

FOCAL's Research Forum on Cuba

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Highlights

Domestic Affairs: Cuba begins an experiment to close state-run lunchrooms. Official media suggest the idea of eliminating the ration card. The Cuban government acknowledges seven deaths from the AH1N1 flu virus. Cuban blogger Yoani Sanchez is denied government permission to travel to receive an award. Catholic publications urge the government to show more flexibility in domestic policy. The independent press and opposition organizations denounce harassment and detentions against dissidents.

Economy: Cuba has not benefited from sugar high prices in world market. The Cuban government is reopening abandoned factories. Cuba and Russia sign an agreement on fishery. Cuba and ALBA country members sign the implementation of the Unique System for Regional Compensation (SUCRE). Business between Cuba and four of its top five trading partners declines.

Exile Community: A strong majority of Cuban Americans favor allowing all Americans to travel to the island. Exile organizations criticize Spain's foreign policy towards Cuba. Consenso Cubano urges the Cuban Government to lift measures against the Cuban family.

Foreign Affairs: Cuba receives the visit of high dignitaries from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean. Venezuela welcomes a new group of 240 Cuban doctors. Cuba's Vice-President attends the ALBA Summit in Bolivia. The Spanish Foreign Minister visit to Cuba sparks controversial opinions. Ecuador's Vice-President meets with Fidel Castro. The Director General of the World Health Organization visits Cuba. The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly condemns the US trade embargo on Cuba.

Security: A military delegation from South Africa visits Cuba. ALBA Summit fails to agree on a military alliance.

US-Cuba Relations: The New York Philharmonic cancels its trip to Cuba. Cuban intellectuals and artists get visas to visit the US. Fidel Castro lauds the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Barack Obama. The sentence of one of the five Cubans imprisoned in the US is reduced. Cuba gives a top State Department official permission to visit dual US-Cuban citizens jailed on the island. The mayor of New Orleans visit Cuba. Fidel Castro blames visitors from the US for an increase of cases of swine flu.

Lo más relevante

Asuntos domésticos: Cuba inicia como experimento el cierre de comedores obreros. Medios oficiales sugieren la idea de eliminar la libreta de racionamiento. El gobierno cubano informa siete víctimas del virus de influenza AH1N1. El gobierno le niega a la bloguera cubana Yoani Sánchez el permiso de viaje para recoger un premio. Publicaciones católicas urgen al gobierno a mostrar más flexibilidad en su política interna. La prensa independiente y organizaciones opositoras denuncian el acoso y detenciones contra los disidentes.

Economía: Cuba no se beneficia de los altos precios del azúcar en el mercado mundial. El gobierno cubano está reabriendo viejas fábricas. Cuba y Rusia firman un acuerdo sobre pesca. Cuba y los países miembros del ALBA firman la implementación del Sistema Único de Compensación Regional (SUCRE). Disminuyen los negocios entre Cuba y sus cuatro principales socios comerciales.

Comunidad de exiliados: Una gran mayoría de cubano americanos favorece los viajes de los ciudadanos de EEUU a la isla. Organizaciones del exilio critican la política exterior de España hacia Cuba. Consenso Cubano insta al gobierno cubano a levantar las medidas que conspiran contra la familia cubana.

Asuntos exteriores: Cuba recibe la visita de altos dignatarios de África, América Latina, Asia y el Caribe. Venezuela le da la bienvenida a un nuevo grupo de 240 médicos cubanos. El Vicepresidente cubano asiste a la Cumbre del ALBA en Bolivia. La visita del ministro español de Relaciones Exteriores a Cuba desata opiniones controversiales. El vicepresidente de Ecuador se reúne con Fidel Castro. La directora general de la Organización Mundial de la Salud visita Cuba. La Asamblea General de la ONU en abrumadora mayoría condena el embargo de EEUU contra Cuba.

Seguridad: Una delegación militar de Sudáfrica visita Cuba. La Cumbre del ALBA no logra acordar una alianza militar.

Relaciones Cuba-Estados Unidos: La Filarmónica de Nueva York cancela su viaje a Cuba. Intelectuales y artistas cubanos obtienen visado para visitar EEUU. Fidel Castro elogia el otorgamiento del Premio Nobel de la Paz a Barack Obama. Reducen la sentencia a uno de los cinco cubanos prisioneros en EEUU. Cuba autoriza a una alta funcionaria del Departamento de Estado a visitar prisioneros en la isla con ciudadanía de los dos países. El alcalde de Nueva Orleans visita Cuba. Fidel Castro culpa a los visitantes de EEUU por el incremento de los casos de fiebre porcina.



Domestic Affairs

October 1: There may soon be no such thing as a free lunch, even in Cuba where the communist-run government began an experiment to close state-run lunchrooms and give workers money to buy their own meals. Lunchrooms were closed at four government ministries in a trial that, if successful, could be extended to the rest of the state's 24,700 lunchrooms across the country. About 3.5 million lunches have been served daily by the state. Instead of receiving lunch, the ministry workers will get a daily stipend of 15 pesos, the equivalent of about 70 US cents. The government has said it is spending more than \$350 million (220 million pounds) a year on the free lunches, which it can ill afford in the midst of a global recession that has hit Cuba hard. The closings are aimed at ending one of a variety of state subsidies Cubans have received for years, but that President Raul Castro says are draining the economy. There are subsidies that "are ineffective or, even worse, make some feel that they don't need to work," Castro said in a speech in August to Cuba's National Assembly (*Reuters*, 1/10/09).

October 1: Cuban President Raul Castro and Fidel Castro sent floral wreaths dedicated to renowned Catholic intellectual Cintio Vitier, who passed away in Havana at the age of 88. At the Marti Studies Center, a cultural institution that Vitier led for many years and of which he was the Honorary President, his mortal remains were covered by the Cuban flag. Present to pay tribute to this outstanding poet, essayist and novelist, who dedicated most of his life to the study and promotion of the thoughts of Cuba's National Hero Jose Marti, were Armando Hart, Director of the Office for the Study of Jose Marti's Life and Work; Monsignor Carlos Manuel de Cespedes; the president of the Cuban Music Institute, Abel Acosta; and the vice presidents of the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC), Graziella Pogolotti and other personalities. For his patriotic values, Vitier was awarded the Jose Marti Order, the highest distinction granted by the Cuban Council of State. He also won the Juan Rulfo Prize for Literature in 2002, the National Literature Prize in 1988, and the title of Officer of Arts and Letters in France (*ACN*, 1/10/09).

Octubre 1: La líder opositora de la provincia Sancti Spiritus, Ana Margarita Perdigón, fue detenida en La Habana cuando se disponía a participar en una reunión. Perdigón, directora de la Agencia Yayabo Press y destacada activista pro democracia, fue interceptada por la policía política, cuando se disponía a reunirse con los líderes de la organización Agenda para la Transición Cubana. El encuentro estaba previsto en la residencia del portavoz de Agenda, profesor Francisco Chaviano. En conversación telefónica con Chaviano y su esposa Ana Aguililla, se conoció que la señora Perdigón fue detenida a la entrada de la playa de Jaimanitas, donde reside Chaviano y estaba programada la reunión (*Cubanet*, 2/10/09).

Octubre 2: El gobierno de Cuba se prepara para prevenir y combatir la segunda oleada de la gripe A durante el invierno boreal, tras haber registrado 435 casos de infectados en la primera, pero ningún fallecimiento, informaron medios oficiales. El viceministro cubano de Salud, Luis Estruch, aseguró en La Habana que la llegada del otoño y el invierno al hemisferio norte es un reto para América Latina, donde ya han fallecido 3,020 personas por la epidemia, según la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS). Ante una

comisión sectorial del Parlamento Latinoamericano, Estruch explicó las estrategias que ha seguido el gobierno cubano para reducir y controlar la gripe producida por el virus AH1N1. El funcionario insistió en la prevención, ya que cada dosis de vacuna contra la Gripe A cuesta entre 10 y 20 dólares (*EFE*, 2/10/09).

Octubre 2: Yoel Lázaro Carbonell, presidente del Movimiento Cubanos Libres, fue enjuiciado por el Tribunal Municipal de San Miguel del Padrón, en Ciudad de La Habana, y condenado a un año de prisión, acusado por la Seguridad del Estado de los delitos de desobediencia y desacato a la autoridad, informó su esposa, Yusimí Caignet. Yusimí dijo que no le avisaron para el juicio oral, y su cónyuge fue enjuiciado en solitario, sin la participación de familiares, amigos, y mucho menos de público. “Sólo estuvieron presentes los acusadores y el tribunal,” dijo (*Cubanet*, 2/10/09).

Octubre 5: De forma casi imperceptible, el gobierno de Raúl Castro autorizó el acceso de todos los cubanos a Internet. Nada se ha dicho en los discursos políticos al respecto y tampoco se publicó la noticia en los medios nacionales de prensa. La eliminación de esta prohibición tiene una trascendencia enorme porque reconoce el derecho a la libre información de los ciudadanos. El Ministro de la Informática, Comandante Ramiro Valdés, autorizó a Correos de Cuba para que instale cibercafé en sus sucursales. La medida se aplica con la lentitud típica de la burocracia cubana y dos meses después aún no hay ningún correo habilitado. Sin embargo, cualquier ciudadano cubano ya puede entrar a los hoteles y centros de comunicación, comprar una tarjeta y conectarse a la red, accediendo a los sitios que estime conveniente, incluyendo a los principales periódicos de Miami. Para la disidencia el fin de la prohibición ha tenido alguna consecuencia negativa. La presidenta de la Asamblea para la Sociedad Civil, Marta Beatriz Roque dijo que las embajadas europeas que les daban acceso a Internet, dejaron de hacerlo. Sin embargo, la treintena de blogs opositores, encabezados por “Generación Y” de Yoani Sanchez, se beneficiaron con la medida. De hecho ellos administran sus blogs utilizando la conexión de los hoteles, según confirmó la propia Yoani. Todos los cubanos consultados coinciden en que el precio del servicio es excesivo. Las autoridades culpan de eso al bloqueo estadounidense, que impide el uso de cables submarinos y obliga a realizar todas las comunicaciones vía satélite (*BBC Mundo*, 5/10/09).

