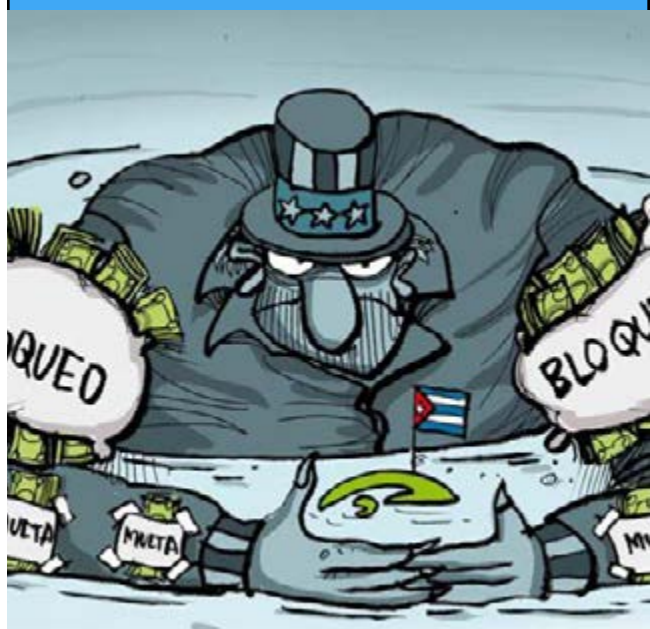


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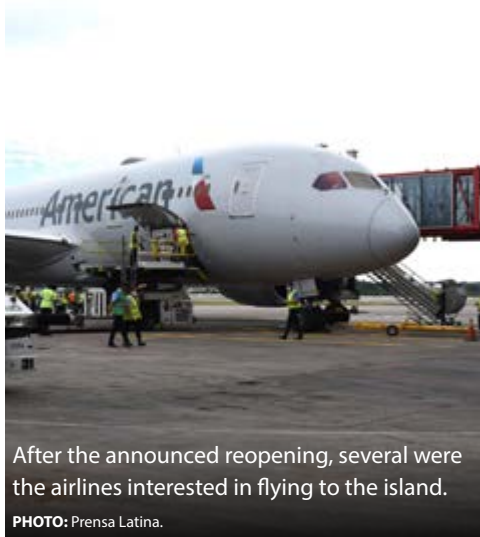
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Hospitality and Health Security Characterizes Tourism

By Cira **RODRÍGUEZ**



After the announced reopening, several were the airlines interested in flying to the island.

PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

HAVANA.-Cuba opened its borders on November 15 to welcome more than 400 weekly flights nationwide, thus restarting tourism activities after nearly two years of numerous restrictions, when the sector, considered the driving force of the national

economy was practically brought to a standstill.

The conditions were created to ensure safe transit at the airports, while health controls were adjusted to make them faster, without disregarding travelers' health.

After the announced reopening, several were the airlines interested in flying to the island, such as those from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Panama and the Dominican Republic, with increasing operations from Russia.

Together with those companies, Iberia, Air France and Air Europa have continued to operate flights to Cuba, while Cubana de Aviación Airlines resumed traditional routes to Argentina and Spain. Flights from other regions like Asia-Pacific were taken up again, as is the case of those operated by Turkish Airlines, while others such as WorldToFly joined them.

All the requests were answered, including those by U.S. airlines, with the number of weekly flights from that country expected to amount to 147.

Cuba authorized all the flights that were coming from the United States before the

health emergency, as well as the possibility for them to connect with all the Cuban airports. However, it is up to Washington which, at the end of 2019, prohibited operations to Cuban destinations except Havana.

When referring to the reopening, Cuban Transportation Minister Eduardo Rodríguez informed that more than 23 airlines are currently coming to the island, and that the facilities are in better conditions.

In this regard, Rodríguez said works were done to make landing and takeoff operations more reliable, to increase comfort at the airports and adjust them to health protocols, in order to guarantee good flow of people, in spite of the increase in the number of travelers.

Over 100,000 tourists are expected to come the rest of the year, when some 200,000 already visited the island in 2021 in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, the minister announced.

Also on November 15, Cuba gave the green light for leisure boats to stay in its territorial waters, while Viazul, a bus company available for tourists to travel nationwide,

resumed its operations as well.

The fact that the compulsory quarantine for international travelers was eliminated benefits the reopening of tourist activities, but it does not mean renouncing to health controls, Cuban Tourism Minister Juan Carlos García explained.

Rigorous epidemiologic surveillance continues at all hotel facilities, both private and state-owned, and for this, he noted, all of them got involved in the More Hygienic and Safe Tourism Program, which grants a certificate for their good practices.

A renewed offer and expanding Internet access through Wi-Fi services at airports, hotels and other places were significant steps. Five-star hotels already have that service available, which can be accessed to from the rooms and even at the beach, while it is being improved in the rest of the hotels.

In addition, there are 4,000 new rooms, with varied recreational offers and new medical and cultural products, which will allow, together with foreign operators, to place the Cuban product back on the international market.

The Hotel that was Born as Hilton Became the Habana Libre

By Orlando **ORAMAS**

HAVANA.-The Habana Libre Hotel, born as the Hilton Hotel and one of dictator Fulgencio Batista's businesses, became a symbol of the revolutionary change for which Cuba was known as a beacon of liberty.

The hotel was designed by renowned L.A. architect Welton Becket, and also designed the Beverly Hilton for the U.S. chain. Its opening, celebrated for four days, took place on March 1958.

At the time, the Habana Hilton was Latin America's tallest and largest hotel, with 27 floors and about 600 rooms.

With the triumph of the Revolution, room 2324 welcomed Fidel Castro after his entry into Havana, on January 8, 1959.

At least two murder attempts against the Cuban leader were planned at the hotel at the time.

One of them pretended to poison him through a deadly pill dissolved in a chocolate milk shake jar, which he used to drink at the cafeteria.

Although many people wonder how Fidel Castro was able to survive the over 600 assassination attempts organized by the Central Intelligence Agency, the truth is that in the

abovementioned case in particular, the pill got stuck to the ice of the freezer where it was hidden and could not be used by the killer hand.

On July 11, 1960, the revolutionary government nationalized the Hotel and since then, a sign has crowned the facility with two words: Habana Libre.

Also emblematic because of its location at one of Havana's most frequented and central corners – La Rampa, in the Vedado neighborhood – the hotel was for decades one of the favorites for national and foreign tourists, in spite of others in Havana and in several tourist resorts in Cuba.

A mojito at the Las Cañitas bar, by the pool, was the love preamble of Cuban couples.

Other celebrations and love affairs have been staged in the last floor, at the Sierra Maestra Panoramic Room and the Turquino Cabaret-Discotheque, equipped with a retractable roof from which a splendid view is seen.

The hotel has also welcomed several events, congresses, international chess competitions and gala dinners, in addition to housing over two thousand reporters from all over the world during the visit of Pope John Paul II to Cuba, in 1998.

It was also the official press center during the historic visit of the then U.S. president Barack Obama to Cuba, in 2016.

The emblematic Ambassadors Room and other facilities bear witness to that.

In addition to its architectonic and historical features, the Habana Libre Hotel treasures important Cuban visual arts works, such as the façade mural, by Amelia Peláez, and the works of Alfredo Sosa Bravo and René Portocarrero, displayed in the halls.



The hotel was designed and its opening took place on March 1958.

PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

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Printing: Prensa Latina

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Publisher: Agencia Informativa Latinoamericana
Prensa Latina, S.A.
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Fidel Castro's Legacy lives

By Lissy **RODRÍGUEZ**

HAVANA.- The homage rendered to historic leader Fidel Castro on the fifth anniversary of his death brought large crowds together at plazas, workplaces and schools, and closed with the inauguration in Cuba of a center named after him.

Dedicated to analysis and the dissemination of thought, the institution has an exceptional character, following the Commander in Chief's –as he is also known– decision not to build monuments, busts or statues in his memory nor to name squares, parks, avenues, institutions or public places after him.

Fidel Castro, who was a loyal follower of the thoughts of Cuba's National Hero, writer and journalist José Martí (1853-1895), agreed with his phrase that "all the glory of the world fits in a kernel of corn."

With that concept in mind, the newly inaugurated Fidel Castro Ruz Center was conceived as a one-of-a-kind institution specially dedicated to children, adolescents and youth.

According to its director, historian René González, technology plays a leading role in the institution, while the information collected is the protagonist.

One of its main attractions is the collection of over 40,000 photos of the Cuban leader that were digitalized in two and a half years, the researcher said in a meeting with the press.

Entrance will be free both for Cuban and foreign visitors, and the center will be the venue for activities such as book launches and photo exhibitions.

On the occasion of the date (November 25), the Cuban people and friends from all the continents recalled a life dedicated to the just causes and to practice what he preached, to travel to the future and come back to talk about it, as former Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika said.

The Cuban youth held a solemn act the night before the anniversary of his death at the historic staircases of the University of Havana. In different parts of the world, members of the international movement in solidarity with Cuba made documentary screenings, book launches, among other initiatives, while pronouncing against the U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade and media campaign against the island.

In Portugal, Germany, Finland, Greece, Philippines, Lebanon, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, the United States, Vietnam, Hungary, France, Slovakia, among other countries, associations and activists remembered the legacy of the late statesman.

