medicare for All proponents, which are always attacked as being “unrealistic” because it can’t be paid for, the capitalist press and the Democratic and Republican party politicians seem to think turning on the tap and printing money is now OK. While $1,200 checks are a start and more for the poor and unemployed is good, where will the rest of the cash go?

Will the airlines spend it on wages or perhaps on buying a “distressed competitor”?” Will it prioritize jobs that produce real value or the further concentration of capitalist profit. We will never be really safe until the banks and big corporations are nationalized under the control of working people, where we can collectively and democratically construct a planned economy that operates for human need not capitalist profit.

We need a workers’ government that plans for socialism and for that we need a revolutionary party. Join us!

So what’s the response from the federal government?

The Democrats and Republicans knee-jerk response is to throw money at the big banks.

Capitalism’s coronavirus response: Bail out the rich!

Long History of Medical Solidarity

The New York Federal Reserve is offering $1 trillion for overnight loans and $1 trillion in 14-day loans for the corporate elite at near zero percent interest rates. The Fed is also buying $500 billion in Treasury bonds and snapping up mortgage-backed securities—all with printed paper money, as usual.

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... Cuba’s solidarity in COVID-19 fight

In 2005, Cuba created the Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade, a voluntary force of Cuban doctors who specialize in providing medical care in disaster situations, such as epidemics and natural disasters. The doctors now fight Covid-19 in Italy and elsewhere are part of this group.

The group’s namesake Henry Reeve was a 19th century American soldier, a former Union Army drummer boy who in 1868, at age 18, joined the Cuban Army of Liberation in their revolutionary war against Spain and died in battle eight years later.

In 2017, the World Health Organization gave the Brigade a prestigious public health award “in recognition of its emergency medical assistance to more than 2 million people in 21 countries affected by disasters and epidemics” in the 12 years since its founding.

During the Ebola outbreak of 2014, Cuba sent over 460 doctors and nurses to help fight the West Africa against the disease. The Henry Reeve Brigade represented the single largest medical operation on the ground in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. Contrary to Joe Biden’s boast in the recent Democratic Party debate, it was Cuba, not the U.S., that led the response to Ebola. Cuba sent doctors to heal patients with Ebola, while the U.S. only belatedly sent its army.

Only socialism can fix this crisis

We have already seen the failure of U.S. capitalism in its inability to respond to this coronavirus crisis. The fallout for workers will be terrible. Thousands of Americans will die. Many have already lost their jobs and countless more will lose theirs in the weeks to come. Homelessness—already over 550,000—will rise sharply. Prior to this crisis, almost 90 million U.S. adults had no health insurance or were underinsured. That number will only rise with the massive layoffs ahead. Working people will suffer preventable illnesses, be forced to ration or forgo vital medicines like insulin, and be bankrupted by medical bills.

Instead of prioritizing human needs and saving lives, U.S. capitalists will use this crisis as an opportunity to deepen their exploitation of the working class, bailing themselves out from the public coffers while trying to reap new profits out of the hides of the workers.

Cuba faces the same coronavirus disease, but it is not infected with the disease of capitalism. No Cubans will be without health care of the highest quality.

Proofits before people

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**Spray now, ask questions later**

By MARK HARRIS

There’s a lot of talk in the Trump era about the “war on science.” But this war, such as it is, extends far beyond uninformed Republican attacks on climate change science or Donald Trump’s mocking of Greta Thunberg, the teen climate activist nearly 60 years the old bully’s junior.

This war involves not only outright science denial, but the myriad ways science is co-opted to serve corporate interests instead of the public good.

One of the latest salvos came this past December when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), under the leadership of a Trump-appointed coal industry lobbyist, asked a federal appeals court to reverse the lower court ruling that held Bayer AG, now owner of Monsanto’s Roundup herbicide, responsible for a California man’s cancer. The German-based conglomerate purchased Monsanto in 2016 for $62 billion.

The friend of the court brief, filed in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Justice, argues the California state law requiring a health warning label for glyphosate-based herbicides was unnecessary since the EPA does not categorize glyphosate as a carcinogen.

In fact, Bayer AG has already lost three recent lawsuits filed by individuals who developed non-Hodgkin lymphoma, a cancer of the immune system, after long-standing use of the Roundup product.

The company now faces over 40,000 lawsuits over Roundup’s potential health risks.

The legal challenges to glyphosate-based herbicides are based on a growing body of epidemiological evidence that link exposure to non-Hodgkin lymphoma and other health effects. Most notably, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), an affiliate of the World Health Organization, determined in 2015 that glyphosate was “probably carcinogenic to humans.”

The agency’s position was based on about 1,000 studies of glyphosate exposure among largely agricultural workers, such as farmers and pesticide applicators, primarily in the United States, Canada, and Europe, along with evidence from animal studies. The link to cancer risk for humans was based on what IARC describes as “limited,” but “statistically significant” evidence.