Octubre 5: El cierre de comedores obreros en Cuba, primer paso para eliminar grandes subsidios estatales, aumentó las ventas en pequeños negocios privados, que sueñan con "hacer su agosto" aún cuando el proceso experimental debe extenderse a todo el país. "Ya no tienen almuerzo, ahora tienen que venir a morir aquí", dijo Idalmis Zayas, dueña de un negocito de pizzas, helados y refrescos en su casa en el bulevar de Obispo, cerca de dos de los ministerios que experimentan la medida. Este es el primer paso del gobierno de Raúl Castro para eliminar insostenibles subsidios estatales vigentes desde los años 60, entre ellos "la libreta", cartilla de racionamiento mediante la cual se vende una canasta básica a todos los cubanos. "A esta hora hace dos días me moría de sueño, hoy no he parado un segundo, pero no me estoy quejando, esta medida sí está buena", dijo sonriente Zayas. La disposición afecta por ahora a cuatro ministerios y aspira extenderse a los 24,700 comedores existentes en el país, en los que comen más de 3.4 millones de trabajadores, de una población total de 11.2 millones (*AFP*, 5/10/09).

Octubre 8: La familia del prisionero cubano de conciencia, Ariel Sigler Amaya, denunció que el disidente pacífico está en mal estado de salud. Por otro lado, aseguraron que el prisionero de conciencia es objeto de hostigamiento a pesar de estar en un hospital de La Habana. La familia de Ariel Sigler Amaya responsabilizó a las autoridades del régimen cubano con la integridad física del prisionero (*Marti Noticias*, 8/10/09).

October 8: Health authorities in Las Tunas province decided to strengthen hygienic and sanitary measures in this area in view of a possible second outbreak of the A H1N1 virus in the world. In a meeting presided over by the first secretary of the Communist Party of the province, Teresa Amarelle, health authorities made emphasis on the need to strictly follow hygienic and sanitary measures to avoid a possible second outbreak of the disease in Cuba. Special emphasis was made on establishing a system of medical surveillance to control the situation in offices, enterprises, schools, bus stations, public transportation means and other places where people usually gather (*ACN*, 8/10/09).

October 8: Cuban President Raul Castro presided over the ceremony held with military honors at the Mausoleum dedicated to the combatants of Las Villas Front. Buried at the Mausoleum, which is part of the Ernesto Guevara Sculptural Complex in the city of Santa Clara, are the fallen during the liberation war and others who died after the triumph of the Revolution. The Mausoleum was inaugurated on the occasion of the 42nd anniversary of the assassination of Ernesto Che Guevara. The Mausoleum keeps the mortal remains of 69 combatants of the guerrilla front, made up by the forces of the Ciro Redondo Column 8, the 13 de Marzo Revolutionary Directory and the 26 of July Movement operating in that territory (*ACN*, 8/10/09).

Octubre 8: El Partido Liberal de la República de Cuba (PLRC) pidió al resto de la disidencia intentar "modificar la composición política de la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular", mediante la participación en las "próximas elecciones" para delegados de circunscripción. "Consideramos oportuno que las fuerzas opositoras y de la sociedad civil aceptemos el reto de participar en las próximas elecciones para delegados de circunscripción (...) Propondremos a aquellos patriotas honestos y capaces que estén en disposición de impulsar los cambios que con tanta urgencia necesita Cuba", afirma un comunicado distribuido por la organización. El PLRC considera que el proceso no debe limitarse al "estrecho marco partidista" y que incluso "valdría la pena renunciar a todo tipo de protagonismo o caudillismo". "Seamos promotores de la responsabilidad cívica, no para hacerle el juego a la casta gobernante, sino para cambiar las reglas del juego. Si en las casi quince mil circunscripciones que existen en el país, al menos la tercera parte de sus delegados fueran propensos a los cambios, terminaría la falsa unanimidad que mantiene el inmovilismo en la vida política de la nación", añade el mensaje (*Cubaencuentro*, 8/10/09).

Octubre 9: Las autoridades cubanas capturaron 2,194,23 kilogramos de drogas en el primer semestre de 2009, informó la prensa estatal. La mayor parte de esa cantidad incautada fue el resultado de operaciones de las Tropas Guardafronteras en la región norte oriental del país (*IPS*, 9/10/09).

October 9: Cuban official media are suggesting the "libreta" (ration card) that Cubans have depended on since 1962 to put meager helpings of food on their tables has outlived its usefulness and is hamstringing the government as it tries to reform the ever-struggling economy. "The ration booklet was a necessity at one time, but it has become an impediment to the collective decisions the nation must take," Lazaro Barredo Medina, editor of the Communist Party's *Granma* newspaper, wrote in a full-page signed opinion. He said the government ought not do away with rations by decree, but suggested readers should start preparing for life without a system that people on this island both covet as a birthright and complain is woefully insufficient to meet even the most modest needs. Barredo's words carry no immediate policy weight, but such a lengthy and frankly worded editorial penned by the editor of *Granma* could very well presage major governmental changes down the road — though it is impossible to know exactly when. The thick brown ration booklet offers 11.2 million Cubans a diet including rice, salt, legumes, potatoes, bread, eggs, sugar and some meat. Many complain it only provides 10 to 15 days of food and that quotas have gotten stingier over the years ([Él es paternalista, tú eres paternalista, yo soy paternalista](#); AP, 9/10/09).

October 9: The idea of eliminating the "libreta" (ration card) is the talk of the town, with strong opinions on both sides. "I was born and raised under the revolution and I have no idea what would be available to buy on the free market," said a skeptical Silvia Alvarez, 50. "It seems to me that in these critical times (...) we ought to keep it at least for a while longer." Antonio Jorge, who once served as Cuba's vice finance minister and now is a professor emeritus at Florida International University in Miami, said he "cannot imagine how this proposal could be implemented." "This is the bare minimum of food, of nutrition," Jorge said, especially for the half of the Cuban population that has no access to remittances — money sent from abroad, usually by relatives in the US "How will they live? How will they fend for themselves?" Scrapping the ration book — presumably in return for higher wages — would be a far more fundamental shift in the egalitarian communist system the Castro brothers have striven to build since shortly after their rebel force won power on New Year's Day 1959. Some believe it is time the government end the handouts and make citizens take more responsibility for their lives. "If you don't work, you won't eat," said Caridad, a 67-year-old retiree emerging from a government-subsidized shop in Havana's historic district. Like many Cubans, she did not feel comfortable having her full name appear in the foreign press, but admitted that to supplement a pension of less than \$10 a month, she had been forced to go back to work cleaning streets. "People need to understand that it is up to them to provide for their families, just like in the rest of the world," she said. "Nothing falls from heaven except the rain" (AP, 9/10/09).

October 9: Cuba announced that three pregnant women died after contracting swine flu, the first report of A(H1N1) casualties on the communist island. "We unfortunately have to regret three confirmed cases of people who died" of swine flu, Deputy Health Minister Jose Angel Portal Miranda said on a television news program. He did not say when the three women died. According to government officials, the number of confirmed H1N1 cases in the country stands at 621 people, including 177 children. National Epidemiology

Director Manuel Santin said around 30 percent of the cases were "imported" by tourism to the island, which hosts 2.5 million visitors a year (*AFP*, 9/10/09).

October 9: Health authorities in the central province of Matanzas maximized epidemiological control and surveillance for the early detection and prevention of A H1N1 Influenza cases. Amancio Martínez, acting director of the Hygiene and Epidemiology Center in the province, told the press that the constant control in the Matanzas city boundaries, which lead to the major tourist resources of Varadero and the Zapata Swamp, allow the early detection of any possible cases. He said that a temperature scanner or thermometer, a top-technology device that detects people with a temperature higher than 37 Celsius degrees was set up at the Juan Gualberto Gomez International Airport of Varadero, located some 74 miles east off Havana. Martínez added that the health staff working in the airport has been trained to give assistance to any detected case, which would receive follow-up checking in any hotel or private rooms for rent (*ACN*, 9/10/09).

Octubre 10: A escasos metros de la campana que llamó a la contienda y de las dos ruedas dentadas que quedaron como únicas ruinas del ingenio azucarero La Demajagua, cientos de habitantes de la ciudad de Manzanillo, provincia Granma, evocaron el inicio de las luchas por la independencia cubana, proclamado por el Padre de la Patria, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, el 10 de octubre de 1868. En el acto, iniciado con una ofrenda floral del pueblo de Cuba al Padre de la Patria y matizado por varios momentos culturales, se subrayó el significado de las palabras de Fidel Castro en 1968 cuando expuso que en Cuba solo ha habido una revolución desde aquel 10 de octubre, hace 141 años. En la jornada, jóvenes de Granma celebraron un maratón que culminó precisamente en el Parque Nacional La Demajagua (*Juventud Rebelde*, 10/10/09).

Octubre 11: Yoani Sánchez, la bloguera que ha ganado reconocimiento internacional por su crítica al castrismo, aún no ha obtenido permiso de las autoridades cubanas para viajar a Estados Unidos a la entrega del Premio Maria Moors Cabot 2009, galardón que recibió su blog "Generación Y" como una de las mejores coberturas periodísticas del año. "En los últimos intentos para viajar fuera de Cuba, la estrategia para impedírmelo ha sido demorar los trámites hasta que pase la fecha del evento al que debo asistir", declaró Sánchez a la prensa. "No tengo muchas esperanzas de que esta vez sí me dejen salir, pero no me entristece demasiado pues cada día viajo virtualmente a miles de lugares". El gobierno cubano le ha negado la salida en tres ocasiones anteriores desde mediados del 2008, cuando solicitó viajar a Madrid para recibir el Premio Ortega y Gasset de Periodismo Digital, el más prestigioso de su género en el ámbito de la lengua española. Ese mismo año la revista *Time* la seleccionó entre las 100 personalidades más influyentes del mundo. Interrogado sobre si esta vez se le concedería a Sánchez el permiso de viaje, el portavoz de la Oficina de Intereses de Cuba en Washington, Alejandro González, declinó referirse al asunto y calificó a la bloguera como "la chica de turno en la guerra mediática contra Cuba". "Todo el que vive en una isla tiene la tentación de salir de ella, pero hace tiempo que comprendí, y lo he dicho muchas veces, que para mí la vida no está en otra parte, sino en otra Cuba", dijo Sánchez (*El Nuevo Herald*, 11/10/09).

Octubre 11: El párroco Monseñor Rodolfo Loiz, quien oficia en la Iglesia Católica "Corpus Christi", al finalizar la misa anunció que el gobierno de Cuba devolvió recientemente el templo Santo Tomás de Villanueva, situado en Quinta avenida y calle 176, municipio Playa, a la Iglesia Católica de Cuba. Esta iglesia pertenecía a la Universidad Católica de Villanueva, contigua a la misma, y fue también confiscada (*Cubanet*, 13/10/09).

