

[A brilliant and courageous statement](#)

Attending to other matters that are now top priority, I momentarily strayed from the frequency with which I had been writing reflections in the year 2010; however, Hugo Chávez Frías' proclamation last Thursday the 30th, obliges me to write these lines.

The president of Venezuela is one of the men who has done the most for the health and education of his people; since these are subjects where the Cuban Revolution has accumulated the most experience, we gladly collaborate to the maximum with this sister country in both areas.

It is by no means a matter of that country lacking doctors; quite the opposite. They had an abundance of doctors, among them there were even first-class professionals, just as in other Latin American countries. It is a social matter. The best medical doctors and the most sophisticated equipment could be placed at the service of private medicine, as it is in all capitalist countries. And often not even that, because in underdeveloped capitalism, like the type that used to exist in Venezuela, the wealthy class had sufficient means to go to the best hospitals in the United States or Europe, something that was and is customary and nobody can deny it.

Even worse, the United States and Europe have been noted for seducing the best specialists from any exploited Third World country to abandon their homeland and to emigrate to the consumer societies. Training doctors for that world in the developed countries implies fabulous sums of money that millions of poor Latin American and Caribbean families would never be able to pay. In Cuba, that used to happen until the Revolution took up the challenge, not just of training doctors capable of serving our own country, but also the other peoples of Latin America, the Caribbean or the world.

Never have we stolen the intelligences of other peoples. On the contrary; in Cuba we have trained tens of thousands of doctors and other top-level professionals, for free, in order to send them back to their own countries.

Thanks to the profound Bolivarian and Marti-inspired revolutions, Venezuela and Cuba are countries where health and education have been extraordinarily developed. Every citizen has the real right to receive general education and professional training at no cost, something that the United States has not been able to ensure for all its inhabitants. The reality is that the government of that country invests a billion dollars every year on its military machine and its war adventures. Furthermore, it is the greatest exporter of weapons and the instruments of death and the greatest market for drugs in the world. Because of this traffic, tens of thousands of Latin American lives are lost every year.

It is such a real and well-known fact that more than 50 years ago, a president having military origins bitterly denounced the decisive power accumulated by the military-industrial complex in that country.

These words would be superfluous if it were not for the intervention of the hateful and repugnant campaign unleashed by the massive Venezuelan oligarchy media, at the service of that empire, using the health problems being experienced by the Bolivarian President. We are united to the President with close and indestructible bonds of friendship that came into being from his first visit to our homeland on December 13th, 1994.

Some were surprised by the coincidence of his visit to Cuba with the necessity of seeking medical care. The Venezuelan President visited our country with the same aim that took him to Brazil and Ecuador. He had no intention of receiving medical care in our homeland.

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It is well-known that for a few years now, a team of Cuban health specialists are providing their services to the Venezuelan President who, loyal to his Bolivarian principles, never considered them to be undesirable foreigners, but sons and daughters of the Great Latin American Homeland on behalf of which The Liberator fought, right up to his last living breath.

The first contingent of Cuban doctors left for Venezuela when the Vargas Stadium tragedy occurred, taking thousands of this noble country's lives. This action of solidarity was nothing new; it made up a tradition well-established in our country from the first years of the Revolution, from the time almost half a century ago when Cuban doctors were sent to recently-independent Algeria. That tradition grew stronger while the Cuban Revolution, in the midst of a cruel blockade, was training internationalist doctors. Countries such as Peru, Somoza's Nicaragua and other countries in our hemisphere and in the Third World were suffering from tragedies as a result of earthquakes or other causes that required Cuba's solidarity. So, our country became the nation in the world that had the highest rate of doctors and specialized health personnel, with extremely high levels of experience and professional capabilities.

President Chávez put a great emphasis in relating with our health personnel. This way, a bond of confidence and friendship was born between him and the Cuban doctors who were always very sensitive to the treatment of the Venezuelan leader; and he was able to create thousands of health centres and outfit them with the necessary equipment in order to provide free services for all Venezuelans. There was no other government in the world that did so much, in such a short time, for the health of its people.

A large percentage of Cuban health personnel provided services in Venezuela and many of them also acted as teachers in certain subjects that were being taught to train more than 20,000 young Venezuelans who began to graduate as medical doctors. Many of them began their studies in our country. The internationalist doctors, members of Battalion 51, graduates of the Latin American School of Medicine, have earned solid prestige in carrying out complicated and difficult missions. On these bases my relations in this field with President Hugo Chávez were built.

I should add that in the course of more than twelve years, since February 2, 1999, the president and leader of the Venezuelan Revolution has not rested one single day and thus he occupies a unique place in the history of this hemisphere. All of his energy has been dedicated to the Revolution.

One could say that for every extra hour Chávez dedicates to his work, the president of the United States rests for two hours.

It was difficult, almost impossible, that his health would not suffer some sort of breakdown and this is what happened in the last few months.

He is a person used to the rigors of military life and he would stoically put up with the aches and pains that were plaguing him with ever increasing frequency. Given the friendly relations developed and the constant exchanges between Cuba and Venezuela, added to my personal health experience that I underwent since the proclamation of July 30, 2006, it is not unusual that I should have noticed the need for a strict medical check-up for the President. He is far too generous in granting me any special merit in this matter.

Of course, I admit that it was no easy task that I set for myself. It wasn't difficult for me to notice that he had some health problems. Seven months had gone by since his last visit to Cuba. The medical team devoted to caring for his health had pleaded for me to take up the matter. From the very first moment, the President's attitude was one of informing the people, with complete clarity, about the state of his health. That was why, at the point by then of returning, via his minister of Foreign Affairs, he informed the people about his health up to that instant and he promised to keep them informed in detail.

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Each treatment was accompanied by rigorous cellular and laboratory analyses, of the kind that are done under such circumstances.

One of the tests, several days following the first surgery, showed results that determined more radical surgery and special treatment for the patient.

In his dignified message on June 30th, the noticeably recovered President speaks about the state of his health with absolute clarity.

I admit that it was no easy task for me to inform my friend about the new development. I could see the dignity with which he received the news that --while his mind was dealing with so many important tasks, among them the celebrations commemorating the Bicentennial and the formalization of the agreement on Latin American and Caribbean unity - much more than the physical suffering that radical surgery would imply, signified a test, as he put it, that he compared to the difficult moments he had to face in his lifetime as an unyielding combatant.

Along with him, the team of persons caring for him and who he described as sublime fought a magnificent battle which I have witnessed.

With no hesitation whatsoever, I state that the results are impressive and that the patient fought a decisive battle that shall lead him and Venezuela along with him, to a great victory.

One has to make sure that his declaration is communicated word for word in every language, but especially it should be translated and subtitled into English; this is a language that can be understood on this Tower of Babel into which imperialism has transformed the world.

Now the external and internal enemies of Hugo Chávez are at the mercy of his words and his initiatives. Without a doubt there shall be surprises in store for them. Let us wish him our most steadfast support and trust. The lies of the empire and the treason of the quislings shall be defeated. Today there are millions of militant and aware Venezuelans who shall never be made to submit to the oligarchy and the empire.

Fidel Castro Ruz
July 3, 2011
4:12 p.m.

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