Further, the Environmental Working Group (EWG), in an Aug. 21, 2019 statement to the EPA, cites evidence from five of eight epidemiological studies of an elevated risk of non-Hodgkin lymphoma among those exposed to glyphosate-based herbicides. One recent study, a 2019 meta-analysis done by researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Washington, found those with the highest cumulative exposure to glyphosate, such as agricultural workers, had a 41 percent greater risk of developing non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

World’s leading herbicide

Today, glyphosate-based herbicides are a ubiquitous global presence. The use of this group of herbicides has grown approximately 100-fold since first introduced in 1974. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the volume of glyphosate-based herbicides in use in the United States increased from less than 25 million pounds in 1982 to over 250 million pounds in 2016.

Significantly, the advent in 1996 of “Roundup Ready” crops, tolerant of the herbicide’s use, has only accelerated the herbicide’s rapid spread.

Of course, nature has a way of adapting to even the most effective of human interventions. Just as widespread use of an herbicides...
in a report written nine months earlier that infection control. State inspectors noted mandates from state health officials for un-
question had long been the subject of rep-

ons respondents moved freely on and off base,
to two military locations in California
protective gear or experience in epi-
eral health employees without training,

mains to be seen – by Easter, he
continuously seeks advice and ap-

\[\text{Early signs of trouble ignored}\]

Trump’s earlier responses were all too deadly erroneous. Several health employees without training, protective gear or experience in epide-

mics were dispatched in late February to two military locations in California where quarantined evacues from over-

seas were being processed. The re-

sponders moved freely on and off base, and some were later allowed to leave without self-testing for the virus, possibly spreading the infection.

Even more disturbing was the outbreak at a Kirkland nursing facility at the same time in Kirkland, Washington, a suburb of Seattle. The nursing home in question has been under criticism for its preg-

\nems from state health officials for un-
acceptable performance in the area of infection control. The Kirkland outbreak is noted in a report written nine months earlier that they found an oxygen mask, tubing and nalaboparizer (vaporizer) jumbled up into a bed cover sheet and patients socks in one instance. In another, they observed a reg-
nistered nurse working in an infected pa-

tient’s room without protective equipment despite notices prominently displayed re-

quired protective gear.

Physicians who suspected a possible coro-
virus outbreak were unable to con-
form to the guidelines for responsible test kits. Only kits that had been improperly man-
ufactured by the CDC. At about the same time, employees sought to report the spread to the facility, number of a quarter of the suburb’s firefighters, ended up in quaran-
tine after working at the Kirkland outbreak at the Kirkland home was in-
deed the coronavirus. As COVID-19 starts to claim this many lives, noting of half-truths and misinformation from Donald Trump commenced.

Ignorant of what to do and mostly con-
municate during a health crisis, which include sharing scientific infor-
mation “in an open, timely, and appropri-

\[\text{The coming fightback}\]

But given the deep crisis of the system in place and the millions who are in the COVID-19 pandemic, few expect the market’s rise to continue. The whirl of re-
sources being directed to the corporate elite, an inevitably increasingly pandemic-af-

France was a problem, declared an emergency for the first time. As America approached to the World Health Organization.

Trump’s proposals, while debilitating in nature, follow a decades-long pattern of bi-partisan underfunding of the public health system. Relying heavily on federal funds, state public health departments have proved to be fragile, having lost more than 55,000 staff since 2008 together with an overall funding de-

Although the work has been conducted by doctors and nurses, the work has been done by volunteers, many of whom have no medical training.

The bi-partisan roll-back of public funds for public health is also shamefully displayed by the lack of ongoing, current training of nurses. A survey of 6,500 nurses was recently conducted by Na-

tional Nurses United, the largest organi-

\[\text{Workers take the biggest hit}\]

Beyond the human health tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic the working class is facing the biggest hit. For starters, 74% of working people in the U.S., working paycheck to payday, have inadequate savings to see them through a crisis wherein they get little advice from the likes of Trump and the bipartisan agreement that was just an initial step, with perhaps another $2 trillion to come.

Without any assistance from Congress is better than none, the current measures for working people coming from Washington are closer to none than better. Stimulus to the working class in sums not greater than $1,200 might slightly deflect the impact of the crisis but would not wash away the overall devastation. “It’s nice and it’s needed, but it’s just a Band-Aid,”\[\text{The coming fightback}\]

With a whiff of $2 trillion in the air, the Dow Jones, which had lost an unprece-
dented 35% of its “value” (11,000+ points) in the past few weeks, soared back over 3,000 points on March 24-25.

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dented 35% of its “value” (11,000+ points) in the past few weeks, soared back over 3,000 points on March 24-25.
death equations were uttered by the United Kingdom’s Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who suggested that allowing COVID-19 to “burn out naturally,” that is, without medical intervention, would have the effect of the surviving population being left with a “natural immunity” to future COVID-19 outbreaks!

Survival of the fittest?

Johnson’s reactionary/racist/classist “herd immunity” or “survival of the fittest” thesis, would have allowed COVID-19 to run its course through the entire population, taking the lives of the weakest and oldest people, leaving the survivors, presumably now endowed with resistant antibodies, to continue as capitalism’s workforce.