October 12: A Cuban blogger who has become an international sensation for offering frank criticism of her country's communist system said she was denied government permission to travel to New York to receive a top journalism prize. Yoani Sanchez had hoped to go to Columbia University for a ceremony to receive her Maria Moors Cabot Prize, the oldest international award in journalism. "Immigration just confirmed that I remain prohibited from leaving the country," she posted on her "Generation Y" blog. There was no confirmation from the government, but Cuban authorities almost never comment on such matters. Sanchez's husband, Reynaldo Escobar, who uses his own blog to provide searing criticism of everyday life in Cuba, said in a phone interview that his wife spent the morning discussing her travel request with immigration officials, then posted word of the denial (*AP*, 12/10/09).

Octubre 12: El gobernante cubano Raúl Castro promovió a Olga Lidia Tapia a miembro del Secretariado del Comité Central del Partido Comunista (PCC) a cargo de la educación, la ciencia y el deporte, según un comunicado oficial. "El Buró Político acordó promover a la compañera Olga Lidia Tapia", quien ocupó hasta septiembre pasado la máxima autoridad del Partido en la provincia de Pinar del Río, "al cargo de miembro del Secretario del Comité Central del Partido", señaló el comunicado, leído en el telenoticiero local. Tapia, quien es licenciada en Educación, "atenderá en su nuevo cargo las actividades de educación, las ciencias y deportes", añadió el texto (*AFP*, 12/10/09).

Octubre 13: Influyentes juristas cubanos se manifestaron en favor de eliminar la confiscación de bienes a los emigrados y la exigencia de que tengan el pasaporte nacional para visitar la isla, informó la revista *Temas*. Jorge Bodes, asesor del Ministerio de Justicia, indicó que una relación normal entre Estados Unidos y Cuba permitiría un mejor ejercicio de este derecho (libre movimiento) en el país, y quizás algunas restricciones podrían eliminarse (*La Jornada*, 13/10/09).

October 13: Cuban President Raul Castro attended in Havana the presentation of the anthology "Con la mano extendida" (With the hand held out), on music themes composed by late Commander of the Revolution Juan Almeida. The presentation, which was also a tribute to Almeida, who died in Havana recently, took place at the Universal Hall of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. Also participating in the launching were Politburo members Esteban Lazo; Commander of the Revolution Ramiro Valdés; Army Corps Generals Leopoldo Cintra Frías, First Vice-minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces; and Alvaro López Miera, vice-minister of the General Staff of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. Major General José A. Carrillo, head of the Political Department of the Revolutionary Armed Forces; Julio Martínez, first secretary of the Young Communists' League, as well as renowned intellectuals, were also present (*ACN*, 13/10/09).

October 14: These are times in which the youth has to grow, expressed the First Vice-president of the Cuban Councils of State and Ministers, Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, during the 10th Plenary Session of the National Committee of the Young Communists' League (UJC). During the meeting, in which Liudmila Alamo was elected as First Secretary of the UJC's National Committee, the 9th Congress of the youth organization was convened. The event, which will be held on April 3 and 4, 2010, was described by Machado Ventura, also a Politburo member, as very important for Cuban youth and its vanguard. This moment is also important, affirmed the top Cuban official, who considered the meeting as an essential part of an even bigger process -the preparation and development of the 6th Congress of the Cuban Communist Party, in which debates and the sharing of ideas will be necessary, because important changes and decisions will be made and that will be done with the participation of all, he added (ACN, 14/10/09).

Octubre 15: Dos líderes bautistas cubanos --ambos relacionados con instituciones religiosas de la Florida-- fueron detenidos por supuestas actividades económicas ilícitas y permanecen incomunicados hace 11 días en una cárcel de la ciudad de Santiago de Cuba, en el extremo oriental de la isla. Rubén Ortiz Columbié, de 68 años, y Francisco García Ruiz, de 46, fueron arrestados por agentes de la Policía Nacional Revolucionaria (PNR) el pasado 3 de octubre, cuando se trasladaban hacia la provincia de Guantánamo para llevar ayuda monetaria a parroquias y feligreses necesitados. Según un documento de la Fiscalía Provincial de Santiago de Cuba obtenido por *El Nuevo Herald*, en el momento del arresto les fueron incautados 97,600 pesos en moneda nacional (unos \$4,000). Estamos muy impactados con este incidente", afirmó el reverendo Rubén N. Ortiz, pastor de la Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana en Deltona, Florida, e hijo de Ortiz Columbié. "Estas personas no están jugando con política, sino que están profundamente comprometidos con el servicio al prójimo, y nos preocupa sobremanera el curso que ha tomado la acusación". El pastor señaló que desde el 2001 su parroquia envía regularmente dinero a Cuba para ayudar en la alimentación y otras necesidades vitales de los fieles, y respaldar las labores de reparación de las iglesias, muchas de ellas afectadas tras el paso de tres devastadores huracanes el pasado año (*El Nuevo Herald*; 15/10/09).

Octubre 15: A partir de los debates promovidos por el gobernante Raúl Castro en Cuba, entre los que quieren que haya cambios en la isla y los que se oponen, han surgido tensiones preocupantes según alertan laicos cubanos. La revista *Espacio Laical* del Arzobispado de La Habana dijo que es preocupante la tensión que se viene dando entre los sectores capacitados que han comenzado a encarnar ese proceso de análisis, debate y propuestas de cambios. Por su lado, hay otros sectores que no desean cambios e incluso en muchos momentos parecen aspirar a un modelo esencialmente inmóvil con sabor a estalinismo. El editorial de la publicación del Arzobispado de La Habana, que encabeza el cardenal Jaime Ortega, coincide en esta fecha con el término del segundo debate nacional convocado por el mandatario y que comenzó el primero de septiembre. El primero se desarrolló en los meses finales de 2007 y fue calificado como muy saludable por la publicación católica, aunque señala que no pocos han comenzado a sentirse defraudados porque perciben que sus criterios y propuestas no se toman en cuenta ([Hora de definiciones](#); *Marti Noticias*, 16/10/09).

Octubre 15: El gobierno cubano emitió una normativa que sanciona las construcciones ilegales en la isla, una actividad muy sensible debido a que por el déficit habitacional y el deterioro de las edificaciones la población se las ingenia para acomodar a sus familias bajo un techo. La resolución 256/09 del Instituto Nacional de Vivienda, aprobada el 15 de septiembre pero publicada el 14 de octubre en la *Gaceta Oficial*, faculta a los directores municipales de la vivienda para "detectar las acciones constructivas que se ejecuten ilícitamente (..) recibir, procesar (..) las ilegalidades dadas en torno a la vivienda". La medida contempla que los inspectores pueden "disponer la paralización inmediata de las obras", pero también la persona que realice obras de construcción sin la debida licencia se arriesga al "decomiso de medios y recursos utilizados o pérdida de lo construido". El objetivo es "organizar, unificar criterios y paralizar las indisciplinas" explicó a la prensa, Jardines Lugo, asesor jurídico de la vivienda del municipio Playa en la capital cubana. Lugo explicó que a veces solo "se ponían multas" pero las construcciones seguían a pesar de las "irregularidades". Ahora, el gobierno puso en marcha un plan en el sector de la construcción que hará "más fácil para la gente obtener la licencia" para remodelar, reparar o hacer modificaciones a sus viviendas ([Resolución sobre la vivienda](#); AP, 15/10/09).

October 16: Internationally acclaimed blogger Yoani Sanchez posted a video of her visit to the immigration offices where once again, the 4th time in the last couple of years, she was denied the permission to leave the island. Sánchez, Cuban blogger writing in *Generacion Y* blog, was once again denied permission to leave the island nation of Cuba to go receive the 2009 Maria Moors Cabot award, the oldest international award for journalism. She recorded a video, uploaded it and made it known through her twitter account. "I'm a bit naive. Until the minute before the start of the Maria Moors Cabot ceremony -celebrated yesterday- I thought the Cuban government would change its mind and let me leave", Sánchez wrote. "That's why I had kept to myself the video I made at the Office of Immigration and Foreign Affairs on Monday October 12. Today, once I proved that I am still in the same place, I've decided to publish it, thinking particularly in all of those who are going through similar situations". In the video she repeatedly asks the official behind the counter to give her the reasons why she is not allowed to travel ([Video](#); *Global Voices Online*, 16/10/09).

Octubre 16: Las autoridades de Tráfico de la provincia cubana de La Habana, que no incluye a la capital del país, indicaron que en los últimos 20 años el transporte público en ese territorio se redujo en un 90 por ciento con una disminución de 600 a 60 autobuses. Según datos publicados en la sección "Cartas a la dirección" del diario *Granma*, portavoz del gobernante Partido Comunista, el transporte público en esa provincia que rodea a la capital tenía en 1989 unos 600 unidades con capacidad para trasladar a medio millón de pasajeros. "Hoy contamos con 60 equipos (...), de los cuales trabajan regularmente no más de 50, que transportan alrededor de 20,000 pasajeros", precisó el director de Tráfico de la provincia de La Habana, Luis Planas, en una carta que intenta responder a las quejas de los lectores. La disminución de autobuses estatales en ese territorio después de 1989, obligó a las autoridades a otorgar a particulares licencias de transporte de pasajeros, para paliar la situación. En las últimas semanas *Granma* publicó cartas de lectores que

calificaban a esos vehículos privados de "guaguas del infierno", por carecer de condiciones de seguridad y ofrecen un "trato deshumanizado" a los pasajeros.

Las autoridades respondieron que actualmente funcionan en la provincia 137 camiones privados de carga reconvertidos, con los que "se resuelve" el traslado de pasajeros, aunque reconocieron sus limitaciones (*EFE*, 16/10/09).

Octubre 16: El gobierno pidió a los médicos reducir gastos en los hospitales y ordenar sólo los análisis y medicamentos necesarios, reportó el periódico mexicano *La Jornada*.

"Estamos sobregastando recursos en los hospitales", dijo el primer vicepresidente, José Ramón Machado Ventura, en una reunión de la Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas (UJC), según citó el diario oficial *Granma*. "No hay país del mundo ni sistema de salud que aguante tal derroche. Si queremos mantener la salud pública, hemos de acostumbrarnos a trabajar con racionalidad y no de forma coyuntural; el ahorro tiene que convertirse en un método de trabajo", dijo el funcionario. Machado Ventura habló durante una plenaria del Comité Nacional de la UJC, que convocó al noveno congreso de la organización para abril del año próximo. Más de 76.000 trabajadores del sector de la salud son miembros de la UJC, indicó *Granma*. El diario *Juventud Rebelde*, órgano de la UJC, apuntó que en la reunión resultó recurrente la idea de que "sólo si no se derrocha, si se optimiza el uso de los recursos disponibles, podrá sostenerse, extensivamente y con calidad", la atención médica (*Cubaencuentro*, 16/10/09).

