

Governor of Piedmont: "Our gratitude will last forever"

By: Enrique Ubieta Gómez / Special for CubaSi
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The sky is clear. This sun, summoned several times, brings our minds back home. The time to return to our Homeland is closer now. The Henry Reeve Medical Brigade ends its mission at the COVID-OGR Hospital in Turin on July 10th, after spending three months saving lives. Alberto Cirio, governor of the Piedmont Region, wanted to meet the Cuban doctors and nurses in that hospital. "I just came here to thank you. Thanks is such a short word, but it means so much," he said. "From tomorrow on, ceremonial activities will take place successively, but I wanted to show my personal gratitude to all of you, privately, more intimately. You have done something beautiful: you came here to heal our families, our senior citizens, our children, and that is why you have all the appreciation from the people in Piedmont."

The results, still only partial, speak for themselves: 175 patients testing positive for COVID were admitted to the hospital, many in serious condition, with 0,57 case fatality rate; 5,166 hospital cares were carried out, as well as 4,890 procedures and 70,000+ nursing actions. But

numbers are cold. And words sprouting out of patients' mouths burn in human warmth. Dozens of letters were handwritten by them before discharge. Smiles and hugs cannot be numbered either. The well-earned prestige by Cuban medicine, represented by every man there, is huge.

"Our gratitude will last forever" — the Governor stated. "From now on, every time you want to return Piedmont, you will be treated like illustrious guests, special guests, since friends always show up in the darkest hours. This is not a goodbye, this is a see you later. We will always wait for you with open arms! I wish you a happy return to your families. You were a hundred days separated from your beloved ones and that is a lot to anyone." Afterwards, he said in perfect Spanish "*hasta pronto*" and asked us to answer the same but in Piedmontese language: "*cerea*" (*cherea*). And that was it.

When I talked about partial results —in reference to numbers— I took into account the latest events: for organizational reasons, the hospital lockdown has been postponed even though most of the Italian doctors terminated their contracts and left. There were only two patients remaining and most of the beds were already allocated in warehouses. But some sick people who may have been admitted in other hospitals arrived. For ethical reasons, the Cuban Brigade decided to support the medical work in the final days of their stay, up until the day before their quarantine. This means some of the doctors will enjoy half of the celebrations. Carla, a nurse who have worked along with the Brigade, cried with emotion when she knew about Cubans' decision.

The Head of the Cuban Medical Brigade, Dr. Julio Guerra Izquierdo, answered back: "As I did the first day, we thank you for allowing us to be here." He showed gratitude for the hospitality and human warmth given by the people in Piedmont, and added: "What we have done for you is what we are used to do elsewhere; we take with us the greatest satisfaction of saving a lot of lives in the red zone of the Hospital and

the gratitude of several patients," he pointed out. "We have met here high-skilled, very human doctors, nurses, health personnel in general. I just want to add that you can count on us every time you need our help in the future."

The Governor and the Head of the Cuban Medical Brigade opened their arms in the distance and the Latin impulse prevailed: Alberto Cirio and Julio Guerra Izquierdo threw their arms around each other, which expressed the feelings of their people. The Cuban ambassador, José Carlos Rodríguez, who spoke with the Piedmont Governor minutes before the meeting, should arrive in Turin in the next few hours. We will climb Pico Fidel (Fidel Peak) on Saturday. On Sunday, there will be a giant outdoor lunch with nearly 300 dinner guests —discharged patients, regional and city authorities, solidarity groups— at the heart of the city. On Monday, all members of the Medial Brigade will be decorated by the Piedmont Region in a special ceremony to be held in the hospital.

This is it by now!

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