This was neatly explained in an original, natively UK government report that stated: “As many as 80% of the population are expected to be infected with COVID-19 in the next 12 months, and up to 15% (7.9 million people) may require hospitalization.” The document projected to 15% (7.9 million people) may require hospitalization. The document projected the U.S. workforce to be produced by U.S. workers.

In the U.S. as of March 31, over 3,700 contracts and remains asymptomatic. Researchers have warned that unchecked COVID-19 infection could kill something like 2 to 15 million people in the U.S. in the months ahead. Trump administration figures, including Trump’s top medical adviser, Dr. Anthony Fauci, reported that a best case scenario U.S. death toll figure might be 100,000 to 200,000.

Germany’s Angela Merkel reported two weeks ago that as many as 80 percent of the German population could be afflicted. At an estimated fatality rate of one to two percent, tens of millions could die in a relatively brief period. In a single month, October 1918, 195,000 Americans died during the worldwide influenza pandemic, the deadliest event in U.S. history. Some 500 million worldwide fell sick during this 15-month horror, which killed the earth’s population by 3.5 percent.

After initial hesitation the Chinese government began a mobilization of doctors, nurses and medical supplies, for China’s accomplishments. Despite the massive campaign by the Chinese government to stop the spread of the virus, its efforts were initially met by the U.S. mainstream media with bias and denigration. Five weeks ago, after pillorying China for its “draconian” forced quarantine measures, the U.S. government itself, along with virtually all fifty states, if not the entire world, have recommended and is increasingly implementing similar measures. The primary measure of appreciation to China’s President Xi Jing-ping, for China’s accomplishments.

Instead, the anticipated and continuing massive layoffs of tens of millions of workers, most with only short term promises of government relief, informs us that the already预先派任COVID-19 era of a coming recession, will be qualitatively magnified for an indefinite period – at least until the end of the present epoch.

How long it will take to bring the current pandemic to a halt is the major social, political and economic question posed before the world today. Indeed, any momentary timeline projection leaves aside the simple fact that a small cure – an effective vaccine akin to those against the great plagues of the past century – COVID-19 will inevitably return as a “seasonal” pandemic where a declining “curve” indicates that an end to the near worldwide quarantine is warranted!

In the meantime the most elementary aspects of social and economic recovery for the world are tragically absent or in dangerously short supply – from basic hospital facilities, ventilators, face masks, sanitizing hand swipes, mass testing and basic life-saving medical devices, like ventilators, to food and productive jobs to sustain life in capitalist America, where the large majority of working people must survive from paycheck to paycheck.

At a time when the combined scientific resources of the world were overwhelming allocated to an endless variety of military, as opposed to healthcare and medical research, prospective gains are dim to say the least. Endless wars are the most profitable of all capital’s industries. For the sake of “industries” infrastructure in the ongoing seven wars presently waged by the U.S. along with drone wars, Special Operations

(continued on page 10)
The shit has hit the fan. COVID-19 now affects multitudes. Worldwide War C is here. It has triggered the shutdown of all but “essential” production and $3 trillion in mil-

lions without jobs and income. In Can-
da, the “value“ of stocks plunged more than $3 trillion in a month while urgently under

diminishing pensions and retirement funds.

A record nearly 1,000,000 workers ap-
piled for unemployment insurance bene-

fits just in the third week of March, com-
pared to the usual 15,000 for that time of year. This is just the tip of a deadly iceberg. Economists predict up to 35 percent unemployment, far above the peak joblessness rate of 27 percent in 1933 during the Great Depression. It seems the term “recession“ just doesn’t cut it anymore.

And let’s be clear: the current economic downturn preceded the virus. It was al-

ready underway in December. Global debt growth, capital profitability, capacity util-

ization, volume of working hours, etc., indicated the onset of a recession. In 2019, countries like Germany saw the lowest growth rates since 2009, the peak of the global financial crisis. In addition, mass layoffs in the global automobile industry were no longer simply the result of competition for the lowest wages or of closing plants, but reflected a slump in economic activity. Capitalism and crisis are inse-

parable.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has his priorities, which happen to be the pri-

orities of big business, whose engine is the pursuit of profits — whose purpose is to make a name for themselves as saviours in the name of health. But this will likely be used to curtail pro-


tests and to step up police surveillance of the population. History is replete with such warning signs, from the WWI Con-

scription Crisis, to October 1970 in Que-

bec, to the Olympics in Montreal, to the

G20 summit in Toronto.

Under Disaster Capitalism, the ruling class seldom wastes an opportunity to take advantage of a crisis (politically and econ-

omically). DJ Justin Trudeau initially sought special powers for his ministers, for the next 20 months, to raise taxes and the spend money without a vote in Parlia-

ment. He claimed, this was not to help the working class. Say NO to the elitist schemes of the Liberal government. It’s time to stand up for the majority. Physi-

cal distancing is a deadly precaution. It ought not be an appetizer to political passivity. The struggle continues!