From Cuba, the 31st Pastors for Peace Caravan, the group of Italian friends undergoing the Soberana Plus-Turin clinical trial, activists of the Portugal-Cuba Friendship Association and members of Canada's Ernesto Che

Guevara Brigade, also evoked the teachings of the revolutionary leader.

On his Twitter account, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel recalled the world leader, of whom he said that his thoughts will be forever present, because those ideas made it possible to "raise the bastion of dignity and justice that our country represents."

Various generations of Cubans, together with local authorities, visited the Santa Ifigenia Cemetery in the eastern province of Santiago de Cuba, where his remains lay to rest. Meanwhile, youth and personalities wearing red scarfs walked from Havana's Vedado neighborhood to the Museum of the Revolution, which holds a replica of the Granma Yacht.



The Fidel Castro Ruz Center was conceived as a one-of-a-kind institution specially dedicated to children, adolescents and youth. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

On the Road to Economic Recovery

By Karina **MARRÓN**



The Cuban President insisted on defending the state of peace. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

HAVANA.- With more than three billion dollars in lost revenue between 2020 and 2021 a tightened economic blockade and additional measures applied by the U.S. government, it seems like a miracle that Cuba is still standing.

However, like Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel said before the National Assembly of the People's Power, (Cuba) not only survives those difficulties or the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the society and the economy, but it does not abandon its development.

Just like the rest of the world, the island suffered hardships caused by the disease. Fighting it not only meant the loss of human lives and the exhaustion of our health personnel, but also using the exiguous funds to buy the resources needed.

According to the president, the government allocated some 300,000,000 dollars of the national budget to cover needs in the health sector. In most cases, a higher price was paid for supplies, medicines and medical equipment due to the U.S. blockade regulations.

It was a hard blow for an almost paralyzed economy that decreased in the first semester of the year, with its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) dropping by 13 percent since 2020.

Together with that, there was a fall in exports of major products such as cigars (91 percent) and rum (86 percent), while service revenue dropped as well, accounting for 2.05 billion dollars only at the end of September –60 percent of the projected amount.

With such a panorama, it's almost impossible to imagine that the GDP would grow two percent at the end of 2021 but, according to

Cuban Vice Prime Minister Alejandro Gil, who is also Economy and Planning Minister, that estimate is possible.

The country is experiencing a gradual economic recovery, which is not only connected with the reopening, on November 15, of borders and to international tourism, one of the country's main sources of hard currency income, he stated.

It is the result of the strategy approved by the government to boost the economy and cope with the crisis caused by COVID-19, which includes the implementation of measures intended to give more autonomy to socialist State enterprises and improve and diversify the economic actors.

Regarding the last point, it is worth praising the incorporation of 601 micro, small and middle enterprises, both private and state-run, to the production of goods and services, together with 104 non-agricultural cooperatives.

Another positive step was the implementation of 63 measures to stimulate food production and commercialization, a sector that had spent 1,348,000 dollars at the end of September, in addition to the difficulties caused by problems in the world food supply chain.

Some of those actions are already showing discreet results, but the Caribbean island has the challenge of continuing to bring them forward in the middle of an adverse international panorama and high inflation rate in the country.

All this is happening in the context of a monetary reform that has provided the population with cash but has rocketed prices. In the meantime, the deficit in goods and services at the end of September stood at 16.50 billion Cuban Pesos (around 687 million dollars).

Increasing offers through greater participation of national producers on the market and making state enterprises efficient is a challenge for the Cuban economy, as these two elements are key to carry on with the economic recovery.

Sanctions and Hostility

By Ibis**FRADE**

HAVANA.- About a year after his arrival at the White House and after his electoral campaign promise, on repeated occasions, that once he became president he would change the U.S. policy towards Cuba, Joe Biden continues to implement the aggressive and hostile line against the island.

A few weeks after his entry into the Oval Office, the U.S. president ratified the inclusion of Cuba in the unilateral list of countries that allegedly sponsor terrorism, which was widely rejected by the international community.

Just amidst the pandemic of COVID-19, the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States grows stronger, preventing the acquisition of medication and equipment needed to fight the health emergency, as denounced by Cuban authorities and organizations from other countries.

The summer of 2021, after the destabilization actions conducted in Cuba on July 11, the Biden administration announced new sanctions against senior Cuban officials of the Ministry of

Interior, the Revolutionary Armed Forces and other entities attached to those bodies.

Under the protection of the Global Magnitsky Act, senior officials of those entities were included in the list of so-called Specially Designated Nationals List (SDN), whose assets are frozen and are prevented from traveling to the United States.

The U.S. government applied those provisions

due to what they call violation of human rights during the "peaceful demonstrations" of July 11; however, videos spread in the social media show the vandalistic acts and deliberate attempts committed against law-enforcement officers and the state property.

Although Cuban authorities consider those restrictions irrelevant from the practical point of view, from the political one, they have implications, because they are part of the aggressive escalation promoted from Washington, which has even made pressures to third countries to stand against the island.



Joe Biden continues to implement the aggressive and hostile line against the island. PHOTO: Internet.

Once and again, the White House repeats that it is still revising its policy towards Cuba, while restrictions on sending remittances and travel prohibitions to U.S. people remain in effect, the U.S. embassy remains closed and the reunification program remains frozen.

Washington also maintains its attacks against the Cuban medical collaboration and internationalist assistance in several parts of the world, and puts forward the argument that through such actions, Cuba fosters trafficking of humans.

As Cuban Justice Minister Oscar Manuel Silvera recently stressed at a virtual event at the UN General Assembly, it is unacceptable that the United States accuses Cuba of fostering human trafficking or the practice of slavery.

The objective of that action is to denigrate the praiseworthy work of the Cuban health professionals, who for decades and with profound solidary and humanist vocation, have voluntarily rendered their services in dozens of nations, even during the fight against the pandemic of COVID-19, he said.

Up to this date, Biden has maintained in effect all 243 coercive measures and sanctions adopted during the Donald Trump administration (2017-2021), which strengthen the unilateral siege that has tried to asphyxiate the Cuban people for more than 60 years.

Love without Blockade

By Deisy**FRANCIS**

HAVANA.-For the past 30 years, Pastors for Peace has been bringing the U.S. people's feeling that Cuba is not alone and that good friends are always there in bad times.

On November 15, Cuba opened its borders after a long pause caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the members of the 31st edition of the Pastors for Peace-Friendshipment Caravan, who in 2020 could not come for that reason, were among

the first people to visit the island amid an unprecedented campaign of discredit, lies and slander against the Cuban Revolution.

According to Shaquille Fontenot (Lowcountry Action Committee), her dream of coming to the Caribbean island became true thanks to the initiative of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO)-Pastors for Peace.

The young Afro-American girl praised the fact that Cuba has helped other countries fight for freedom and self-determination, and added that she was very excited in the possibility of getting firsthand information about the reality in Cuba.

The caravan raised donations for the Cuban families, once again challenging the blockade imposed for 60 years by the U.S. governments of the moment, both Democratic and Republican.

According to Angie Langdon, the IFCO-Pastors for Peace social media coordinator, nearly 67 caravan members came for the first time to discover for themselves the truth, often manipulated and distorted. Gail Walker, the organization's executive director, said that many people in the United States are disappointed with the Joe Biden administration's policy towards the island.

In a video previously sent to *The Havana Reporter*, the activist said it would be a great trip and that offering

solidarity is the reason why "we leave our families, our job and our homes" to go to Cuba.

Gail, the daughter of late Reverend Lucius Walker, the founder of the Caravans for Peace initiative, reiterated her respect for the example Cuba gives to the world.

She stressed that many U.S. citizens are angry at Biden's refusal and inability to lift the blockade or at least abolish the 243 measures adopted by his Republican predecessor Donald Trump, which tightened that hostile policy.

Pastors for Peace was founded in 1988 as an IFCO project in response to the then Ronald Reagan administration's hostility in Latin America. The caravans started in 1992 on the initiative of Reverend Lucius Walker, who was a close friend of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro.

The caravan is part of the growing solidarity with Cuba movement in the United States. Precisely on November 15, the night in New York was once more lit up with billboard messages demanding for the end of the U.S. blockade imposed on Cuba and against White House-backed destabilizing campaigns.

With that same objective, a rally was held that same day in front of the Cuban embassy in Washington, while days earlier, a donation of food and medicine had been shipped by solidarity groups such as CodePink, Bridges of Love and The People's Forum.



Pastors for Peace had a meeting with president Miguel Díaz-Canel in Palacio de la Revolución. PHOTO: Estudios Revolución.



More Biotechnology for Cuba and the World

By Claudia **DUPEYRÓN**

HAVANA.- The new biotechnological complex at the Mariel Special Development Zone, the first of the three high technology centers expected to be created in that area located west of Havana, is the most modern of the country and one of the most innovative in Latin America.

Eduardo Martínez Díaz, President of the BioCubaFarma (BCF) business group, said a group of projects is being promoted, some of which have attracted the attention of foreign investors from different countries.

"We are convinced that we will have other similar, biotechnological and pharmaceutical complexes here," he said recently.

Inaugurated on November 1, the work is considered the most important investment made with 100 percent Cuban capital. In the beginning, Abdala COVID-19 vaccine developed by the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Center will be produced there, together with other medicines made by groups that belong to BCF.

Those medicines include HeberFERON (the combination of interferon alpha 2b and interferon gamma), Jusvinza, the therapeutic vaccine against hepatitis B and new formulations of Heberprot-P, the only effective medicine in the world to treat diabetic foot ulcers.

