

Blockades in times of Covid-19

By: Angel Guerra Cabrera / La Jornada
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In mid-March, Chinese billionaire Jack Ma and his foundation announced the donation of 500,000 Covid-19 rapid test kits and one million face masks to the United States, despite the growing racist and xenophobic attitude of its president, who did not stop talking about the "Chinese" virus. Those resources were desperately needed in the great power, whose government — in an undoubtedly criminal attitude — did not take the most obvious safety measures to protect its population between the months of January and March, as evidenced by the rapid advance of the pandemic there.

Alibaba's founder had also made significant donations to South Korea, Japan, Italy, Iran, and Spain. Actions he later extended to Latin American and Caribbean nations. However, Ma's aid could not make it to Cuba. The U.S. Company contracted to charter the shipments decided not to do so to Havana, arguing that the U.S. blockade

prevented it. Jack Ma, who has dispatched donations to more than one hundred nations with the hashtags **#Estevirusloparamosentretodos** and **#Oneworldonefight**, has not given up sending aid and will surely find a shipper ready to challenge Washington's genocidal punishment to the Cuban people.

Such eyebrow-raising fact, which basically portrays the cruelty of Trump and his staff by maintaining the economic siege on Cuba amid the tough economic situation the world is facing today, does nothing but bringing to our minds Cubans' daily struggles to survive over the last 60 years. Nonetheless, since the real estate tycoon became president of the U.S., sanctions have been progressively strengthened to unimaginable extremes. However, although the Caribbean island suffers the longest siege in contemporary history, there are other countries subjected to severe economic penalties by Washington. Venezuela is a very serious case of cruelty. But Iran, North Korea, Syria and even Russia and China are also the subject of bloody, illegal and immoral punitive measures. It should be noted that due to the pandemic, the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, have called for the lifting or easing of the blockades, particularly in the case of Cuba and Venezuela. But the top promoter of economic wars and violation of human rights in the world is playing the innocent.

The pandemic has made us wise to appreciate — in all its harshness — features we already know about neoliberal capitalism and its political system, particularly in the U.S. Seen now as a whole, the world's situation confirms this system is experiencing a deep crisis, genetically unable to protect the interests and needs of the majority, inconsistent with life. To the point that the U.S., Spain, Italy, El Salvador, and other countries have taken measures that break head-on with the neoliberal logic in order to support action plans for their population. These measures are based on strong state interventionism in economies with a marked social sense. That is a very unusual behavior in governments ruled by the market as hundreds of billions have been allocated, without

return, to the pockets of citizens.

I want to focus on two issues essential to Latin America, the Caribbean, and the rest of the world, which highlight the hegemony crisis hindering the U.S. and the desperation revolving around Trump and his staff. One of them is the ferocious campaign against Cuban medical personnel and Cuba's solidarity policy led by the U.S. starting last year. At that time, Washington succeeded in encouraging countries like Brazil, Ecuador, and Bolivia — impersonated by presidents Bolsonaro, Moreno, and Anez, respectively, who love to cozy up to U.S. — to part ways with Cuba's medical cooperation. However, in spite of extortions, pressures, and quackeries made by their powerful media networks, Trump's administration failed to undermine the very much-appreciated medical collaboration of the island with several countries. Indeed, there are a growing number of Caribbean and European states requesting the presence of Cuban medical brigades and pharmaceutical drugs to fight Covid-19. And it occurs despite the active campaign against Cuban doctors led by officials from the U.S. Department of States, Assistant Secretary Kozak and Secretary Pompeo himself.

The other hot issue, beyond the criminal blockade, is the doubled belligerence of Trump's administration against Venezuela. They do not like how Maduro and Chavism made Guaidó look like a fool and defeated every *coup d'état* attempted since 2019. They do not like the unbreakable Military-Civilian unity. We will talk about it next time.

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