Octubre 16: La policía política detuvo a los activistas Miguel López Santos, María de los Ángeles Borrego y Jesús Adolfo Reyes, miembros de la agrupación "Hijos de la Virgen de Regla". El incidente tuvo lugar cuando los disidentes se dirigían a casa de la opositora Sara Marta Fonseca Quevedo, sita en el Reparto Río Verde del Municipio Boyeros, en Ciudad de La Habana. Sara Martha Fonseca Quevedo es portavoz de la secretaría pro- tómpore de la Junta Provincial de Ciudad de La Habana, perteneciente a la coalición parlamentaria Agenda para la Transición Cubana (*Cubanet*, 21/10/09).

October 16: José Alejandro Rodríguez, a regular columnist for *Juventud Rebelde*, wrote a scathing j'accuse "against the demons of sequestered information," as he titles his latest article. The object of his ire is trickle-down information. "The problem, and we in *Juventud Rebelde* are living it," he writes, "is that information does not escape the excessive centralization of our economy and society in general (...) Very often, decisions are made way up top about what to say and inform and what not to say about the major topics of society..." Officials refuse to answer reporters' questions, claiming that they've explained everything in appearances on the radio-TV program Round Table, Rodríguez complains. "The hyperbolization of the Round Table as the stage for supreme information is an assault on the necessary versatility and variety that distinguish good journalism," he scoffs. "Round-Tableization' is a major contribution to the bureaucratization of journalism." The press is asked to help promote the decree that created a results-based salary scheme, but "the bureaucrats refuse to complicate their lives with the [new] rules and the sliding wage scales. It's easier to be egalitarian, to pay the usual dues. And nobody explains why merit pay has run into a wall in Cuba". The column disappeared from the online edition of *Juventud Rebelde*. Fortunately, Spanish blogger Jorge Ferrer

downloaded it before it was removed ([Juventud Rebelde y la información secuestrada](#); *The Miami Herald*, 17/10/09).

Octubre 17: The Cuban government has acknowledged seven deaths from the AH1N1 flu virus on the island, with 695 cases now confirmed, the official daily *Granma* said. The official newspaper published a statement by the deputy health minister, Luis Estruch, to the effect that up to October 15 there were 695 people infected on the island, of whom 203 were children. "The acquiring of new equipment with excellent diagnostic capabilities and having kept the serums of people who died in previous months from severe respiratory infections have made it possible to confirm another four deaths," Estruch said, without providing further details about the victims. According to Estruch, an "active investigation" is now being conducted among groups running the highest risk of contracting the AH1N1 flu virus, including pregnant women, children of 5 years or under, and tots with some kind of disability (*LAHT, AP*, 17/10/09).

Octubre 17: Dos misioneros bautistas arrestados por 14 días en una cárcel de la ciudad de Santiago de Cuba, bajo acusaciones de distribución ilícita de ayuda humanitaria, fueron liberados sin cargos. A Rubén Ortiz Columbié, de 68 años, y Francisco García Ruiz, de 46, se les eximió de responsabilidad penal por la tenencia de 97,600 pesos en moneda nacional (unos \$4,000), que pretendían repartir entre iglesias y feligreses necesitados de la zona oriental del país. Oficiales del Ministerio del Interior (MININT) convocaron a los familiares de ambos detenidos para proceder a liberarlos. A la salida estaba disponible una enfermera para atender a Ortiz Columbié, quien presenta severos problemas de hipertensión. Ortiz Columbié y García viven en Santiago de Cuba (*El Nuevo Herald*, 20/10/09).

Octubre 18: Several Cuban personalities associated with ousted Vice President Carlos Lage and Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque will go on trial next year on charges that may include espionage and the disclosure of state secrets, *El Nuevo Herald* has learned from sources in the Cuban Prosecutor General's office. The Prosecutor General himself, Juan Escalona Reguera, is expected to present the government's case. The defendants include: Entrepreneur Conrado Hernández, who worked for a Basque trade association and is believed to have delivered information about affairs of state to the Spanish intelligence service; Hernández's wife Amalia, a physician who worked at the Havana hospital where Fidel Castro was operated in 2006. She allegedly gave information about Castro's condition to Hernández, who in turn passed it on to his Spanish handlers. Raúl Castellanos Lage, cousin of the ousted Vice President, who allegedly made "counter-revolutionary statements" and disparaging remarks about First Vice President José Ramón Machado Ventura. Perez Roque and Lage are not among the defendants (*El Nuevo Herald*, 18/10/09).

Octubre 19: Varios disidentes permanecen desde hace más de una semana en la casa del líder opositor Vladimiro Roca, sitiada por la policía política. El periodista independiente Julio Beltrán Iglesias, de la Agencia Libre Asociada (ALA), indicó que se trata de una decena de "comunicadores comunitarios" que reciben clases de redacción en la vivienda de Roca. Estos comunicadores se dedican a informar, principalmente, sobre problemas

barriales. Sus reportes son divulgados a través de la Mesa de Trabajo de la líder disidente Martha Beatriz Roque, quien también se encuentra entre los sitiados. Los activistas habrían decidido "plantarse" el pasado 10 de octubre, con la exigencia de que la policía devuelva una cámara fotográfica que le fue "arrebataada" a uno de ellos, según dicen. La protesta por la confiscación de la cámara es simbólica. "Estamos protestando porque este régimen "ni oye ni contesta (...) Porque la policía aquí ha dicho que ellos hacen con nosotros lo que les da la gana (...) Porque esta es una nación cautiva de un solo hombre", dijo Roque a *Radio Latina Stereo*, de Lanzarote, Islas Canarias (*Cubaencuentro*, 19/10/09).

Octubre 19: Diez meses después de la entrada en vigor en Cuba de una reforma que eliminó el techo salarial y estableció nuevas formas de pago, la medida muestra "avances insuficientes" en algunas empresas y en "muchas otras" no se aplica, informó un alto dirigente sindical. El jefe del Departamento de Asuntos Económicos de la Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC, única), Alfredo Vázquez, señaló que "los avances en la implementación" de la reforma salarial "son insuficientes" y que ésta "no es todavía una realidad en muchos centros laborales" de la isla. "Persiste la indisciplina en el cumplimiento de las políticas, no se implementan en muchos colectivos los sistemas aprobados, y no faltan los que en su aplicación no se ajustan a lo aprobado", añadió Vázquez, citado por el semanario *Trabajadores*, órgano oficial de la CTC, sin dar cifras. El gobierno de Raúl Castro comenzó a aplicar en enero pasado una reforma, que estableció nuevas formas de pago, según las características de las empresas (todas estatales), en busca de incrementar la productividad, reducir costos y utilizar más eficientemente los recursos (*AFP*, 19/10/09).

October 20: Cuba's government has released one of its estimated 200 political prisoners following a visit by Spain's foreign minister, Cuban dissidents said. Nelson Aguiar, who was sentenced to 13 years in prison in a 2003 government crackdown on opponents, was freed and is back with his family in Havana. There was no immediate confirmation from the government. Elizardo Sanchez of the independent Cuban Commission on Human Rights said the release was a gesture to Spain, whose foreign minister, Miguel Angel Moratinos, completed a two-day visit to Havana. "It's the same thing as always: the Castros giving prisoners as gifts," Sanchez said. Sanchez said the Cuban authorities also had given permission to a former prisoner, Omelio Lazaro Angulo, to leave the country (*Reuters*, 20/10/09).

October 20: Thousands of Cuban children, youngsters and adults in Bayamo, the capital of eastern Granma province, sang once their National Anthem, in the place where their ancestors did the same, for the first time, on October 20, 1868. The ceremony was presided over by Politburo members Ricardo Alarcón, President of the Cuban Parliament, and Culture Minister Abel Prieto (*ACN*, 20/10/09).

Octubre 21: El doctor Darsi Ferrer Ramírez, activista de Derechos Humanos, continúa acusado de los delitos de receptación y atentado, aunque esta última acusación se suponía que había sido desestimada por parte de la instrucción policial y la fiscalía. Por la primera acusación pudieran encausarlo de tres meses a un año de prisión o multa. Por la segunda,

de uno a tres años de trabajo correccional, con o sin internamiento. El doctor continúa la huelga de hambre en la prisión de Valle Grande desde el pasado 13 de octubre. Desde entonces, las autoridades que lo mantienen en custodia no le permiten comunicarse con su familia ni tener visita de la esposa. El opositor pacífico tomó la decisión de iniciar la huelga tras sufrir casi tres meses de encierro en la citada prisión habanera, por causas por las que ya tendrían que haber sido liberado bajo fianza, aguardando la vista pública en su casa y no encerrado en prisión preventiva. La medida cautelar (prisión preventiva) tomada contra el opositor pacífico, generalmente sólo se le debe aplicar a individuos que pueden intentar escapar a la acción judicial o a personas con una conducta delincencial reiterada, lo que no es el caso del doctor Ferrer (*Cubanet*, 21/10/09).

Octubre 21: Néstor Rodríguez Lobaina, miembro de Agenda para la Transición Cubana, denunció desde Baracoa, provincia Guantánamo, que su casa está rodeada por agentes de la policía política y no le permiten salir de la misma. Rodríguez Lobaina informó además, que el pasado día 9 de octubre, un grupo de jóvenes inauguraron en "La Demajagua" el Foro Juvenil Cubano. Al terminar esa actividad la policía lo detuvo en Bayazo y lo trasladaron a la oficina de operaciones de Guantánamo. Más tarde lo condujeron hacia su lugar de residencia, donde se encuentra en la actualidad sin libertad de movimientos (*Cubanet*, 21/10/09).