According to its directors, they plan to increase the production of CIMAvax-EFG vaccine developed by

the Molecular Immunology Center to treat lung cancer.

Engineer Catalina Álvarez, the general director of the complex, announced it is expected to produce up to 15,000 vaccine bottles per hour, as the industrial complex has two facilities, one with conditions to fill 12,000 flasks per hour and the other 3,000 per hour.

"We'll begin producing 12,000 bottles and, depending on how the production schemes are designed, we'll be able to make over 30 million doses in six months, stated Álvarez.

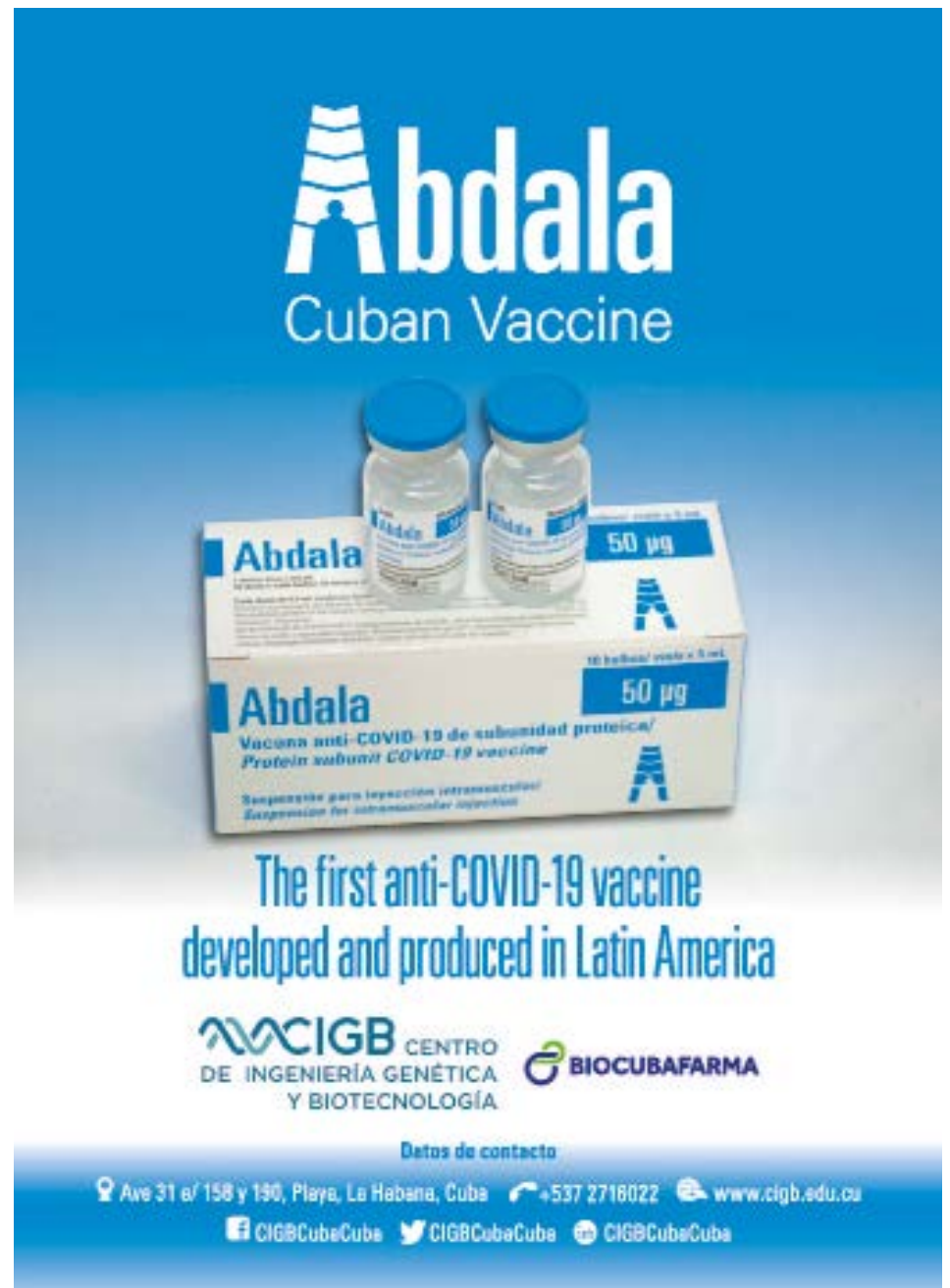
CIGB-Mariel also has labs for quality control, warehouse for raw materials and final products, plants to obtain the active ingredient in the vaccines and immunogens in the form of liquid, powder and spray formulations.

In the future, they will produce the new formulation of Heberprot-P to treat patients with advanced stages of diabetic foot ulcers.

Therefore, we are trying to obtain new preparation to reduce the frequency with which patients have to go to the clinic to get the treatment, Martínez told *The Havana Reporter*.

"These formulations are in microspheres or nanovesicles, protected from the protease present in the damaged area. The molecule lasts longer where it is applied, thus reducing the number of doses needed," he explained.

"Enhancing Heberprot-P effectiveness is not easy because it is effective already," but the results are expected to be better with the new formulations than those of the current medicine.



Vaccination Strategy against COVID-19

By Nara **RAMS**

HAVANA.- Ever closer to the goal of having almost the entire population vaccinated against Covid-19 with its own products, Cuba is now focusing its immunization strategy on booster doses to further strengthen protection against the virus.

Cuban adults and children from two to 18 years of age – the latter, the first pediatric population to be vaccinated in the world – were applied a three-dose scheme, two of Soberana 02 and one of Soberana Plus, produced by the Finlay Vaccine Institute (IFV), and three of Abdala, by the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Center (CIGB).

The other important milestone the island made was to prove hyper-immunity in recovered patients when administered an anti-COVID dose, said Dr Rolando Pérez Rodríguez, director of Scientific Policy at the Biotechnological and Pharmaceutical Industries Group (BioCubaFarma).

In a press conference held last November, Pérez explained that in convalescent patients with low levels after having the disease, the immune response is activated when a vaccine dose is administered.

"That phenomenon shows us that stimulating immunological memory allows the development of that response and generates antibodies with high capacity to neutralize the virus," he stressed.

He also recalled that a three-dose scheme is used with the Cuban sub-unit vaccines to induce a response in an interval that goes from 15 days to one month, unlike other technological platforms with two injections applied within three or four weeks.

Up to the moment, 27 countries have approved the administration of booster doses – 12 of them in Latin America. In addition, 25 Italian volunteers participated last November in the Soberana Plus Turin clinical trial, an exploratory study to assess the vaccine's reactogenicity and immunogenicity in COVID-19 convalescents and other individuals with no previous case of the disease and immunized with other SARS-CoV-2 vaccines.



The other important milestone was to prove hyper-immunity in recovered patients. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

The expert also noted that after receiving authorization to conduct a study with the Soberana 01 vaccine candidate, the formulation will be used in other institutions in the provinces of Havana and Cienfuegos.

In this sense, IFV Research director, Dr. Dagmar García Rivera, commented that the Soberana 01 study is aimed at deepening on what happens after the administration of the booster, as well as verifying its capacity to attain this objective and making a comparison with the results obtained with Soberana Plus, which is currently administered to recovered patients as a single dose.

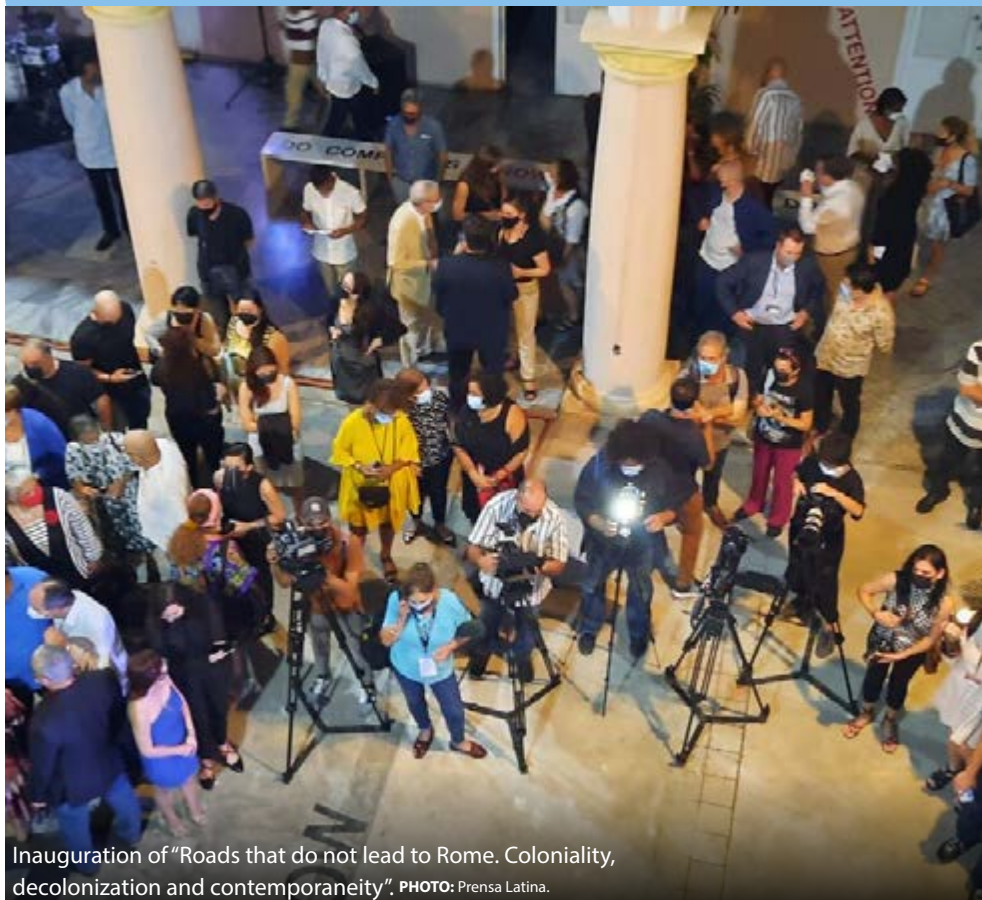
García Rivera revealed evidence of a favorable duration of the response in people vaccinated with both shots, as well as with the Soberana 01 booster in patients vaccinated with Pfizer, produced by the United States and Germany.