Workers should not let our “leaders“ off the hook. Press the unions, the labour-

based New Democratic Party (NDP) and other working class mass organizations to seize this opportunity to fix and improve social amenities across the board. Now would be a good time for unions to orga-

nize “essential workers” who do not yet belong to a union, and to support organizers who refuse to work the conditions. In opposition to government bail outs of big business, labour and the NDP should demand nationalization of key sectors: finance, industry and com-

merce.

Socialists advance an action programme that includes: Basic Income for all. Every adult de-

serves a decent, living wage — without any cuts to special social program entitle-

ments, and without privatization of public services. No one should have to buy their healthcare or medications. Sick leave, quarantine leave, and parental leave should be full pay. The same for any-

one laid off due to closures.


Freming of communication must, es-

pecially vital at a time like this, means putting an end to bandwidth limits, long distance charges, SMS surcharges and exclusionary paywalls. Nationalize the telecoms.

Tax the rich. Expoprate the big banks, the big oil and gas corporations, and seize “dead” capital sitting in offshore and domestic accounts. Use these resources to fund mass testing for COVID-19, to develop a vaccine against it, and to encourage farmers to grow healthy food. Transition energy produc-

tion towards a break with fossil fuels and nuclear fission. Move rapidly to green, sustainable energy systems, under public ownership and workers’ control.

The Migrant Rights Network ad-

vances a number of demands that deserve full support:

It is agricultural, food, domestic, ware-
houses, public transport, hotels, cleaning work,

sparks workers, and taxi drivers, healthcare and other workers who are ensuring that we get the basics. We demand that all of them get income supports.

Programs announce by the govern-

ment, such as the CERB and the CERI

before rent day, and the amounts prom-

ised are very little. We need decent pay for everyone in the current crisis. We need a chain to make it happen.

Northern Lights

News and Views from Socialist Action Canada

website://socialistaction.ca

BY ROBBIE MAHOOD

Among the mass protests that erupted in various parts of the globe in 2019, the case of Chile is outstanding for the way it expressed the pain of a people driven to the brink of despair by the weight of the economic crisis and the effects of its policies.

Chile has long been regarded as a neo-

liberal success story, a country that had left behind the brutal years of the Pino-

chet dictatorship and carried out a “demo-

cratic transition,” with the return of civilian rule after 1990. But the fundamentals of Pinochet’s dictatorial model rest on ex-

ploitation, volume of working hours, etc.,
growth, capital profitability, capacity util-

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ability, and deportations, and permanent status for all.

Under the present mode of production, it is capitalism for the poor, and socialism for the corporations. Any move to curb the relentless rise of climate catastrophe, show that capitalism has outlived its use-

lessness. It must be replaced by a cooperative
communism, a genuine economic democracy, which will defend the sovereignty of the people, migrant workers, unemployed, temporary and precarious workers, dis-

abled people, cash work and more. That’s not fair!

Everyone needs full access to health-
care and community supports, includ-
ing housing. And that a real crisis response must mean an end to detentions and deportations, and permanent status for all.

The response on October 24 was a huge mobilization of close to 2 million people in central Santiago. Hundreds of thou-
sands demonstrated in other cities, not-
tably Antofagasta and Valparaiso, the next two big urban centres.

The unions were late to respond to this popular explosion. Early on, the military strike by the Union Portuaria (dock-

workers) was unheeded by the CUT (Central de Trabajadores), the main union, until November when the first of two short lived nation-wide strikes took place.

Piner万元 adds a carrot to the stick

Faced with a spreading insurgency, and realizing that mass repression could be insufficient to re-establish control, Piner万元 adopted a conciliatory line.

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Key lessons of pro-Indigenous uprising

BY GARY PORTER

We have witnessed the beginning of an historic shift. It is a turning point for indigenous rights, for climate change resistance, and for a new generation of fighters for justice. It is a powerful step forward in social protest in Canada for a new generation of militants.

In mid-February, the RCMP, Canada’s federal police force, moved to attack the blockade erected by hereditary chiefs of the Wet’suwet’en people and their supporters who were there to stop the construction of a methane pipeline across their unceded land.

An unprecedented wave of protest broke out across Canada. From Halifax to Victoria, thousands of indigenous people, especially the young, acted in solidarity with their sisters, brothers and siblings in northern British Columbia (BC). The number, size and militancy of the actions caught the federal and British Columbia provincial capitalist governments off guard.

More unexpected was the huge turnout of young whites and others in solidarity with the oppressed indigenous peoples. Together they blocked highways, closed bridges, occupied key railroad arteries, shut ports, choked ferry access, blocked the BC legislature, and more.

These actions continued for over 2 weeks. It was the largest outpouring of solidarity with the indigenous people against their capitalist oppressors in Canadian history.

