

[Not a word about the blockade](#)

The U.S. administration announced through CNN that Obama would be visiting Mexico this week, in the first part of a trip that will take him to Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, where he will be within four days taking part in the Summit of the Americas. He has announced the relief of some hateful restrictions imposed by Bush to Cubans living in the United States regarding their visits to relatives in Cuba. When questions were raised on whether such prerogatives extended to other American citizens the response was that the latter were not authorized.

But not a word was said about the harshest of measures: the blockade. This is the way a truly genocidal measure is piously called, one whose damage cannot be calculated only on the basis of its economic effects, for it constantly takes human lives and brings painful suffering to our people.

Numerous diagnostic equipment and crucial medicines --made in Europe, Japan or any other country-- are not available to our patients if they carry U.S. components or software.

The U.S. companies producing goods or offering services anywhere in the world should apply these restrictions to Cuba, since they are extraterritorial measures.

An influential Republican Senator, Richard Lugar, and some others from his same party in Congress, as well as a significant number of his Democratic peers, favor the removal of the blockade. The conditions exist for Obama to use his talents in a constructive policy that could put an end to the one that has failed for almost half a century.

On the other hand, our country, which has resisted and is willing to resist whatever it takes, neither blames Obama for the atrocities of other U.S. administrations nor doubts his sincerity and his wishes to change the United States policy and image. We understand that he waged a very difficult battle to be elected, despite centuries-old prejudices.

Taking note of this reality, the President of the State Council of Cuba has expressed his willingness to have a dialogue with Obama and to normalize relations with the United States, on the basis of the strictest respect for the sovereignty of our country.

At 2:30 p.m., the head of the Interests Section of Cuba in Washington, Jorge Bolaños, was summoned to the State Department by Deputy Secretary of State Thomas Shannon. He did not say anything different from what had been indicated by the CNN.

At 3:15 p.m. a lengthy press conference started. The substance of what was said there is reflected in the words of Dan Restrepo, Presidential Adviser for Latin America.

He said that today President Obama had instructed to take certain measures, certain steps, to reach out to the Cuban people in support of their wishes to live with respect for human rights and to determine their own destiny and that of the country.

He added that the president had instructed the secretaries of State, Commerce and Treasury to undertake the necessary actions to remove all restrictions preventing persons to visit their relatives in the Island and sending remittances. He also said that the president had issued instructions for steps to be taken allowing the free flow of information in Cuba, and between those living in Cuba and the rest of the world, and to facilitate delivering humanitarian resources directly to the Cuban people.

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He also said that with these measures, aimed at closing the gap between divided Cuban families and promoting the free flow of information and humanitarian assistance to the Cuban people, President Obama was making an effort to fulfill the objectives he set out during his campaign and after taking on his position.

Finally, he indicated that all those who believe in the basic democratic values hope for a Cuba where the human, political, economic and basic rights of the entire people are respected. And he added that President Obama feels that these measures will help to make this objective a reality. The president, he said, encourages everyone who shares these wishes to continue to decidedly support the Cuban people.

At the end of the press conference, the adviser candidly confessed that 'all of this is for Cuba's freedom.'

Cuba does not applaud the ill-named Summits of the Americas, where our nations do not debate on equal footing. If they were of any use, it would be to make critical analyses of policies that divide our peoples, plunder our resources and hinder our development.

Now, the only thing left is for Obama to try to persuade all of the Latin American presidents attending the conference that the blockade is harmless.

Cuba has resisted and it will continue to resist; it will never beg for alms. It will go on forward holding its head up high and cooperating with the fraternal peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean; with or without Summits of the Americas; whether or not the president of the United States is Obama, a man or a woman, a black or a white citizen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fidel Castro', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Fidel Castro Ruz

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