Dr. Miladys Limonta Fernández, CIGB coordinator for the anti-COVID-19 vaccine candidates' development projects, highlighted Abdala's suitability to stimulate immunological response as booster doses.

The shot's capacity was proven in convalescent people who were previously vaccinated with other formulations, such as Sputnik (Russia) and Sinopharm (China), and in those vaccinated five months before with the complete scheme of Soberana 02 and Soberana Plus, and Abdala.

As an additional data, the use of Abdala as a booster dose is effective in people over and under the age of 60, she concluded.

Space for the future and continuity



Inauguration of "Roads that do not lead to Rome. Coloniality, decolonization and contemporaneity". PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

By Barbara **JANSEN**

HAVANA.- As part of its encounter with visual arts, the 14th edition of the Havana Biennial pays attention to the discourse of countries located on the fringes of the centers of power and with a new format, opens up to new knowledge in a year marked by COVID-19.

Over 300 international artists will attend all three experiences that compose the event, whose declaration, "Yes to the Havana Biennial," has toured the world in six languages as a form of denunciation of the manipulation campaign against holding the celebration.

The biggest contemporary art event in Cuba, the Biennial started with the opening of a collective exhibition of creators from Spain, Mexico, France, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Jordan, Argentina, South Africa, Brazil, Bolivia, the United Kingdom and the host country.

Including artists from almost all the continents, the exhibition "Roads that do not lead to Rome. Coloniality, decolonization and contemporaneity" marked the debut of the first experience, called Preámbulos (Preamble). Other outstanding proposals, such as the collective exhibitions Disonancias (Disagreement) and Detrás del Muro (Behind the Wall), catapulted the works of hardly-known national sculptors, while the theoretical program – to be held until December 5 – analyzed topics such as the function of arts in times of crisis, decolonization as an act of freedom, ecology and sustainability.

Under the motto "Future and Contemporaneity," the Biennial completes its proposals with the experiences The Havana of the Biennial and Return to Future, foreseen to take place from December 6 to March 24 and from March 25 to April 30, respectively.

As a curatorial megaproject, the event not only tries to contribute to a better understanding of current topics upon the basis of an artistic space that on many occasions is left out of major circuits, but also to "offer the possibility of expressing the authentic culture of our peoples," said Nelson Rodríguez, director of the Havana Biennial, an event that overcame failed boycott attempts.

Gallery experts, critics and specialists from Latin America joined the novel dynamics of the event that for the first time will be extended for six months and summons Cuban artists to show projects connected to the curatorial concept.

Other outstanding proposals included in-person and virtual debates conducted by renowned specialists such as Patrick Flores, director of the Singapore Biennial and El Hadij Malick, director of the Dakar Biennial, who socialized their practices on the evolution of this type of event in the Middle East.

As part of its endeavor to make the Cuban contemporary art visible, the Havana Biennial offered notable moments, such as the granting of the 2020 National Visual Arts Award to engraver Rafael Zarza and the opening of several visual art exhibitions by famous Cuban artists Flora Fong and José Villa Soberón.

Latin Grammy to Cha cha chá: Tribute to the traditional

By Claudia **MADEN**

HAVANA.- The expectation of artists and fans were high during the 2021 Latin Grammy Award, an event that captured the international sound scene, with the sight set on Cuba and its musical creators. The MGM Grand Garden Arena of Las Vegas, Nevada in the United States, not only witnessed the granting of 45 out of the 53 awards the event gives, but also the success of the best traditional tropical music made this year in Cuba: the album Cha cha chá: Homenaje a lo tradicional (Cha cha chá: Tribute to the traditional), by the Aragón orchestra and singers Alain Pérez and Issac Delgado.

During the ceremony, Pérez and Delgado (the latter, with his son) went on the stage and caressed the golden gramophone in surprise of their success, which proved the merits of the cha cha chá rhythm, one of the genres of the Cuban music in the world after its commercial explosion in the 1950s. Produced by the Musical Recording and Editing Company of Cuba (EGREM) and El Cerrito Records Studio of California, the United States, the awarded album shows that musical creation in Cuba is a phenomenon that still undergoes constant development and is able to stand out in any stage, in spite of strong pressures.

In this edition, the event could not ignore the unquestionable values of

these sounds, which have influenced the paradigms of not few styles and sonorities for decades and are a reason for admiration, said the Cuban company – the oldest in the island.

A tribute to Aragón orchestra and its founder, Rafael Lay – referents of the charanga genre and identity in Cuba – the phonogram added its legacy to the creative universe of multiple instrument player Alain Pérez, responsible for all musical arrangements with director Isaac Delgado. The album, recorded on November 2020 at the EGREM Estudios 18, in Havana, was mixed and mastered by El Cerrito Records, in California. It included Cuban flute player Orlando Valle "Maraca" as special guest.

The production won the category that included renowned Latin artists, such as José Aguirre Cali Big Band, with Gente con alma (People with soul); Chabuco, with Chabuco en La Habana (Chabuco in Havana); Jon Secada and Gonzalo Rubalcaba, with Solos (Alone), and Leoni Torres, with Alma cubana (Cuban soul).

Prior to the celebration, the Latin Recording Academy granted the Musical Excellence Award to renowned exponents of the region, such as Joaquín Sabina, Fito Páez, Martinho da Vila, Emmanuel, Sheila E. & Pete Escovedo, Milly Quezada and Gilberto Santa Rosa, for the outstanding artistic value of their creative contributions to the Latin music and their communities.



Best traditional tropical music for Cha cha chá: Tribute to the traditional, by the Aragón orchestra and singers Alain Pérez and Issac Delgado. PHOTO: Internet.

War Media in 2021

By Isaura**DIEZ**

HAVANA.- The use of the mass media in the nonconventional war against the Cuban government has been a constant feature in 2021, ranging from attacks on the social network up to the politicization of music awards.

As part of that cyberspace war, Twitter is one of the most belligerent platforms against the island. The use of hashtags inciting subversion in Cuba was a priority this year.

The social network founded by U.S. tycoon Dorsey manipulates trends for users who, instead of reading #CubaVive on the front page, got direct access to a hashtag posted by destabilizing groups.

Days before the unconstitutional demonstration convened for last November 15, Twitter placed #15NCuba at the top

of all trends, although two of its five tweets y retweets came from three accounts only.

With fake news, users @mjorgec1994, @agusantonetti and @yuniortrebol accounted for 40 percent of the world initial movements related to that tag on Twitter, according to Trendsmap site.

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez recently denounced the destabilizing campaign plotted and funded by the United States, which aims at repeating the July 11 disturbances, when citizens looted establishments and caused chaos.

According to Julián Macías, Spanish expert in digital strategies and social networks, the violent events in Cuba on July 11 bear some similarities with anti-government incidents in other countries.

According to the expert, boots or fake accounts, as well as politicians, influencers and organizations are involved in the

misinformation campaign against the island.

"It's striking when you see accounts posting over a thousand tweets in only one day. When we analyze them we know the same texts have been copied and pasted, and that there is no human action behind that operation," he noted.

A STRATEGY REPEATED IN NOVEMBER

After the call to hold an illegal protest last November 15 failed, some websites that advocate a change of regime on the island affirmed that Cuba was a country in chaos, with militarized streets and repressive actions on every corner. Days earlier, newspapers such as El País, The New York Times and CNN, just to mention a few, had prepared the scenario for the alleged action that would follow the advices and supervision of the National Cuban-American Foundation: to wear white clothes and carry a rose.

Cuban authorities and the press showed evidence that Yunior García, one of the main organizers of the demonstration, had links with U.S.-based terrorists, movements and organizations.

Celebrations, a fair, concerts and an initiative to support the revolution were held one day earlier (November 14), while on Monday 15th, Cuban children went back to school and the country opened its borders to international tourism.

However, the alternative reality that some websites and media wanted to sell was that of a rebellion in Cuba, which is why jokes and surprise flooded the social networks upon knowing that Yunior García had secretly left for Spain.

FROM WASHINGTON'S POCKETS TO THE MEDIA'S WALLET

Dr. of Communication Sciences Rosa Miriam Elizalde told *The Havana Reporter* that "for more than 60 years, the media has played a major role in the war against the Cuban government, using it to promote a so called change of regime."

The specialist said more than 150 newspapers or websites, mostly digital, have been created with the word Cuba in the root of the domain, where the professional origin does not actually matter but the very much politicized and sensationalist discourse, which generally reproduces plenty of fake news.