The rule of law

Although John Horgan, the New Democratic Party (NDP) Premier of BC, a social democrat, was inclined simply to enforce “the rule of law” and attack the indigenous people and their allies, Trudeau proposed negotiation. After two weeks of no progress, Trudeau ran out of patience. The police began arrest- ing activists, young and not so young.

The last of the protests, the 1-day 24-hour blockade of the BC legislature was ended by a dirty trick by the NDP attorney general. He invited 5 key leaders inside to discuss the removal of the blockade. They went, but when no agreement was reached, they were arrested, as had been previously arranged with Parliamentary security service.

As all of this unfolded, negotiation with the Wet’suwet’en continued in the north. The Federal and BC governments, in the end, accepted the contention of the Wet’suwet’en hereditary chiefs, that they alone, and not the Band councils set up under the Indian Act of 1876, have final authority over their unceded land.

A major victory

The Supreme Court of Canada had already agreed with this view in a prior decision, but finally the two governments accepted it, at least for the future. This is a major victory.

However, no agreement was reached on the pipeline, and even though the rightful title holders had never agreed, the contractor started up work and the RCMP added new forces on the unceded land, both being clear provocations. The fight subsided in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, but the Wet’suwet’en stated they are not standing down and not asking their allies to stop down. The struggle continues.

Socialist Action (SA) has been expect- ing and preparing for such struggles. SA scheme, the March 8 Coordination, and some sections of the environmental movement.

Pinera is responsible for the widespread deployment of police and their arsenal, seeking to wreck maximum havoc among the demonstrators. At least 50 have been killed and close to 4,000 injured by police violence.

Among the casualties are over 400 who sustained severe eye trauma from the rubber bullets fired by police. Covering eye with a hand is a common gesture of solidarity in Chile today, even making its way onto TV game shows.

There have been over 3,000 arrests, with reports of torture and sexual viol- ation of those detained. Memorial posters, flowers and photos of the young victims mark the sites where demonstrators have been killed by the cops.

The Struggle Continues

Looking back over the first 4 months of the rebellion, we can say that some of the most important demands of the protest movement have not been taken up by the major forces in the opposition, for example, the demand for the ouster of Pinera or for a general strike.

The political initiative has passed at least partially to the government. While the protests are anti-neoliberal, it lacks a clear anti-capitalist program, except for the small forces of the revolutionary left.

Nevertheless, because of the depth of the crisis of the regime, the movement is ongoing, if on a smaller scale. A mass vanguard of several tens of thousands continues to agitate. Hundreds of neighbourhood committees, and in some cases wider coordinating councils still function. There is the ongoing toll of injury and death as demonstrators resist police.

The mobilization for International Women’s Day on March 8 will be an impor- tant barometer of the potential for the movement’s resurgence.

And ahead is the struggle for a Consti- tutional Assembly that reflects the popular will, one that is “free, sovereign, joint and plurinational,” as opposed to Pinera’s version that he hopes will salvage the regime inherited from the dictatorship.

Meanwhile, a victory of mass militant solidarity action has occurred

Recently published an in-depth booklet on the history and struggle against colonial-settler oppression, occupation, theft and murder of indigenous people by the Canadian state. It explains how our common struggle against capitalism is inextricably bound up in theirs, and vice-versa. There can be no reconciliation under capitalism, and there can be no socialism without reconciliation.

Socialist Action also published a new booklet on the life and death struggle against climate change, how eco-catas- trophe originated in the ceaseless drive of capitalism for capital accumulation through profit. The very survival of capital- ism depends on it and drives the rapid expansion of green technologies that may kill us all. Again, socialism, a system of rational and democratic operation of a planned economy, is the only way out of the present crisis.

New generation of fighters

The new generation of indigenous people, and many young descendants of the colonial settlers, are fighting side-by-side for climate sanity and indigenous rights. Many are beginning to understand the capitalist system is at the heart of the problem, resisting any solution. Many are beginning to look to socialism as the way out. Belatedly, some large labour organ- izations are expressing solidarity. Even the Ontario New Democratic Party issued a statement of support for the Wet’su- were’en.

But the BC NDP government of John Horgan has boldly stepped forward as the prime defender of the global oil cartel and their methane operations in BC.

Horgan and his Cabinet are teaching painful lessons about the social demo- crats who run the NDP, their fundamental commitment to capitalism and to private profit, over human rights and human need — whatever they may say in elec- tion speeches.

Behind Horgan stands Justin Trudeau, ready to intervene when necessary, in support of the imperatives of big busi- ness. The lessons of this experience must be drawn and the fight for a socialist, la- bour-controlled NDP should be acceler- ated and invigorated.

At the same time, the fight in the streets must continue. Our task is to build even broader unity against the LNG project, and against the Trans Mountain pipeline.

Meanwhile, a victory of mass militant solidarity action has occurred. The gigan- tic tar sands project proposed by Teck Frontier, was cancelled. In the face of the gritty militancy of the fighters for in- digenous rights and climate sanity, and the falling price of oil, the oil barons withdrew their application and killed the deal.