Octubre 21: El disidente Nelson Aguiar aseguró que fueron las gestiones del canciller español Miguel Angel Moratinos, durante su reciente viaje a Cuba, las que lograron su liberación tras seis años en prisión. Visiblemente emocionado, con movimientos lentos debido a una artrosis que se incrementó en la cárcel y algunas hernias discales, Aguiar indicó que continuará su labor como opositor, pero antes viajará a España para ser operado; aunque no tiene planes más allá de eso. "Me dijeron [las autoridades carcelarias] que mi libertad dependía de Moratinos cuando viniera (...) Ellos [los españoles] te tienen presente", comentó con lágrimas en los ojos en su casa en La Habana, donde pasó la primera noche fuera de la prisión. Aguiar, de 64 años, fue uno de los 75 juzgados en el 2003 por tribunales cubanos, que los acusaron de recibir dinero y orientaciones de Estados Unidos para desprestigiar a la revolución. Recibió una sentencia de 13 años. "Debe de haber más liberaciones, porque este gobierno [de Raúl Castro] está buscando cierta apertura ante el mundo, la necesita, porque tiene interés en levantar la economía, y sin dinero no se puede levantar la economía, y solo no se puede", dijo Aguiar. Aguiar señaló que está "en libertad completa, sin restricciones de ningún tipo" y que desde Cuba o desde España se mantendrá en su actividad política, la que siguió desde prisión, utilizando a su esposa como mensajera. Algunas miembros del grupo de las Damas de Blanco dijeron que se alegraban por la liberación de Aguiar, pero lamentaron que sus esposos fueran "moneda de cambio" del gobierno para quedar bien con otros (*AP, EFE*, 21/10/09).

Octubre 21: Los tribunales del gobierno cubano ratificaron la condena de dos años de cárcel al disidente Agustín Cervantes, miembro del Movimiento Cristiano Liberación (MCL) y gestor del Proyecto Varela en Santiago de Cuba. "Esta es la manera que tiene el régimen cubano de saludar la política de 'normalización' que defiende el gobierno de España", dijo en una nota el líder del MCL, Oswaldo Payá, quien resaltó que la

ratificación de la sentencia se produjo dos días después de la visita a la isla del canciller español, Miguel Ángel Moratinos. Cervantes fue condenado a dos años de cárcel el 29 de septiembre pasado, por un supuesto delito de "lesiones", en un juicio sumario "sin garantías ni posibilidad de preparación", denunció entonces Payá (*Cubaencuentro*, 22/10/09).

October 23: The Communist Party daily *Granma* featured testimony by four Cubans deported from Mexico after being kidnapped and tortured by traffickers of undocumented migrants. Under the headline "The 'American Dream' could cost them their lives," the newspaper published the statements of Jorge Arencibia, Kendry Melenilla, Julio Cesar Urbina and Yunier Rosado upon their return to the island, together with photos showing the injuries they suffered. The four were part of a group of 14 that left Cuba on a motorboat in September and were tortured by the people traffickers to force their relatives in the United States to pay the \$10,000 they were charging to get each one off the island. "What happened to them in the hands of their captors will show others the cost of trusting their future to people who only care about dollars," *Granma* said in the first mention of the case in Cuba's state-controlled media. *Granma* quoted the Mexican press as saying that "Miami crime rings linked to drug trafficking control all the trafficking of undocumented Cubans." "We hope that the case of these four youths serves to dissuade those who dream of buying their future with money," the paper said, making no mention of why thousands of Cubans emigrate illegally and in secret (*LAHT*, 25/10/09).

Octubre 26: La Iglesia Católica cubana instó al gobernante Raúl Castro a liberar "toda la energía acumulada" y "todo el talento restringido" de los cubanos en un artículo publicado en la revista *Palabra Nueva*. "Es decisivo que el Estado (...) y las leyes, continúen dando la oportunidad para que el talento cubano se manifieste cada vez más y más. Libérese todo el talento restringido y toda la energía acumulada en la mente y el cuerpo de los ciudadanos", señaló la revista de la Arquidiócesis de La Habana, que encabeza el cardenal Jaime Ortega. Asimismo, consideró que "la superación técnica y profesional" de los cubanos es "una de las innegables realidades de las últimas cinco décadas", aunque "donde mucho se ha invertido, poco se ha aprovechado". "Es cierto que el talento abunda en la sociedad cubana. Pero en buena medida es un talento restringido, atado, reo de las mismas estructuras y políticas que lo crearon. En ocasiones se pierde, y en otras se debate en la impotencia y el sufrimiento, porque nada hierde más al talento que la imposibilidad de mostrarse y rendir frutos", añadió la publicación. *Palabra Nueva* elogió la decisión de Raúl Castro de trasladar a las ciudades escuelas que por años estuvieron en el campo, como parte de las medidas que adopta su gobierno para eliminar gastos "insostenibles" y encarar la crisis económica internacional. También recordó un reciente llamado del comandante de la Revolución y ministro de Informática y Comunicaciones, Ramiro Valdés, quien pidió a los cubanos no esperar que "papá Estado" resuelva todos sus problemas. "Es un razonamiento válido, una invitación a asumir las responsabilidades que corresponda a cada uno. Es preciso entonces crear condiciones para que el ciudadano dependa menos de ese 'papá Estado', concluyó la revista ([Lo que funciona](#); *AFP*, 26/10/09).

Octubre 27: El prisionero político Rigoberto Zamora fue encerrado en un calabozo de castigo de la prisión Las Mangas, provincia Granma, luego de protestar porque oficiales de la Seguridad del Estado realizaron una requisita en su celda y le fueron decomisadas sus agendas y libretas de apuntes y telefónicas. Según el opositor Armando Alcántara, encarcelado también en Las Mangas, Zamora se declaró en huelga de hambre para exigir la devolución de sus pertenencias, a pesar de su precaria salud (*Cubanet*, 27/10/09).

Octubre 27: Residentes de la localidad de El Moro expulsaron con gritos de “mentirosos” a los principales dirigentes del Partido Comunista y del Poder Popular en Arroyo Naranjo, Ciudad de La Habana, por engañar a los locales sobre supuestas medidas de desarrollo urbano, entrega de materiales de construcción, la reparación de las vías y la asignación de teléfonos fijos. Una reunión donde supuestamente el gobierno municipal y el delegado de la circunscripción 178 explicarían a los locales los motivos de la demora en el cumplimiento de lo prometido, dio un giro inesperado cuando unas 60 personas mostraron su descontento al sentirse engañados y comenzaron a gritar ofensas contra los organizadores y los representantes del gobierno. Las autoridades municipales habían prometido al delegado distribuir una cantidad de teléfonos en El Moro, lo cual resultó ser “una equivocación”, y también se había informado a la población sobre la entrega de materiales para la reparación de viviendas, algo que tampoco se produjo (*Cubanet*, 27/10/09).

Octubre 28: Una escultura metálica al relieve del desaparecido guerrillero cubano Camilo Cienfuegos fue izada sobre la fachada de un edificio de la Plaza de la Revolución, de La Habana, muy cerca de la efigie de su compañero de armas, Ernesto "Che" Guevara", instalada allí desde 1993. La imagen escultórica de Cienfuegos (1932-1959) alzada sobre una pared de hormigón del ministerio de la Informática y las Comunicaciones fue inaugurada cuando se cumplen 50 años de su desaparición, según anunciaron medios locales. Camilo Cienfuegos fue uno de los comandantes de la guerrilla revolucionaria encabezada por Fidel Castro en la Sierra Maestra y es recordado por los cubanos como uno de los líderes más carismáticos y apreciados (*EFE*, 28/10/09).

October 28: President Raul Castro inaugurated the Mausoleum of the Northern Front of Las Villas in Yaguajay, central province of Sancti Spiritus. In the solemn ceremony, Raul was accompanied by Commander of the Revolution Ramiro Valdes Menendez and by Osmany Cienfuegos Gorriaran, brother of Commander Camilo Cienfuegos – also known as the Hero of Yaguajay. The mausoleum was built in the same place where revolutionary rebel troops seized the army barracks of Batista’s tyranny in December 1958. The ceremony was carried out with military honors (*ACN*, 28/10/09).

October 28: An earthquake of magnitude 3.4 on the Richter scale was felt in a large area in the southeastern region of Cuba. No damages or human losses were reported. The telluric movement, described as a low-intensity one, took place at 10.09 a.m. (local time), with its epicenter located two kilometers southwest of the El Cobre town, in eastern Santiago de Cuba province. This is the fifth earth tremor felt so far this year in the Caribbean nation, a season considered by specialists as of low seismic activity (*ACN*, 28/10/09).

October 28: The habanero peppers, oranges and peanuts cost more at Cuba's free-market "agros" - farmers markets where vendors, not the government, set prices. But food stalls overflow with abundance not seen elsewhere on the shortage-plagued island. So when the Communist Party served notice that it plans to impose price controls at those agros - ending one of Cuba's few capitalist experiments - angry shoppers fearing yet more shortages turned on state inspectors in an unprecedented public rage. Police were called to one farmers market this month when customers shouted and chanted at state workers conducting a routine inspection. Two *Associated Press* reporters were escorted out of the same market after their questions about the changes caused another shouting match. "It's going to be a mess. There will be less merchandise," said Antonio Gutierrez, whose farm cooperative outside the capital sells vegetables to vendors at Havana's 42nd Avenue and 19th Street agro, where the disturbances occurred. Price controls would end one of the country's few private business initiatives just as Cubans hoped the economy would loosen up under Raul Castro, who took power from his ailing brother, Fidel, in February 2008 (*The Miami Herald*, 28/10/09).

Octubre 29: A pesar de un operativo policial la bloguera Yoani Sánchez logró ingresar, disfrazada, al debate mensual de la revista *Temas* en La Habana, donde el asunto a discusión era "Internet en la cultura". Sánchez se refirió a los debates que los medios cubanos prefieren evitar y criticó el calificativo de "chancleteo" utilizado por el director de *Temas*, Rafael Hernández, durante una conferencia reciente en Miami, al referirse a la labor de los blogs independientes en Cuba. Mientras Sánchez hacía su sorprendente intervención en los debates de *Temas*, Claudia Cadelo publicaba en su blog, *Octavo Cerco*, que un grupo de personas entre las que ella se contaba no pudieron acceder al debate que se realizaba desde las cuatro de la tarde en la Sala Fresa y Chocolate, del Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográfica (ICAIC). El ICAIC, apunta Cadelo, se reservaba el derecho de admisión según le informaron los custodios, y así muestra un video. Yoani Sánchez logró entrar disfrazada con una peluca a la sala del ICAIC ([Video](#); *Marti Noticias*, 30/10/09).

Octubre 29: An earth tremor of 4.0 degrees on the Richter scale occurred at Cuba's south-eastern coast, the second over the last two days, according to Vladimir Moreno, director of the National Seismology Center. The tremor, described as of medium intensity, took place less than 36 hours after the one experienced by locals on October 28. This is the sixth perceptible earth tremor of 2009 in Cuba, a season described by specialists as of low-seismic activity, since in previous years from 10 to 15 earth tremors have taken place (*ACN*, 29/10/09).