Official figures reveal that between 1996 and 2021, the U.S. Congress allocated nearly 404 million dollars to so called "democracy" programs.

According to those documents, platforms such as Directorio Cubano, Cubanet, Diario de Cuba, Hypermedia editorial, among others, have been the main beneficiaries of that financing.

This year they featured sensationalist headlines, rarely quoted sources, posted very ideological contents and pieces by independent writers and acted like a cluster to spread fake news.



PHOTO: ACN.



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Enriqueta Favez's Life Taken to Theater

By Liz**BOBADILLA**

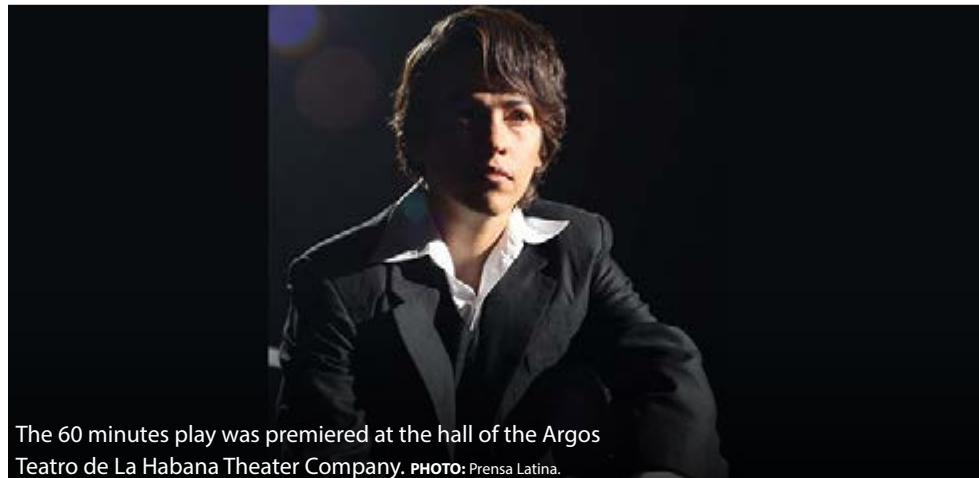
HAVANA.- Capable of breaking patriarchal stereotypes, Swiss Enriqueta Favez went beyond the bounds of time to inspire Cuban artists such as Liliana Lam and Alberto Corona, who turned her transgressions into a play.

Lam and Corona took Cuban writer Julio César González Pages' book *Por andar vestida de hombre* (For walking around dressed as a man) to the theater, which deals with the life of Favez. She was tried for assuming a male identity to be able to work as a doctor upon arriving in Cuba in 1819.

It all started at the end of 2019, when Lam wanted to make a monologue about the book. After several attempts, with the pandemic and some works in between, "we sat down and wrote the play in 20 days approximately," Corona told The Havana Reporter.

The result was touching, as the play script covers all the research contained in the volume, which goes inside "a character that was controversial for her time and has been known up to these days," said the actor and director of the play entitled *Favez*.

According to Corona, making the play was an interesting process, because this is his first time as director and Lam's first time doing a monologue, which aims at depicting the



The 60 minutes play was premiered at the hall of the Argos Teatro de La Habana Theater Company. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

lead character's legacy as a forerunner of women's rights, able to fight for her dreams and appreciate humanity.

The 60 minutes play, which was premiered at the hall of the Argos Teatro de La Habana Theater Company, consists of four scenes that recreate Enriqueta's life in Baracoa, Guantánamo province, up to the events that changed the course of her life.

"Every episode of her life is told; her fight for happiness, the misunderstanding and cruelty with which she was treated when her real sex was discovered. But, above all, it is about her courage and strength (of character). It is a call to make people understand that every person

has the right to be happy," the monologue summarizes.

Married at the age of 15, a widow shortly afterwards and with a daughter that died days after she was born, Favez changed her clothes and appropriated the male condition of her husband to study medicine in Paris. She served as surgeon of the Napoleonic troops before coming to Cuba.

Once in Cuba, she challenged all the laws discriminating women of her time by dressing in men's clothes to practice medicine. She broke with racial barriers by rendering her services to black people and married another woman: Juana de León, arising indignation

within the bourgeois catholic society that sent her to prison.

She spent her last years in New Orleans, the United States, where she lived in a convent as Sister Magdalena and provided health services to the poor. She then provided missionary services in Mexico.

It's not surprising then that this figures is in the center of an artistic project of this kind because, ever since the book was published by Editorial de la Mujer publishing company (2012), "it has generated strong debates, it's full of anecdotes and natural forces; she is a woman that broke with norms and prejudices," said writer González-Pagés, who is also a professor and an anthropologist.

Two centuries after those events, several creators have approached her life, such as Fernando Pérez and Laura Cazador with the film *Insumisas*; Rolando Almirante with the documentary *Enriqueta y Adela* (*Enriqueta and Adela*); Tanya with the song *Libertad disfrazada* (*Disguised Freedom*); Tony Díaz with the play *Escándalo en la trapa* (*Scandal at La Trappe*) and José Villa Soberón with a sculpture.

Enriqueta Favez broke with stigmas of her time. Her decisions acquire special dimensions when people such as Corona and Lam retake her story and give back to society an example of what a woman is capable of doing when she embraces her identity.

Homage to Eusebio Leal

By Yaimara**PORTUONDO**

HAVANA.- A life-size bronze sculpture of the late Havana City's Historian Eusebio Leal was placed at the entrance of the emblematic Palacio de los Capitanes Generales (Palace of the Captain Generals), today the City Museum.

Sculpted by Cuban artist José Villa Soberón and his assistant Gabriel Cisneros, the piece represents the beloved historian making a quick step and waving his right arm.

A commemorative plaque dedicated to Leal was also placed in the building's courtyard, with a phrase that summarizes his dedication to the city: "I wanted to enclose Old Havana in the walls of a museum but it made me a prisoner of its walls forever."

Artist Leo D'Lázaro was the one that made the bas-relief for the sculpture, while Argel Calcines, director of *Opus Habana Magazine*, conceived the epigraphic project. In the meantime, artists José Duverger, Juan Carlos Botello and Michael González, Cultural Heritage Director, participated in the installation of the plaque.



The bronze sculpture was placed at the entrance of the emblematic Palace of the Captain Generals. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Handmade and Without Permission

By Yayi**CISNEROS**

There are different ways to promote a plastic work or an artistic exhibition. The poster is one of them. With *A mano y sin permiso*, Galería Habana (gallery) presents, through 82 posters from Eduardo Marín's collection, the peculiar zone where two strong sides of our visual world converge. The borders between art and design are unclear, nothing is entirely pure or impure; it is a mixture.

The pieces shown are from the early 1980s up to our days. The oldest pieces from the collection allow to identify a generation of young Cuban plastic artists that resorted to posters as a means to advertise their first individual or collective exhibitions.

More than once, the posters exhibited have turned out to generate controversy. Opened until the end of December, the exhibition once again proposes a return with a critical look, now focused on the specific aspect of its expression in the form of poster.

With regards to plastic arts in Cuba, this exhibition centers attention on an almost legendary period, thus showing, among other points of interest, the creator's attitude towards the artistic event, towards the individual and generational work and its contemporary socio-cultural contexts.



The exhibition presents 82 posters from Eduardo Marín's collection.

A Square of Missionaries, Musicians and Fountains in Havana

By Danay**GALLETI**

HAVANA.- Declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, the oldest region of the Cuban capital has monuments, obelisks, fountains, statues and sculptures that were built to recall cultural figures connected with the city.



The Fountain of the Lions, a masterpiece by Italian sculptor Giuseppe Gagini. PHOTOS: Prensa Latina.

Its peculiar squares are recurrent spaces where those buildings converge, many of which date back to the Spanish colonial period, traditionally located in the busiest areas of what is known as the historic district.

Erected near Havana's Avenida del Puerto (Port Avenue), between Oficio and Amargura Streets, the Plaza de San Francisco de Asís (Saint Francis of Assisi Square) stands



The Plaza de San Francisco de Asís (Saint Francis of Assisi Square) stands out for its ancestral symbolism.

out for its ancestral symbolism. It was a place where locals could witness bullfights, executions, plays, parties and tournaments.

Its name changed at least ten times over the years, depending on the period. Years ago it comprised the Customs House building, an outdoor market and a convent built in 1575 by the Franciscan Order. For centuries, the convent's tower was the highest point in Havana.

In 1836, the square was provided with another of its symbols: The Fountain of the Lions, a masterpiece by Italian sculptor Giuseppe Gagini. The square also features the statue of a friar carrying a child, alluding to the visit Majorcan missionary Junípero Serra made to Havana before leaving for Alta California.

The square changed its surroundings in 2021 when the sculpture entitled La Conversacion (The Conversation) was unveiled. The piece was made by contemporary French artist Étienne Piro and donated to the City Historian's Office by Italian Vittorio Perrotta. The concept of the new sculptural work breaks with the area's traditional image.

The piece represents two people holding a conversation, an action that trains our thought, enriches our language, shapes our personality, helps control emotions and reminds us of the importance of communication to maintain and strengthen friendship ties among countries. Another sculpture that enhances the Saint Francis of Assisi Square is the one that represents Polish pianist Federico Chopin seated on a bench. Made by sculptor Adam Myjak, who graduated at the Fine Arts Academy in Warsaw, dedicated to reflect the composer's last stage of life.