This fight is not over. When it comes back, these largely young indigenous and Canadian militants aim to fight to win.
Chelsea Manning free at last!

Said Q&A period links were made to the journalist Anthony reads & journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, framed-up by racist Philadelphia cops on a murder charge in 1982, and, like Assange, Mumia’s health was callously ignored by prison authorities. Also discussed was whistleblower Edward Snowden, forced to flee the U.S. for Russia; the case of Black Liberation Army member Assata Shakur, who fled to Cuba in 1984, and the jailing and murder of members of the Black Panther Party. Feb. 24 was Assange’s first day of trial in the UK and was a global day of protest in more than 25 cities. In New York the NYC Free Assange Committee hosted a rally at the UK Consulate in Manhattan. About 300 participated.

Global day of protests

Speaking at the demonstration was Magen Kirsten, civil rights lawyer and co-author of the indispensable book, In Defense of Julian Assange.

“Delivering real journalism is a risky undertaking with uncertain rewards,” Kirsten said.

“Truth has become a revolutionary thing. Assange is accused of espionage and faces a show trial under a law that has a horrific record (the Espionage Act-MG). Everyone who has ever been caught under the law has been found guilty. There is no defense. Whistleblows and Julian Assange are under the threat of extinction but our rights are threatened too!”

Speaker Ben Norton, a journalist at Grayzome, told the crowd: “WikiLeak has enriched our understanding of the crimes of this government that claims to act in our interest, but of course it doesn’t and we have their own U.S. State Department cables that prove it. When U.S. politicians from both the Republican and Democratic parties go on TV and say Julian Assange is a spy, a terrorist, and a criminal, whatever accusations they smear him with, that is a lie because Assange has done nothing wrong. Over the vast majority of journalists refuses to do.”

Other speakers at the rally included Michael Crooke of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) and co-author of the book, The War Zone: The Case of Haiti; Adam Hilton of Haiti Liberté newspaper; Matty Goodman of Socialist Action and others. Complete coverage on Facebook or email NYCFreeAssange@gmail.com for details on future events.
The War Party is both Democratic and Republican

By Glen Ford

(Speech to the New York City Feb. 21-23, 2020 UNAC national antiwar conference at People’s Forum. Glen Ford is the Senior Editor of Black Agenda Report.)

Most of us in this room consider ourselves socialists of one kind or another, and all of us claim to be anti-imperialist. And most of us have been talking about the global “crisis of capitalism” for most of our adult lives.

There is no doubt that capitalism is in crisis. Many of the contradictions of capitalism have become acute. Certainly, capitalism is in a crisis of legitimacy. Young people don’t believe in it anymore. They see no future for themselves in this system, and are explicitly rejecting it. Polls show about half of young people have a favorable view of socialism, or consider themselves socialists. They may not be clear about what socialism is, but they do know that they oppose the system of capitalism that they live under.

But crises of legitimacy do not, by themselves, bring down the system. It is a sign that the people are not happy. Mass unhappiness may bring down an administration, but it doesn’t change a system one bit.

The people of the United States certainly are aware of the endless wars that have multiplied in the 21st century. The polls show it. We see this war weariness in surprising places.

But, the bipartisan War Party and the National Security State.

The twin parties of war

The War Party, which is both Democratic and Republican, had no qualms about sending the U.S. back on a constant war footing after George Bush was forced to withdraw from Iraq. Their instrument to get the endless wars back on track was Barack Obama, who fooled the people into believing he was a peace candidate, and then continued all of George Bush’s wars and started a whole series of his own—this time, using Islamic Jihadists as his foot soldiers.

But, the bipartisan War Party and the National Security State were into a panic. They decided that Donald Trump could not be trusted with the keys to the empire. So, they all piled into Hillary Clinton’s over-stuffed campaign tent. For the first time ever, current and former hands of CIA and Pentagon became involved in presidential election politics—as Democrats.

When Trump won his victory in the Electoral College, the CIA produced a document claiming the Russians and Wikileaks had tried to rig the election. In doing this the Democrats and the National Security State created a real crisis of legitimacy for the whole bourgeois democratic system in order to delegitimize, not just the Trump administration, but all dissent in the United States.

The Democrats became the more aggressive War Party, and the party of censorship and fear-mongering. The New McCarthyite Party. And, right at the core of that Democratic Party is Black America, which has historically been the most pro-peace constituency in the nation, and at the forefront of leftist dissent. This new posture for the Democratic Party has created a bizarre Black Democratic politics. It has made the Black Misleadership Class more ridiculous and cartoonish than they have ever been.

Black Misleadership Class

This turn towards war by the Black Misleadership Class was set in motion, not by Trump—who is anathema in Black America—but by Barack Obama, the First Black President. Before Obama—and for all of Black history on this continent—Black people have been supremely skeptical of the motives of the U.S. government and its wars against people of color around the world.

War propaganda and the demonization of peoples targeted by the United States did not work among Black Americans. We knew that the U.S. powers-that-be constantly lied about us, and that they were probably lying about the people they were invading and bombing.