Octubre 30: Ricardo Vega Murillo, esposo de la activista Elizabeth de Regla Alonso Castellanos, fue detenido por la policía política cuando le llevaba medicinas y ropa a su cónyuge, quien se encuentra participando de una protesta en casa del disidente Vladimiro Roca Antúnez. Los oficiales registraron las pertenencias de Vega Murillo, quien les explicó sobre la necesidad de hacerle llegar los medicamentos que llevaba a su esposa y otros participantes. Sin embargo le fue negada su solicitud. En vez de acceder a la entrega de ayuda humanitaria, los policías le montaron en un vehículo y lo bajaron en una

localidad rural de provincia Habana, donde no existe transporte público (*Cubanet*, 30/10/09).

Octubre 30: La prensa local de Macedonia informa de una visita de Raúl Castro al mayor coto de caza de ese territorio, en una fecha que se mantiene en secreto. El hecho se ha convertido en un reclamo para la promoción del lugar. El semanario de más tirada en Macedonia, el *Fokus*, indicó que el general Castro pasó "unos días de inolvidable y exitosa experiencia cazadora" en el terreno de Jasen, y que su nombre es usado por los gerentes del coto para recalcar el renombre del lugar, al que acuden cazadores ricos de Europa, Estados Unidos y Rusia. El director de esa reserva, Mihail Malahov, confirmó que Raúl Castro la visitó, pero por razones de discreción se negó a precisar la fecha. Según el semanario, Castro estuvo alojado en la llamada Villa azul, la más antigua del coto, excelentemente equipada, donde "hace un tiempo" estuvieron el alcalde de Moscú, Yuri Luzhkov, y miembros de la familia real marroquí, entre otros visitantes (*EFE*, 30/10/09).

Octubre 30: La obra integral del poeta y ensayista José Lezama Lima, marginado en la época de censura de los años 70, será publicada por primera vez en Cuba, informó el diario oficial *Granma*. "A la vuelta de un año, los lectores cubanos podrán disponer del grueso de las Obras completas" de Lezama Lima (1910-1976), "en virtud de un enorme esfuerzo editorial destinado a conmemorar (...) el centenario del nacimiento de uno de los más fascinantes escritores del siglo XX", señaló *Granma*. Autor de una extensa obra, ocupó después del triunfo de la revolución de Fidel Castro, en 1959, varios puestos en el Consejo Nacional de Cultura y la Unión de Escritores, antes de ser marginado por ser homosexual, en los años 70. Su figura y obra fueron reivindicados años después en ensayos de Abel Prieto, actual ministro de Cultura y miembro del Buró Político del gobernante Partido Comunista (*AFP*, 31/10/09).

Octubre 30: Tres escuelas primarias del municipio capitalino de Playa, cerraron sus puertas debido a la aparición de niños enfermos con el virus de la pandemia, AH1N1. Así mismo, la Escuela Pre-Universitaria Vocacional Lenin, del municipio Arroyo Naranjo, estuvo cerrada por una semana debido a la muerte de uno de sus alumnos contagiados con la enfermedad. La dirección de Educación de los municipios Centro Habana y Habana Vieja dio órdenes a los maestros de no recibir a niños que presenten tos o fiebre. Hasta el momento, el Ministerio de Salud Pública admite siete fallecidos, pero medios extraoficiales hablan de una cifra superior a los cuarenta decesos en la nación (*Cubanet*, 30/10/09).

October 31: As of November 9 Cuba is to carry out a vaccination campaign against seasonal flu aimed at people over 75 years of age and other risk groups, reported an expert. Doctor Manuel Santin Pena, national director of epidemiology of the Ministry of Public Health, told journalists that persons in homes for the elderly and handicapped, as well as those in psychiatric hospitals or suffering from asthma, severe diabetes and chronic kidney diseases will also be benefitted. He pointed out that 902,000 doses acquired through the World Health Organization (WHO) will be administered and explained that the antigen is specific for three viral strains with probable circulation in the

country, although not absolutely effective for all viruses present during the winter season. For this reason, an immunized person with this vaccine can suffer flu symptoms, the specialist explained and added that it is not specific for the A(H1N1) influenza pandemic for which there are not other vaccines yet available to the country (*PRELA*, 31/10/09).

Economy

October 5: Cash-short Cuba is slashing the amount of land devoted to growing its famous tobacco by more than 30 percent as the global recession and worldwide spread of smoking bans bite into sales of the country's prized cigars. Demand for Cuba's cigars fell 3 percent in 2008 and earlier was reported down 15 percent in 2009 because of the recession and the smoking bans adopted in a growing number of places as a public health measure. Cuba's National Statistics Office, in a report posted on its web page, said land to be planted with tobacco for next year's crop had dropped to 49,000 acres (19,800 hectares), down from 70,000 acres (28,200 hectares), which was in turn less than 2008. It said the coming crop was expected to be 22,500 tonnes, down from a planned 26,800 tonnes. The office blamed the drop on "financial restrictions that made it impossible to count on the necessary resources" (*Reuters*, 5/10/09).

October 4: The Cuban government has accused the managers of Havana's farmers markets of irregularities, shortages, laziness, health code violations and inefficiency, state media said. Officials participating in a meeting at the Agriculture Ministry noted "deficiencies at different levels in the production, warehousing and distribution chain that have led to shortages at some units," the Communist Party daily *Granma* reported. Deficiencies were found in a number of areas, including compliance with health regulations and decision making, the newspaper said in a report that was picked up by other state media outlets. Havana Mayor Juan Cotino criticized the "laziness, lack of discipline and deficiencies" that harm state efforts to "put food on every table amid the global economic difficulties" (*EFE*, 5/10/09).

Octubre 8: Cuba sustituirá por maquinaria china unas locomotoras norteamericanas de la época de la II Guerra Mundial que nunca pudo reparar debido a que el embargo estadounidense le impidió comprar los repuestos necesarios. "Próximamente llegarán 60 locomotoras chinas para dar de baja a las americanas" -de las cuales 32 ya no sirven-, dijo a periodistas el viceministro Antonio Puente durante un recorrido por los Talleres José Ramírez Casamayor. "Creo que el ferroviario es uno de los sectores más dañados por el bloqueo", expresó Camilo Chávez, director de la Empresa de Reparación de locomotoras. "Son locomotoras (las 32 paralizadas) a las cuales no le hemos podido encontrar solución", manifestó el funcionario. Incluso a las otras 48 se les puso repuestos fabricados en la propia Cuba o se buscaron piezas en otros países como México, indicó. Según el viceministro, durante 20 años cubanos no recibieron ni una locomotora y la infraestructura se deterioró de manera notable. A partir de 2005 el gobierno comenzó un plan inversionista para levantar el sector del transporte, no sólo ferroviario. La Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas indicó en un informe de 2008 sobre transporte ferroviario que se cuenta con 8,193 kilómetros de vías, de los cuales 5,076 eran de uso público y el resto corresponden a industrias como el acero o el níquel. Además se contabilizaron 283

locomotoras destinadas al sistema ferroviario público, 400 coches de pasajeros y unos 5,800 vagones de carga (AP, 8/10/09).

Octubre 8: Cuba puede verse nuevamente afectada por la contracción del crecimiento de la economía venezolana que fuera anunciada en Caracas, aunque analistas descartan un impacto del paquete anti-inflacionario. "Los recortes grandes en inversiones (en Cuba) tienen que ver con los recortes fiscales que tuvo que hacer (el presidente Hugo) Chávez por la baja del precio del petróleo", dijo un economista local, que descartó sin embargo una relación de impacto en la isla del paquete anti-inflacionario. Caracas dictó medidas para reactivar el crecimiento de la economía, luego de que en el segundo trimestre se registrara la primera contracción del Producto Interno Bruto (PIB) en un lustro, y prevé un crecimiento cercano a 0% o tal vez negativo, tras registrar +4,8% en 2008. "No creo que (Chávez) vaya a hacer nuevos recortes fiscales, lo que va a hacer es medidas antiinflacionarias, fundamentalmente para compensar el tema, una cosa son recortes fiscales y otras medidas antiinflacionaria, son dos medidas de índole totalmente diferentes", opinó el analista, que solicitó no ser identificado. Venezuela es el primer socio comercial de Cuba (4,892 millones de dólares) y abastecedor de petróleo –100,000 barriles diarios-, mantiene con la isla un fuerte programa de cooperación, que cerró 2008 con la ejecución de 76 proyectos por 1,355 millones de dólares (AFP, 9/10/09).

Octubre 9: Aunque este año hubo un alza del precio del azúcar en el mercado mundial y la producción isleña se mantendrá sobre los 1,4 millones de toneladas, Cuba no espera que ello se refleje en mejores ingresos para el país en el corto plazo. La cotización del dulce "en los últimos 8 meses ha mantenido una tendencia sostenida al incremento", declaró el viceministro del sector Nelson Labrada durante un encuentro para analizar el impacto de las sanciones estadounidenses en el rubro. De 0,13 ó 0,14 de dólar la libra de azúcar el año pasado se pasó la "barrera psicológica" de los 25 centavos, algo que no sucedía desde el año 81 expresó el funcionario. Sin embargo y pese a que en algún momento la caña fue "la locomotora" de la economía de la isla, en esta ocasión no se espera aumentos en los ingresos por este concepto. "La caña de azúcar, en las condiciones cubanas, requiere entre 14 y 16 meses para crecer, por lo tanto el precio está excelente pero no puede haber incrementos espectaculares (para la agroindustria) en pocos meses, ni siquiera de un año a otro", aclaró Labrada. Se espera una producción similar a la de los dos años anteriores sobre los 1,4 millones de toneladas, indicó el funcionario. Las cifras están lejos de los 7 millones de toneladas que la isla logró en la década de los 70 (AP, 9/10/09).

Octubre 12: Cuba is working on the dredging and technological modernization of its three major ports in collaboration with China and Venezuela to meet the challenge that the enlargement of the Panama Canal will bring, official media said. The works seek to increase depth to allow the operation of larger vessels in the ports of Havana, Cienfuegos and Santiago de Cuba, through which more than 80 percent of the island's imports enter the country, the director of the Havana port authority, Miguel Izquierdo, told the weekly *Opciones*. The official said that financing will be provided by an accord approved recently between China and Cuba, and from another with the mixed company Puertos del ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America), founded to promote the

development and modernization of Venezuelan and Cuban port terminals. Izquierdo said that in the 1980s, Cuban ports received some 12 million tons of cargo, but that volume has decreased to some 3 million for a series of reasons, including the world economic crisis (*EFE*, 12/10/09).