Majestic Building Houses Culture in Sancti Spíritus

By Mayra**PARDILLO**

SANCTI SPIRITUS.- The majestic building that served as El Progreso Club in the province of Sancti Spiritus, today the Rubén Martínez Villena Provincial Library, captivates people from its marble staircase up to the emblematic dome.

Next on the list of what are considered the three architectural jewels of the city – the Main Parochial Church, the Bridge over the Yayabo River and the Main Theater- this cultural institution has been available to all people alike for many years, regardless of race, origin or religious belief.

Although the main symbols of Sancti Spíritus, founded in 1514, are all three mentioned above, many locals have a special feeling for that imposing small palace, which allows discovering the mysteries hidden in every book or publication.

Also captivating are its community-oriented function, the variety of its bibliographic funds and its location in front of the central Serafín Sánchez Valdivia Park, named after a local hero of the three independence wars waged against Spanish colonialism.

The sculptures at the entrance are the prelude to what the building keeps inside: large mirrors exhibited on both sides of the wide hall, while the gorgeous stained glass dome can be seen from the marble iron railing staircases.

Built in the first half of the 20th century, the town's most luxurious building is also appreciated by foreign visitors. It was turned into a library in December 1963.

The first stone was placed on October 10, 1927, and its construction was entrusted to master builder Pepe Trelles, one of the

most representative of the period. The work was completed two years later.

According to sources consulted by this author, the building was erected in the place formerly occupied by a big house destroyed by a mysterious fire.

On January 6, 1959, as he was heading to the Cuban capital after defeating the

Fulgencio Batista regime, the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution Fidel Castro Ruz visited the center and addressed its residents from one of its balconies.

On the second floor, a bust of National Hero José Martí (1853-1895), considered the most universal of all Cubans, welcomes visitors.

The beautiful institution is surrounded by highly valuable patrimonial buildings, in the heart of the city's historic district, which was declared National Monument.



Built in the first half of the 20th century, the building was turned into a library in December 1963. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

World Academy of Sciences

By Ana Laura **ARBESÚ**

HAVANA.- Cuban scientist Tania Crombet was chosen to join, the World Academy of Sciences (TWAS).

Together with Gerardo Guillén Nieto and Ernesto Altshuler, she will be part of that institution, which also groups another ten Cubans. Among them are Lilliam Álvarez Díaz, Academic Secretary of Cuba's Academy of Sciences, and Luis Herrera Martínez, a well-known scientist of the Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering Center, who is currently the Scientific and Commercial Assistant of BioCubaFarma business group.

It is not an individual recognition because contemporary scientist research means teamwork, she told **The Havana Reporter**.

Crombet, who worked in the development of molecules like the one in the lung cancer vaccine, said her membership is also an honor but above all, a great commitment and responsibility by representing Cuba at the world academy for scientific achievements in developing countries.

The scientist, who is the current director of Clinical Research at the Molecular Immunology Institute (CIM) and leads several projects of impact on human health in her country and the world, noted it is in recognition of the Cuban scientific community.

There are other Cuban academics of great prestige that form part of it, as well as others with brilliant and internationally renowned careers that undoubtedly deserve this distinction, she stressed. Crombet, who is also a member of the team of international experts in the fight of COVID-19 in the world, told this publication what her designation means to her.

"In my case, it is by no means an individual recognition. It is in recognition of CIM and the doctors of health institutions that are the real protagonists of the research, because there is a dedicated staff behind each clinical trial."

Also, it is an homage to Cuban science and the work of the leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, who in 1960, when the illiteracy rate in Cuba was very high, proclaimed that the future of the country would necessarily be a future of men and women of sciences, because the revolution's task would be to open opportunities to sciences.

TWAS presently has 584 members. One of the missions of its council, which is elected every three years, is to benefit the



Tania Crombet said her membership is an honor but above all, a great commitment and responsibility by representing Cuba.

PHOTO: ACN.

development of sciences in developing countries by granting scholarships and subsidizing research works.

The other Cuban members are Lila Castellanos Serra, Biotechnologist and founder of CIGB; Hugo Pérez Rojas, permanent research at the Institute of Cybernetics, Mathematics and Physics; María Guadalupe Guzmán, Head of the Pedro Kouri's Diagnostics Research Center, Manuel Limonta, TWAS Vice President; and Vicente Verez Bencomo, Director of the Finlay Vaccine Institute.

Lights and Shadows of the Glasgow Climate Change Conference

By Néstor **MARÍN**

LONDON.- The recent Climate Change Conference (COP26) ended up with conflicting opinions about the failure or success of an event that was seen as the last chance to adopt actions to save the planet. In the view of optimists, the summit managed to keep alive the goal of limiting the rise of global temperature to 1.5 Celsius degrees, even though disagreements among the almost 200 participating countries about the language of the final text forced to extend the event one more day than the schedule predicted.

We made huge progress in COP26. We've kept 1.5 alive and made huge progress on coal, financing and reforestation, said the host leader, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson. According to the British conservative, the event will be seen as the moment in which humanity finally decided to take climate change seriously, although there is still a lot to do to save the planet, he admitted. Coal and subsidies to fossil fuels were the apple of discord that forced COP26 to go to extra time at the Scottish Event Campus in order to be able to approve the final declaration.

An initial call to speed up efforts to eliminate the use of coal in plants lacking the

adequate technology to capture pollutant emissions and inefficient subsidies to oil and gas, were finally included in the text, as part of an appeal to attain a "progressive reduction."

According to critics, including environmentalists who stayed in the streets of Glasgow for two weeks – the time the conference lasted – the agreement is far from perfect and fell short of expectations. COP26 concluded and here is a brief summary: blah blah blah, wrote in Twitter young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, who became an icon in the fight against climate change since she started demonstrating every Friday outside the Swedish Parliament

to demand urgent actions against the deterioration of the environment.

The Fridays for future global movement, which drew inspiration from the Swedish student's weekly demonstration, also stated "fury" for the outcome of COP26 and recalled that over 500 lobbyists for companies that extract and sell fossil fuels participated in the event.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, also shared his reservations about the success of the event hosted by the world body.

The outcome of COP26 was a compromise that reflects the interests, the contradictions and the state of political will in the world today, and although it is an important step, it is not enough. It is time to go into emergency mode, Guterres affirmed.

Developing nations, for their part, made it clear that industrialized countries, which are ultimately responsible for damaging the environment and the most that emit more pollutant gasses, have the moral obligation of helping them face and mitigate the impact of climate change. They also complained about not seeing much of the 100 billion annual dollars promised in 2009.

Cuba, a country that makes efforts to implement a sustainable development project in spite of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States, rejected the application of unilateral measures that mean exclusion or limitation when accessing the so-called green fund.

Criticism apart, not few experts consider that the Glasgow Declaration was ultimately pretty progressive, especially because for the first time in over 30 years, the topic of fossil fuels and the pressing need of doing without them to stop global warming was placed on the table.



The summit managed to keep alive the goal of limiting the rise of global temperature to 1.5 Celsius degrees. PHOTO: Internet.

Morro Castle stands out for its beauty

Text and Photos Roberto F. CAMPOS

HAVANA.- The Morro Castle in eastern Santiago de Cuba, one of Cuba's most beautiful fortresses, stands out as a perfect silhouette at the entrance of the bay.

This attractive site, built as a result of the commercial and political rivalries prevailing in the Caribbean region in the 17th century, is known for the history it entails and the view it affords, one of the most striking in the island. The San Pedro de la Roca Castle, the official name of the fortress, is composed of a series of facilities erected in a rocky hill with the objective of protecting the entrance of the important Bay of Santiago de Cuba.

This intricate complex of forts, bastions and batteries is the most complete and best-preserved example of the Spanish-American military architecture, with Italian and Renaissance design.

In 1997, it was included in the list of World Heritage Sites by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The castle was built on a cliff that is over 20 meters high. Because of the rocky surface, the elements that compose it were erected on a series of terraces and united by a group of stairs.

The oldest part of the castle is the La Lengua del Agua Fortress, where the construction of this important and strategic site started in 1590.

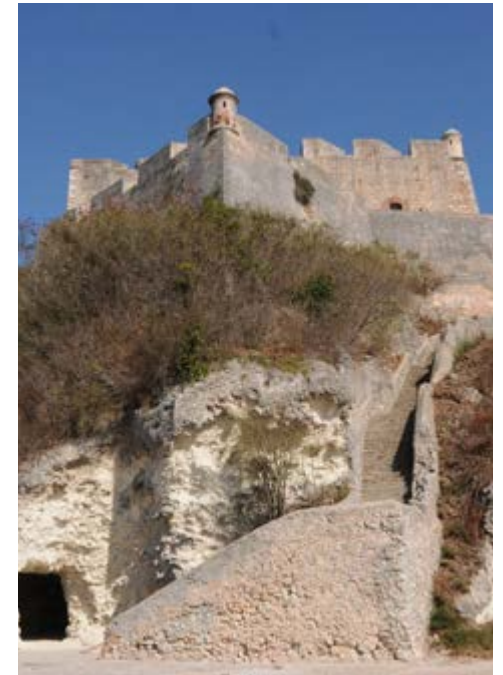
The castle, damaged by the 1675, 1678 and 1679 earthquakes and rebuilt from 1693 to 1695, stands out for its batteries La Estrella and Santa Catalina – interconnected and located in the channel that leads to the bay of Santiago de Cuba – and Aguadores, in the southern part.