Our anti-war posture was homegrown, because we were the eternal domestic victims of U.S. coercive power—from white mobs and white media and the police. You don’t have to be as tall as I am to remember when, in Black conversations about U.S. wars, it wasn’t “What are WE doing over there?” but rather, “What are THEY doing killing folks” in other people’s countries? We didn’t identify with the U.S. war machine.

Black organizations were early opponents of the Vietnam War. SNCC was anti-war before the first U.S. troop buildup. Malcolm X opposed all this country’s wars. Martin Luther King broke with sometimes-allies President Lyndon Johnson, to denounce the Vietnam war.

Malcolm X opposed all this country’s wars, Martin Luther King broke with sometimes-allies President Lyndon Johnson, to denounce the Vietnam war.

Johnston, to denounce the war. The Black Panther Party proclaimed revolutionary solidarity with the Vietnamese, and with all peoples’ struggles against U.S. imperialism.

The heavily-Black U.S. Army in Vietnam refused to be cannon fodder. Black troops fought pitched battles with white military police in Da Nang and other places. They burned down the military prison in Long Binh—because U.S. “military justice” is also mass Black incarceration, just like the U.S. civilian system. They took out officers and NCOS in what were called “fraggings.” Black troops made the U.S. Army in Vietnam useless.

By 1970, the Joint Chiefs of Staff were demanding an all-volunteer Army, so that they could recruit the kind of soldiers that would do their bidding.

The late 1960’s mini-unit, the 82nd Airborne Division, was 60 percent Black, as were other elite units. By the time of the Iran War, the 82nd had become the whitest division in the U.S. Army. Black soldiers made up 20 percent of the U.S. military, but they were now mainly in support units, not the combat arm line units.

Two weeks before George Bush invaded Iraq, the Zogby polling organization conducted a survey. They asked, “Would you be in favor of a U.S. invasion of Iraq if it resulted in the death of thousands of Iraqi civilians?” Big majorities of whites said, “Yes,” go ahead and invade. Sixteen percent of Hispanic-American Americans said they supported an invasion, even if it kills thousands of civilians. But only seven percent of Black Americans were for an invasion that would wreak such carnage.

But, then came Obama. For the first time, Black people identified with the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Empire.

When Obama threatened to bomb Syria, supposedly in retaliation for a chemical weapons attack—an attack that was actually staged by the Islamic jihadists that Obama had deployed as foot soldiers of empire—another poll was taken. It showed, for the first time in U.S. polling history that Blacks were more in favor of bombing Syria than whites. Only a minority of all Americans favored the bombing. But 38 percent of Blacks went along with Obama’s proposed air strike, versus about 36 percent of whites, if my memory serves.

Obama’s war on Syria

Even though Black majorities were not in favor of Obama’s war on Syria, his very presence in the White House created a huge distortion in Black views on war and peace. For that, and many other reasons, we at Black Agenda Report were glad to see Obama go. We hoped that Black America would return to its historical consensus in favor of social justice and peace.

However, the Democrats—who are now the most aggressive war party—have succeeded in linking Donald Trump to Russia, and then lumping all critics of U.S. warming up with Russia and, thereby, with Trump. That’s the evil genius of Russiagate. A CIA-concocted lie designed to maintain the momentum of Obama’s military offensive around the planet put in play by the Obama administration.

Fortunately, we now have a fighting organization that upholds the historical Black commitment against imperial war, and connects these wars to the militarized oppression of Black and brown people here at home. The Black Alliance for Peace fills a huge void that has existed since the loss of Black Voices for Peace.

Russiagate presents the peace movement in general, and Black anti-war forces in particular, with unique difficulties. The Black Misleadership Class is all-in with the CIA and the Pentagon. But the masses of Black folks still identify with the oppressed people of the world, and themselves as among the global oppressed.

Black Americans remain anti-imperialist at their core. And they are more pro-socialist than any other ethnicity. That’s a winning combination.

Power to the People!
In his speech “On Revolutionary Medicine,” Che Guevara said, “The life of a single human being is worth a million times more than all the property of the richest man on earth.”

While the U.S. condemns its population with reluctant and haphazard “free market” responses to a global pandemic that demands comprehensive, organized, centrally directed action, Cuba is showing the world a different route. It is carrying forward the legacy of its legendary revolutionary doctor with what the British newspaper the Independent called last week “true global solidarity.”

When a British cruise ship was stranded in the Bahamas in mid-March with over 1,000 people onboard, including five confirmed Covid-19 coronavirus cases and 52 passengers and crew showing symptoms, Cuba was the only nation to extend the hand of friendship to the stranded people. Every other nearby Caribbean nation, including the U.S., refused.

Cuban officials said that the decision to help came from humanitarian concern for the sick passengers and represented “a shared effort to confront and stop the spread of the pandemic.” When the boat docked in the port of Mariel, passengers held aloft a sign that read “Te Quiero Cuba.” While most passengers flew back to the UK, those not well enough to travel were taken to nearby hospitals for treatment. UK Foreign Minister Dominic Raab, no friend of Cuba, thanked the country profusely for its aid.