Octubre 12: The Cuban government is reopening abandoned factories to increase manufacturing output and reduce imports amid a sharp cash crunch caused by the global economic recession, state media reported. Among the industrial facilities reopening is a plant operated by Empresa de Pastas y Caramelos in the eastern city of Santiago that makes crackers and had been shuttered for nearly a decade, the official daily *Granma* said. "The production line was shut down nine years ago due to the technological aging of its machinery, breakdowns and problems with raw materials," *Granma* said in a front-page story, adding that workers and state agencies made an effort in recent months to "recover that production." Council of Ministers vice president and Economy and Planning Minister Marino Murillo participated in a ceremony over the weekend in Santiago at which the cracker plant was officially reopened. A pastry plant "closed for 23 years" was also recently reopened in Santiago, *Granma* said (*Latin American Herald*, 12/10/09).

Octubre 12: Cuba will meet its tobacco export commitments for 2009-2010 despite a 30 percent cut in production of the leaf, the government said. That guarantee was offered by the vice president of state-owned Grupo Tabacuba, Osvaldo Encarnacion, in comments to official weekly *Trabajadores*. Cuba's National Statistics Office, or ONE, announced that the amount of land planted with tobacco was reduced from 28,200 hectares (69,629 acres) to 19,800 hectares (48,888 acres) due to the severe global recession and an acute financial squeeze on the communist-ruled island. Encarnacion told *Trabajadores* the 2009-2010 tobacco harvest is expected to come in at just below 23,000 tons, representing a 10 percent decline from the previous season (*AP*, 12/10/09).

Octubre 13: El sector de las construcciones en Cuba carece de fuerza de trabajo suficiente, un problema que ha tratado de solucionar mediante el desplazamiento de personal fundamentalmente desde las provincias orientales del país, informó el diario oficial *Granma*. Según la fuente, alrededor del 15 por ciento de la fuerza total está integrada por contingentes albergados en más de 150 campamentos, lejos de sus lugares de residencia (*IPS*, 13/10/09).

Octubre 14: El gobierno de Raúl Castro canceló las operaciones en Cuba de la aerolínea comercial Aeropostal Alas de Venezuela como parte de una revisión del funcionamiento de las empresas extranjeras dentro de la isla. Según un documento oficial de la Cámara de Comercio de Cuba obtenido por *El Nuevo Herald*, la suspensión de Aeropostal se hizo efectiva el 12 de agosto tras un proceso de supervisión que detectó "un grupo de entidades que aún y cuando han sido canceladas, continúan operando ilegalmente desde el territorio nacional". En una carta fechada el 25 de agosto por Iván Marichal Aguilera, encargado del Registro Nacional de Sucursales y Agentes de Sociedades Mercantiles Extranjeras, se alerta a organismos y entidades estatales sobre la obligatoriedad de suspender la prestación de servicios a 182 firmas foráneas que han sido canceladas desde

enero del 2006; 28 de ellas durante el presente año. La misiva se adjunta a una lista que relaciona empresas canceladas de España, Italia, Canadá, República Dominicana, China y Venezuela (*El Nuevo Herald*, 14/10/09).

October 14: Cuba and Japan signed in Havana an agreement for technical cooperation in four large-scale projects, as a reflection of the will of the two countries to boost development in several areas. The document was signed by Japan's ambassador to Cuba, Masuo Nishibayashi, and Cuba's Minister for Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment, Rodrigo Malmierca. One of the projects seeks to strengthen the production of certified seeds for popular rice and another one the farming of marine species. The two initiatives are aimed at achieving self-sustainability in food production. The agreement also includes actions for the development and exploitation of underground water sources in regions prone to droughts and for the comprehensive management of solid waste in Havana (*ACN*, 14/10/09).

October 15: Eight Cuban enterprises participate in the First ALBA Meeting on Complementary Goods, in Cochabamba, Bolivia. *Prensa Latina* reported that among the Cuban enterprises taking part in the event are Suchel Camacho (cosmetics), Copextel (commercialization of high-tech electronic equipment), Labiofam (pharmaceutical labs), Polos Científicos (scientific group) and Alimport (food importer). Odalys Seijo, vice president of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce, told the press that the event includes a fair and a business round as part of the 7th ALBA Summit. She said the Cuban enterprises will have the opportunity to strengthen relations with companies from other participating countries and to diversify cooperation (*ACN*, 15/10/09).

Octubre 15: Cuba pagó cerca de medio millón de dólares por unas 900,000 acciones del canal de televisión Telesur, para convertirse en accionista minoritario con derecho a la toma de decisiones, de acuerdo a la minuta de la asamblea de accionistas publicada en la *Gaceta Oficial* de Venezuela. Según la gaceta 39,282, con fecha 9 de octubre del 2009, el Instituto de Radio y Televisión de Cuba (IRTC) suscribió un acuerdo con el Ministerio de Comunicación e Información de Venezuela, para la compra de 903,000 acciones del canal Telesur, por un precio de 903,000 bolívares fuertes, equivalentes a \$475,000 al cambio de una tasa preferencial de 1.92 bolívares por dólar, la misma tasa que existía cuando se firmó el convenio entre ambos organismos en abril del 2005. Con el nuevo cambio accionario, Cuba controlará alrededor del 15 por ciento de las acciones de Telesur, mientras que Venezuela mantendrá el control mayoritario con más de 5.8 millones de acciones (*El Nuevo Herald*, 15/10/09).

Octubre 16: Rusia y Cuba planean la apertura de una empresa conjunta en el área de la pesca, otra señal de la creciente sintonía política entre los ex aliados de la Guerra Fría, en momentos en que la isla sufre los efectos de la crisis global. Viacheslav Zujov, funcionario de la Unión Estatal Recursos Pesqueros Nacionales de Rusia, dijo que en noviembre ambos países firmarían un acuerdo que dará luz verde a la empresa conjunta, según un reporte de la agencia estatal *Prensa Latina* en Moscú, difundido en la isla. "Quisiéramos crear una compañía mixta en la esfera de la pesca en sentido general, es decir, no sólo para la actividad pesquera como tal, sino también la acuicultura, la cría en

presas y el desarrollo de tilapias u otros tipos de especies", dijo Zujov a *Prensa Latina (Reuters, 16/10/09)*.

October 16: The Ministerial Council for Economic Complementation of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of the Americas (ALBA) met in Cochabamba, Bolivia, prior to the 7th Summit of the regional organization to begin in the same city. The ministerial body, made up by economy ministers of all nine ALBA member nations discussed in the Gran Hotel Cochabamba, key aspects that will be later analyzed by the heads of states of their countries in the Summit. Among the topics discussed were the implementation of the Unique System for Regional Compensation (SUCRE, Spanish acronym), the constitution of the ALBA Bank and the commercial branch for the promotion of the Trade Treaties for the Peoples as oppose to Washington's Free Trade Treaties (ACN, 16/10/09).

October 17: The 7th Summit of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas, or ALBA, approved new steps for strengthening its model of "just and complementary trade" and ratified its struggle against "threats from the empire," as the group calls the United States. The treaty for a Unified Regional Compensation System, or SUCRE, was the most important economic measure approved at the presidential meeting. Its goal is to endow ALBA countries with "monetary and financial sovereignty" and calls for "the elimination of the US dollar in regional trade." This is a first step, official sources said, towards the future creation of a common currency that Morales suggested be called the pacha, which means "land" in the Quechua Indian tongue. They also agreed on principles that would allow the nine ALBA countries to develop a Peoples' Trade Treaty, or TCP, an initiative that calls for "fair, complementary and mutually supportive" trade so that nations of the bloc can overcome their economic inequalities. ALBA will also found the ALBAEXIM trade corporation for exports and imports, as a mechanism for balancing commerce and which will open stores in the different countries for their products (*LAHT, 17/10/09*).

October 19: The Entrepreneurial Forum of the 27th Cuba-Vietnam Intergovernmental Commission was inaugurated in Havana's National Hotel with the purpose of exploring new ways to increase trade between the two countries. The delegations are headed by Cuban Construction Minister Fidel Figueroa de la Paz, and by his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Hon Quan. During the first session of the forum, opened by Pedro Alvarez Borrego, president of Cuba's Chamber of Commerce, several agreements were signed between enterprises from the two nations. The Cuban industrial group UNECAMOTO, dedicated to the production and commercialization of car parts and pieces, and the ALCUBA construction enterprise, signed letters of intent with their Vietnamese counterparts; while the Cuban tourist chain Caracol and the ministries of the Light Industry and Domestic Trade signed a contract with the Vietnamese company Nhat Trang (*ACN, 20/10/09*).

October 20: Business between Cuba and four of its top five trading partners has declined sharply this year in a reflection of the communist-led Caribbean island's deep economic crisis, trade reports from the countries said. Reductions in exports to and imports from Cuba ranged from 20 percent to as high as 50 percent, according to the reports from

China, Spain, Canada and the United States. In descending order, they are the top traders with Cuba after Venezuela. Numbers were not available for Venezuela, which is the leading economic and political ally of Cuba's government and supplies the island with oil. China, Cuba's second trading partner, reported that imports from the island fell 48.2 percent to \$368 million through August, while Chinese exports to Cuba dropped 12.7 percent to \$641.9 million. Spain, tied with Canada as the island's third biggest trading partner, said its exports to Cuba declined 43 percent to \$394 million through July, while imports were down 24 percent to \$91 million. Canada, which did \$1.4 billion in trade with Cuba last year, said exports plummeted 52.4 percent to \$242 million through August and imports fell 55.7 percent to \$283 million. The United States, which is Cuba's fifth trading partner despite its 47-year-old trade embargo against the island, said sales to Cuba totaled \$383.8 million through August, down 23 percent (*Reuters*, 20/10/09).

October 21: A paper presented during the 10th Scientific Meeting of the Cuban Society of Geology's office in Villa Clara province, shows a study of over 250 mineral lots where gold is present in this territory. During the meeting, Emiliano Gallardo, a specialist with the Geology and Mining Enterprise, spoke about gold mining in Cuba from colonial times (1511-1898) up to the present time. He also explained that the presence of gold, sometimes accompanied by copper, has been corroborated by several studies (*CAN*, 21/10/09).