Designed by Italian military engineer Juan Bautista Antonelli, the complex started to be built in 1638, during the government of Don Pedro de la Roca y Borjas, hence its name.

During the War of Independence, the fortress was considered obsolete from the defensive point of view and thus turned into a military prison by the Spanish government.

On July 3, 1898, the castle witnessed the Santiago de Cuba Naval Battle between the Spanish fleet headed by Vice Admiral Pascual Cervera and a U.S. squadron, an event that marked the end of Spain's colonial control in the Américas.

After the conclusion of the Cuban-American-Spanish War, the fortress was occupied by the U.S. army, and in 1904, it was registered as a property of the Cuban State.



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November Elections in Latin America

By Alain **VALDÉS**

HAVANA.- November was the month of elections in 2021, a year that has almost come to its end in Latin America with turnouts in Nicaragua, Argentina, Chile and Venezuela, while in Honduras, voters are still to go to the polls.

As it usually happens in all electoral processes, the abovementioned elections are a reflection of their national realities, the strength of the different political stances and in some cases, the reaffirmation of the majority's support to a given management model.

Nicaragua and Venezuela are an example of the last-mentioned case; the first, with the reelection of President Daniel Ortega for a new term as a result of a process that was not known beforehand by the national, continental and world right headed by the United States and the European Union, in an attempt to wipe the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) off the political board.

As an FSLN candidate, Ortega won the polls with 75.87 percent of the valid votes, which represented the support of 2,093,834 Nicaraguans – of the over 4.4 million with the right to vote.

Meanwhile, in Bolívar's homeland, the Socialist United Party of Venezuela (PSUV) won 20 of the 23 governor's position of the country – in addition to the Caracas City Hall, one of the most important – with the endorsement

of international observers, who confirmed the legitimacy of the process.

The victory of Chavismo thwarts the plans of the internal opposition, Washington and Brussels to find a pretext to justify the aggressions against Caracas, especially the economic ones, in spite of the will of the government of President Nicolás Maduro's to engage in dialogue.

Even though progressive ideas won two important victories in Latin America, the result of the Argentinean legislative elections shows a different panorama, while

in Chile the end of the presidential elections is still up in the air.

In Argentina, the party of President Alberto Fernández – Frente de Todos – lost majority in the Senate after winning only 35 of the 72 seats available, while in the House of Representatives, it won 119 of the 257 seats.

Experts agree that with such a correlation of forces, it will not be easy for Fernández to rule; thus, the strategy of anticipating programmatic disagreements and urging representatives of the popular will and different political stances to agree on a common agenda.

The case of Chile is still a pending story that goes to a second round on December 19 between the two candidates with the highest number of votes: conservative José Antonio Kast, from the extreme-right Republican Party and young Gabriel Boric, from the left coalition Apruebo Dignidad.

None of the candidates is affiliated to the parties that have ruled the country in the last three decades, a clear sign of discredit of the traditional political formations, especially after the social uprising of 2019.

A former student leader, Boric (35) promises to strengthen the role of the State, impose higher taxes to the rich and move forward towards a new, fair and sustainable economic project.

Kast, a 55-year lawyer, is a fanatical champion of neoliberalism who plans to reduce public expenditure, cut taxes to big companies and foster free market.

Hence, the Chileans have to choose between two diametrically opposed programs to rebuild a country that needs a new social pact and in which the State still uses tactics that are typical of the Pinochet dictatorship to guarantee governability.



Chile goes to a second round on December 19 between the two candidates with the highest number of votes: Kast and young Boric. PHOTO: Internet.

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Economic Links with Cuba's emigration

By Humberto **GONZÁLEZ**

HAVANA.- Cuba is going through a new stage in the relations with its community abroad, based on several factors that include the updating of its migration policy and of its economic model.

In addition, the development of new technologies facilitates the exchanges and the physical presence is not required to establish links, General Director for Consular Affairs and Attention to Residents Abroad of Cuba's Foreign Ministry, Ernesto Soberón, told *The Havana Reporter*.



General Director for Consular Affairs and Attention to Residents Abroad of Cuba's Foreign Ministry, Ernesto Soberón. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

For over 40 years, Cuba has firstly advocated a rapprochement policy towards nationals living abroad, and then the establishment of links with that community. They have shown greater interest in participating in the socioeconomic development process, he explained.

In that regard, the director stressed that today they have the possibility of establishing businesses in Cuba, both those living abroad permanently and the ones that still keep their Cuban residence.

There are prioritized sectors open to those investments, as well as smaller projects largely connected with local development, while they can also establish micro, small and mid-size enterprises (MIPYMES).

Although the MIPYMES are not considered foreign investment, they do allow to be part of the new actors called on to help boost the national economy, Ernesto Soberón emphasized.

The MINREX official reiterated that all those opportunities pave the way for a synergy that benefits both Cubans living abroad either permanently or temporarily, and the country.

In this sense, he added that those citizens can help in the search for projects that are of interest both for the Caribbean island, the countries where they reside and themselves. "We intend that the Cuban residents abroad promote development and wellbeing," stated Soberón.

This is a new process, but previous exchanges suggest there is certain interest in the agricultural sector, small and mid-size provincial industries, fish farming and services; that is to say, anything that makes the territorial economy more dynamic.

Foreign investment poses no impediments at all to Cuban residents abroad. In accordance with the law, a foreign investor is an individual or a legal entity with legal residence and capital abroad. Cubans have those same opportunities, he said.

The official explained that some of the investment options include: goods and services providers for Cuban entities, either in the form of consignment contract, operating leasing of small machineries or industries or as clients of Cuban exports.

Food production, renewable energy sources, tourism, industries likely to connect with the exporting activity and technological and innovative activities are among the projects in prioritized sectors.

In addition, they can be established as joint ventures, in the form of one hundred percent foreign capital or as international economic association agreements.

Last December, Cuba held the second Business Forum with 2,200 participants from 86 countries, giving room to debates and updated information with aimed at boosting foreign trade and investment.

Sustainable Agricultural Development at Marta Farm

By Raquel **DÍAZ**

HAVANA.- Marta Farm is a Cuban agroecological community project with a direct impact on territorial development, being the first private client authorized to operate at the Mariel Special Development Zone (ZEDM).

The leader of the initiative, Eduardo Funes, told *The Havana Reporter* that Marta Farm is a private business whose social objective is the production, processing and commercialization of vegetables, fruits and beekeeping products.

The idea is to apply science to the agricultural sector based on the knowledge accumulated over the years, he added.

The farm was established at ZEDM in February of this year, and "our intention is to create a sustainable agrarian community, a center that manages all this development at the territorial level," Funes explained.

"With that goal in mind we plan to create a network of farms -about 60- with their own program of cultivation, harvest and production cycles. It's not just about Marta Farm but of how to make an impact on the territory and multiply our knowledge," he stated.

A center for the processing of fruits and agricultural products will be built soon for their commercialization in different parts of the territory, Funes announced.

"We are currently getting ready to export, but in order to attain that goal, first of all we must know consumer behavior on the national market and get familiar with the international market. In addition, we must have enough production volumes," he said.

The project leader explained they have a cooperated production agreement with the Cuban Beekeeping Enterprise to sell some ten tons of honey each year from Marta Farm.

The history of this agro-ecological project located in Artemisa Province began 10 years go.

THE LEAP

Graduated from the Agrarian University of Havana, Funes is an agricultural engineer with 25-years' experience as researcher and professor, who one day decided to use his knowledge in Cuban agriculture.

"After visiting more than 40 countries in all five continents and meeting hundreds of farmers worldwide -from the most to the least developed- I realized I had not put my knowledge into practice and it felt like an empty chapter in my professional training," he commented.

"Then, the idea of the project came up, precisely when I was turning 40 and you want to do something different with your life," he said joking.

It was a family decision and although he had all their support, it was a very risky step, to invest all their savings, to renounce to the comforts of the academic life, to adapt to the physical efforts demanded by agricultural tasks, Funes recalled.

"Yet, we committed all our efforts to the project, beginning with the transformation of that abandoned place that was in very precarious conditions."

These past ten years have entailed huge personal sacrifices, he said. "We changed the pleasures of urban life for the rural life. It was much more than introducing good practices, technology and running a farm."

Today, Marta Farm has very good indicators of production, processing, commercialization and consumption. It focuses on horticulture, animal husbandry, beekeeping, environmental protection and the use of renewable energy sources.

"Nevertheless, we are coping with a fresh start that is our presence in Mariel now. We have new prospects, we must learn to deal with another level, another type of organization and with a lot more actors in the scene. But we must learn and learn by doing," he finished saying.



The leader of Finca Marta, Fernando Funes. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

AZCUBA aims at achieving exports with high added value



AZCUBA president Julio Andrés García. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

By Roberto **SALOMÓN**

HAVANA.- The AZCUBA Entrepreneurial Sugarcane Group aims to significantly increase labor productivity and exports with high added value in order to include itself in the world economy and attain food and energy sovereignty and security.

AZCUBA president Julio Andrés García recently highlighted the latest actions implemented in 2021, such as the restructuring of the sector – including the setting-up of 56 new sugar-producing agribusiness companies and a sugarcane mill – which give higher autonomy to this activity. Reintroducing connections between sugarcane entities and the industry in the same entrepreneurial organization will have a positive impact on sugarcane plantations, the production of sucrose, its by-products and the agricultural production in general, the official noted.