A Cuban official recently told Newsweek that the embargo is “the main obstacle not only to respond to major health crises like COVID-19, but the main obstacle to the country’s development in any area.”

Cuba: A model of solidarity in COVID-19 fight

BY NICK BAKER

On March 22, a group of 52 Cuban doctors and nurses arrived in Italy to treat patients in Lombardy, the epicenter of the Italian outbreak. The head of BioCubaFarma, a Cuban pharmaceutical producer, has said that the island has plenty of medications on hand to treat thousands of patients if needed, and that they “are preparing to significantly increase the production of those [medications] with less coverage.”

Cuba is repurposing textile factories to make facemasks, and, in an example typical of Cuba’s resourcefulness in the face of embargo-caused shortages, the Ministry of Health has even released a video with step-by-step instructions on how to make surgical facemasks at home with a sewing machine.

At the time of this writing, Cuba has 67 confirmed cases of Covid-19, with one death, an Italian tourist who arrived ill. As tourism is a major industry for Cuba, all of Cuba’s cases so far have been foreign tourists who arrived infected, Cubans arriving from abroad, or by contact with people visiting Cuba. There have not been any cases of Covid-19 transmission between Cubans on the island.

Since the first coronavirus cases were discovered in three Italian tourists, the Cuban government has been sending thousands of health workers, including medical students, to go door to door at every house and apartment across the island, asking if anyone inside is sick or suffering from respiratory illness that could be coronavirus.

On March 20, with 21 confirmed cases of coronavirus, Cuba announced that it was closing its borders for one month. On March 23, Cuba announced that all schools would be closed for four weeks and all travel between provinces suspended. Tourists currently on the island have been instructed to stay inside their hotels. Public health measures were also announced based on plans MINSA had developed in January, when Cuba was working with China to respond to the virus and before it had spread globally.

The Ministry of Health has also been releasing daily numbers of people being quarantined in public health centers and hospitals—currently at 1,403 people—including those who have had contact with infected people and Cubans returning from abroad.

Brigades Treat Covid-19 Patients

In normal times, more than 50,000 Cuban doctors serve in over 60 countries, providing vital support to those countries’ health care systems. In times of crisis, Cuba’s health care workers are always on the front lines, demonstrating the international solidarity that is a fundamental element of Cuban socialism. As Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parilla tweeted recently, quoting Fidel Castro, “In international relations we practice our solidarity with actions, not with beautiful words.”

On March 22, a group of 52 Cuban doctors and nurses arrived in Italy to treat patients in Lombardy, the epicenter of the Italian outbreak. In the days before the doctors arrived, Italy had reached out to health officials in Cuba for help planning the country’s response to the outbreak.

In the past week, Cuba has also sent brigades to Venezuela and 144 doctors to Jamaica.

Three times of solidarity

The Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement, “These are times of solidarity, of understanding health as a human right, of reinforcing international cooperation to face our common challenges.” An official at the Ministry of Public Health (MINSA), Dr. Alberto Raúl, no friend of Cuba, thanked the island with reluctant and haphazard “free market” responses to a global pandemic that demands comprehensive, organized, centrally directed action. Cuba is showing the world a different route. It is carrying forward the legacy of its legendary revolutionary doctor with what the British newspaper the Independent called last week “true global solidarity.”

When a British cruise ship was stranded in the Bahamas in mid-March with over 1,000 people on board, including five confirmed Covid-19 coronavirus cases and 52 passengers and crew showing symptoms, Cuba was the only nation to extend the hand of friendship to the stranded people. Every other nearby Caribbean nation, including the U.S., refused.

Cuban officials said that the decision to help came from humanitarian concern for the sick passengers and represented “a shared effort to confront and stop the spread of the pandemic.” When the boat docked in the port of Mariel, passengers held aloft a sign that read “Te Quiero Cuba.” While most passengers flew back to the UK, those not well enough to travel were taken to nearby hospitals for treatment. UK Foreign Minister Dominic Raab, no friend of Cuba, thanked the country profusely for its aid.

A Cuban official recently told Newsweek that the embargo is “the main obstacle not only to respond to major health crises like COVID-19, but the main obstacle to the country’s development in any area.”

Cuba: A model of solidarity in COVID-19 fight

BY NICK BAKER

On March 22, a group of 52 Cuban doctors and nurses arrived in Italy to treat patients in Lombardy, the epicenter of the Italian outbreak. The head of BioCubaFarma, a Cuban pharmaceutical producer, has said that the island has plenty of medications on hand to treat thousands of patients if needed, and that they “are preparing to significantly increase the production of those [medications] with less coverage.”

Cuba is repurposing textile factories to make facemasks, and, in an example typical of Cuba’s resourcefulness in the face of embargo-caused shortages, the Ministry of Health has even released a video with step-by-step instructions on how to make surgical facemasks at home with a sewing machine.

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