Those entities are expected to give a better yield in the 2021-2022 sugarcane harvest – and in subsequent years – as well as in the sowing of sugar cane and other tasks, as entrepreneurial interests are now in tune with those of the municipalities, which favors management at that level.

As a result, each company has independence; provincial structure disappears; municipal level grows stronger, and changes can be made in the research institutes and entities that support this activity. AZCUBA will only coordinate strategies and rule support companies.

The next harvest, which begins in December, will be shorter because of the lack of raw material, which demands higher efficiency in the tasks. The restructuring process conducted should contribute to that.

More Sorbitol and Bio-products.

This year, progress has been made in an investment at the sorbitol factory – about 500 kilometers east of Havana – for about 25 million dollars, which will contribute to its modernization and will favor the production of over 3,000 tons (t) of that by-product.

The capacity of the plant – 10 thousand t – has not been used to its best as shortly over 1,500 t have been produced annually; for that reason, the country has been forced to import a part of that item.

As a result of the abovementioned investment, a prebiotic product with a high added value and proven benefits for human and animal health could also be produced at the industrial level.

In addition, the Sugarcane Industry Central Laboratory was also opened this year in Havana by Cuban Vice President Salvador Valdés.

The facility will allow improving the quality of sugar, honey, alcohols and drinks, as well as the physical-mechanical and sugarcane research trials.

Other results are related to the production of enzymes for industrial and pharmaceutical use, the activation of pure wax plants and the combination of bio-products and new assortments, in order to reduce imports and the use of chemical products.

First Geo-park in Viñales

By Teyuné **DÍAZ**

HAVANA.- Cuba has its first national geo-park, a zone with an important geological and geomorphological heritage, rich in natural values and autochthonous species of the flora and fauna.

The Viñales Geo-park, is located at about 25 kilometers from the western city of Pinar del Río. It includes 57 geo-sites of which 10 have international value, 23 national, 18 regional and 6 local value.

In order to have more details about the natural and cultural values of this site, The Havana Reporter talked to Mario Sánchez and Manuel Vázquez, the Geo-park's director and scientific coordinator, respectively.

Sánchez explained that the area of Viñales is an important tourist destination in the province because of its values, including its landscape, which combines three ecosystems: valleys, slate heights and limestone formations, which hardly exist in the world.

On top of that, come the natural values of the flora and fauna, with several autochthonous species, as well as the vernacular architecture and rural traditions, such as the sowing and harvesting of tobacco and ten stance country songs, elements that are attributed to the cultural landscape.

The new designation will allow managing new ecotourism options to diversify the offer and thus contribute to controlling the loading capacity within Viñales Valley,

overexploited in some places because of the high number of visitors, the scientific coordinator added.

The geo-park will also contribute to the development of the territory and the communities, as other jobs could be created through either environmental training or education, which in turn could foster the preservation of the area's geological and geomorphological values.

The expert noted that such designation does not mean the absence of challenges in what regards the guarantee of a sustainable management; for that reason, it is essential to articulate actions among all institutions in view of its preservation. In line with this, the geo-routes proposed are located outside the Viñales central area, which is the most exploited by tourism.

Ten routes have already been established in the area to spread and promote the site's geological values. Each of those routes have different levels of complexity and in some parts, tours can be mixed and include both walks and car tours, Vázquez explained.

One of the greatest attractions of the area is the Prehistory Man-painted Mural, in the Dos Hermanas Valley, which tours the evolution of species from fossil materials found in the zone. A peculiar feature of this mural is that it is the biggest outdoors mural known. In addition, in order to interpret the passing of the years, it is read from left to right and when looked closely and from a short distance, onlookers can see a series of lines that were made to prevent the visual distortion of the painting. For that reason, when seen from any angle, the painting seems flat.

The geo-park's most outstanding values include the variety of karstic forms, either underground or on the surface, as well as the limestone and rock formations formed before, during and after the great impact of the so-called Chicxulub meteorite, which had an influence on the whole planet and caused the extinction of many species, including dinosaurs.



The Viñales Geo-park, is located at about 25 kilometers from the western city of Pinar del Río. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Prensa Latina Sports Champions

By Jhonah **DIAZ**

HAVANA.- Cuban wrestler Mijaín López, Venezuelan triple jumper Yulimar Rojas and the Argentinean soccer team were selected as virtual champions of the Prensa Latina sport survey, which again reached the international arena after a pause made in 2020 because of COVID-19.

After a season full of emotions and feats, over a hundred media outlets from all over the world selected the best representatives of sports in Latin America and the Caribbean in three categories: Best Male Athlete, Best Female Athlete and Best Team.

From start to end, as if it were a long distance race or sprint event, the winners showed their credentials to win the awards summoned from November 8 to December 17.

Performances at the Tokyo Games were no doubt vital when making the decisions. For that reason, López and Rojas climbed the Olympus of this News Agency, although the Argentinean soccer squad also stood out for its victory at the Americas Cup.

The Cuban Greco-Roman wrestler – Olympic champion in Beijing 2008, London 2012, Río de Janeiro 2016 and Tokyo 2020 – beat athletes such as Ecuadorian cyclist Richard Carapaz (third place in this year's Tour de France and winner of the Switzerland Tour), among other players.

Cuban boxers Andy Cruz and Julio César la Cruz – Olympic and world champions – and South American number one Lionel Messi (Barcelona/Paris Saint-Germain) – protagonist at the highest level of the so-called "universal sport" of the time – were also voted for.



The Venezuelan jumper set a world record in the Japanese capital with 15.67 meters. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Meanwhile, the Venezuelan jumper – who set a world record in the Japanese capital with 15.67 meters – easily defeated other outstanding contestants, such as Jamaican Elaine Thompson-Herah (athletics), Dominican Marileidy Paulino (athletics) and Brazilian Rebeca Andrade (gymnastics).

Rojas lived a year full of victories, in which she also won the Diamond League, exceeded 15 meters in eight competitions and recorded 7.27 in long jump – despite winds of more than 2.0 m/s.

The red-and-blue squad, for its part, got ahead of the Cuban canoeing duo composed of Fernando Dayán Jorge and

Serguey Torres – winner of C-2 1000 meters in Tokyo – and the Brazilian (Women) and Argentinean (Men) Volleyball teams.

Thus, after a long time due to the pandemic, Prensa Latina again casted off and sailed a sea of votes to praise the athletes that shined and honorably represented the region in the major sport events.

The table is now served for 2022, when new stories will make headlines, including countless medals, world records and athletic feats. In the meantime, see you soon! Chapeau!

Cuba dominates world boxing

By Yodeni **AGUILA**

HAVANA._ To the rhythm of straight punches and uppercuts, Cuba returned to the top of amateur boxing, when three of its eight boxers became world champions at the Stark Arena in the city of Belgrade.

Cuba's boxing team stood out among the hundred countries represented in the Serbian capital during the eleven days the competitions lasted, with the titles conquered by Julio César la Cruz (92 kg), Andy Cruz (63.5) and Yoenlis Hernández (75) bringing the number of gold medals won in 21 editions of the AIBA World Boxing Championships to 80. Once in the ring, La Cruz took revenge of the 2019 qualifying competition and conquered his fifth world title, thus becoming the second holder of most titles to his credit in the history of the International Boxing Association (AIBA), after his triumphs in Baku 2011, Almaty 2013, Doha 2015 and Hamburg 2017.

After defeating Italian Aziz Abbes 4-1 in the final competition, the Cuban heavyweight boxer closed 2021 undefeated, accompanying his compatriot Felix Savón (91), champion of Reno 1986, Moscow 1989, Sidney 1991, Tampere 1993, Berlin 1995 and Budapest 1997, on the list of the world's top boxers.

The brilliant performance in Belgrade of the Cuban two time Olympic champion was complemented by the gold won by lightweight boxer Andy Cruz, who remained undefeated in three world tournaments by

beating Turkish Karem Ozmen 5-0 in the final. His versatile performance earned him the Val Baker Prize as boxer with the best techniques in the tournament.

Cruz, 26, is the third representative of the Cuban Boxing School to win such distinction, together with Olympic champions Teófilo Stevenson (Moscow 1980) and Roberto Balado (Barcelona 1992).

Cuba's overall result was sealed by Hernández who, in spite of taking part in this kind of tournament for the first time, opened the path to the gold medal by defeating Russian Dzhambulat Bizhamov 4-1.

The other medals won by Cuba were also in the hands of newcomers to this kind of events, such as Osvel Caballero and Henrich Ruiz, who won bronze in the 57 and 86 kilogram divisions, respectively.

The Cuban team stands out as historic holder of 143 titles in world events (80-35-28), followed, for the American continent, by the United States (2-2-0), Brazil, (0-1-0), the Dominican Republic (0-0-1) and Trinidad and Tobago (0-0-1).

The U.S. team won four medals, led by Jahmal Harvey (57) and Robby Gonzalez (80). In the meantime, Keno Machado (86) won the silver and Nigel Paul (+92) of Trinidad and Tobago, and Dominican Alexy de la Cruz (60) gave the bronze to their countries.

For the first time in 75 years of AIBA history, the event in Belgrade granted medals in 13 weight categories and offered cash prizes. Scheduled for 2023, the upcoming Men's AIBA World Boxing Championships will be held in the Uzbek city of Tashkent for the first time.



The lightweight boxer Andy Cruz, undefeated in three world tournaments, won the gold medal. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.



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