Octubre 23: La compañía británica Thomson Cruises anunció que incluirá visitas a La Habana en sus tres cruceros de 14 días por el Caribe, durante la temporada 2010-2011, informaron fuentes de la industria turística. En un comunicado, indicó que aprovechará la oportunidad de ofrecer a los británicos esta escala, en momentos en que sólo pocas compañías europeas de cruceros tienen permiso para acceder a esta capital debido a las leyes de Estados Unidos. Según el boletín *Caribbean News Digital*, todos los cruceros del Thomson Dream por el Caribe, durante la temporada 2010-11, visitarán La Habana. Pocas líneas ofrecen cruceros hacia Cuba, ya que eso implica que no pueden transportar pasajeros estadounidenses, precisó. La línea británica Fred Olsen —dijo— ofrece pocos cruceros a la isla, y la alemana Hapag Lloyd también visita el país caribeño, pero esos viajes no son comercializados entre estadounidenses (*Notimex*, 23/10/09).

October 28: A cooperation agreement between Cuba and the Russian Federation in the fishing sector was penned in Havana. Andrey Anatolievich Krainiy, Director of the Russian Federation's Federal Agency for Fisheries, and Cuban Food Industry Minister Maria del Carmen Concepcion, signed the document at the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment. The agreement will make possible for Russia to advise Cuba on apiculture, the training of specialists and naval construction and repair, while the Caribbean nation will provide logistic services and attention to Russian crews in Cuban ports (*ACN*, 28/10/09).

October 28: Trade and investment relations between South Africa and Cuba will be strengthened during the Havana International Trade Fair, the South African Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said. "The fair will provide an opportunity for deputy minister Thandi Tobias-Pokolo and her Cuban counterpart to discuss issues on the

bilateral agenda, with particular focus on trade and investment," the *South African Press Association* cited the spokesman Sidwell Medupe as saying in a statement. Tobias-Pokolo would lead a 40-member government and business delegation to Cuba for the Havana International Trade Fair, from November 2 to 7 (*Xinhua*, 28/10/09).

October 29: Cemil Cicek, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State from the Republic of Turkey, inaugurated the 9th Session of the Intergovernmental Commission between the two nations in Havana. Cicek, who is heading the Turkish delegation, referred to different areas of cooperation with potential to concrete agreements, being construction, academic exchange and agriculture among them. He also announced a large Turkish presence in the upcoming International Fair in Havana, since commercial cooperation between Cuba and Turkey has increased over the last few years, mainly due to the inclusion of pavilions of important entrepreneurs from that European country (*ACN*, 29/10/09).

Octubre 30: Más de 80 empresas españolas expondrán sus productos o servicios en la XXVII Feria Internacional de La Habana, que congregará a más de 500 firmas de medio centenar de países y organismos internacionales, informaron fuentes oficiales. La representación ibérica incluye delegaciones oficiales de la Comunidad de Madrid, el País Vasco, Valencia y otras autonomías, precisó el agregado comercial de la embajada de España en La Habana, Javier Landa, y agregó que el nivel de presencia es similar al del año anterior. Con un intercambio total de \$1,430 millones, España fue en 2008 el tercer socio comercial de Cuba, tras Venezuela y China, según la Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas de la isla. De las compañías españolas que acuden a la Feria, que durará una semana, a partir del 2 de noviembre, veinte tienen representación permanente en Cuba, bien con sucursales o en empresas mixtas o de asociación con el Estado (*EFE*, 30/10/09).

Octubre 31: Cuba alcanzó por sexto consecutivo la cifra de dos millones de turistas, informó el Ministerio del Turismo. Según la fuente, la isla reporta hasta el momento un crecimiento de 3,9 por ciento en los arribos de visitantes foráneos, a pesar de la crisis económica y la situación sanitaria internacional (*IPS*, 31/10/09).

Exile Community

October 1: Cuban exiles who had previously opposed a concert in September, in Havana, by Colombian singer Juanes, ended up mostly backing the event after Juanes spoke out in favor of uniting Cubans, a new poll showed. Juanes, who has a home in Miami, was originally pilloried by Cuban exile commentators who had portrayed his September 20 concert with other Spanish-language artists in Havana's Revolution Square as pandering to Cuba's communist rulers. A poll conducted among Cuban Americans by Bendixen & Associates between September 24-26 showed 53 percent of respondents had a favorable opinion of the Juanes concert afterwards, against 29 percent who expressed a negative view. This was a stark reversal of a previous Bendixen poll on August 24 which had shown 47 percent of Cuban Americans opposing the event, against 27 percent who supported it. Moderate Cuban exiles, who favor a shift in US policy away from a strategy

of isolation and hostility towards more contacts and constructive engagement, said the latest poll results showed the atmosphere was ripe for increased US-Cuban cultural and academic exchanges. "These results reflect what we have been saying for years, that Miami is changing," said Carlos Saladrigas, Co-Chairman of the Cuban Study Group, an organization of Cuban American businessmen which is lobbying for more US engagement with communist-ruled Cuba to foster political change there ([Juanes Cuban Concert Study](#); *Reuters*, 1/10/09).

Octubre 1: Tras asegurar que no ha podido dejar de llorar desde hace dos semanas, la madre de Juan Carlos Rivera culpó al sistema escolar de Miami-Dade por la muerte de su hijo, ocurrida en septiembre en el patio de la escuela secundaria Coral Gables. "Esto pudo haberse impedido. La escuela tiene máxima responsabilidad. Se necesita más seguridad en las escuelas", dijo Anaís Cruz, con los ojos enrojecidos e inflamados. Cruz, de 42 años, habló con la prensa por primera vez sobre la tragedia que ha destruido a su familia. Rivera, de 17 años, fue asesinado a puñaladas el 15 de septiembre por uno de sus compañeros en Coral Gables High. Andy Rodríguez, de 17 años, que vivía a una cuadras de la víctima, está acusado de asesinato en segundo grado. Es posible que ambos hayan peleado por una muchacha. "Envié a mi hijo a estudiar a Estados Unidos y terminó brutalmente asesinado por una trivialidad", dijo Cruz, rodeada de un equipo de abogados de la firma de abogados Haggard. "Le pido a Estados Unidos justicia para mi hijo" (*El Nuevo Herald*, 1/10/09).

October 8: Recently released CIA files from the mid-1960s show Cuban exile and accused terrorist Luis Posada Carriles informed on violent Miami-based efforts to attack Fidel Castro's fledgling Cuban government even as he was deeply involved in helping them. Jorge Mas Canosa, who went on to found the Cuban American National Foundation in the 1980s and became one of the most influential lobbyists in Washington through the Clinton administration, is described in one document as possessing 125 pounds of the explosive Pentolite. The memos also describe proposed sabotage of ships off the coast of Veracruz, Mexico, which Mas Canosa organized and planned to finance. It is unclear from the documents whether the plot ever took effect. Francisco J. Hernandez, the current president of the Foundation, worked closely with Mas Canosa for years. He said the documents described actions by his friend he found difficult to believe. "The fact of the matter is that Jorge was never a man who believed in terrorism," Hernandez said. "Yes, in those years, he believed in taking the war of liberation to Cuba, but not to kill innocent people," Hernandez said, adding, "It's shame that 40 some years later at a time when he cannot defend himself, these allegations come." Posada has called Mas Canosa a great friend. And in a 1998 interview, he said Mas Canosa had financed many of his activities over the years (*AP*, 8/10/09).

Octubre 9: El ensayista e historiador cubano Rafael Rojas se convirtió en el primer ganador del Premio Internacional de Ensayo Isabel Polanco, otorgado por la Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara en colaboración con la Fundación Santillana. Con el escritor mexicano Carlos Fuentes como presidente del jurado, el premio le fue concedido a Rojas por su ensayo *Repúblicas del aire: utopías y desencanto en la Revolución de Hispanoamérica*. El galardón que se entrega por primera vez está dotado

con 100,000 dólares como premio. El jurado del premio refirió que la obra de Rojas es un texto de "gran valor literario que aborda con solvencia, a través de una escritura vigorosa, desenvuelta y convincente, la singularidad del republicanismo hispanoamericano" (*El nuevo Herald*, 9/10/09).

Octubre 14: El empresario cubanoamericano Gus Casamayor, fundador de una organización dedicada a proteger el medio ambiente, recibió el premio Points of Light que otorga la Gobernación de Florida en el marco del mes de la Herencia Hispana. "Gus siente una gran compasión por el planeta y está dedicado a educar a las comunidades hispanas acerca de la conservación del medio ambiente. Su dedicación nos ayudará a conservar las bellezas naturales de la Florida", dijo el gobernador Charlie Crist. El hombre de negocios se dedica a entrenar a las comunidades y las empresas en el desarrollo de modelos empresarios que protegen el medio ambiente. Además, protege los bosques de Haití y les enseña a los niños la importancia de conservar los bosques (*El Nuevo Herald*, 14/10/09).

October 20: A new poll of Cuban Americans shows a strong majority favor allowing all Americans to travel to the island, a major shift from a 2002 survey that showed only a minority supporting the change, the Bendixen & Associates polling firm reported. Executive Vice President Fernand Amandi said he was surprised by the magnitude of the swing in just seven years -- from 46 percent in favor in 2002 to 59 percent in the September 24-26 survey. Only 29 percent were opposed in the new survey, compared to 47 percent in 2002. "The significant thing is how quickly they have moved in a short period of time," Amandi said, adding that the shift took place across all age groups, from older exiles to more recent arrivals. A campaign to allow all Americans to travel to Cuba has become a key Washington battle ground this year for those who favor and oppose easing US sanctions on the island. Permitting such travel would allow US tourists to visit Cuba. Only Cuban Americans are now allowed virtually unrestricted travel to the island (*El Nuevo Herald*, 21/10/09).

Octubre 21: Los grupos opositores cubanos en España se felicitaron por la decisión del régimen castrista de excarcelar a dos presos políticos, pero se mostraron convencidos de que a esta liberación seguirá el arresto de más disidentes y más represión. Los exiliados, en declaraciones a la prensa, criticaron al ministro español de Asuntos Exteriores, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, por afirmar que la liberación de Nelson Aguiar y Omelio Ángulo evidencia que el diálogo con la isla da resultados, cuando, en su opinión, "el regalo de presos" ha sido siempre una estrategia del régimen castrista. El coordinador de Unión Liberal Cubana (ULC), Antonio Guedes, se alegró por los excarcelados, pero lamentó que, en paralelo, el Gobierno de La Habana "siga deteniendo" a opositores y "no tenga una voluntad de cambio". Pedro Pablo Álvarez, uno de los cuatro cubanos desterrados a España en febrero de 2008, dijo que es "decepcionante" que el gobierno socialista español haya relegado a la disidencia y opte por una política que "da más fuerza a la dictadura". Álvarez auguró que en los próximos días "entrarán otros en la cárcel", porque "la represión ha aumentado" desde que Raúl Castro asumió la dirección del país por enfermedad de su hermano Fidel en julio de 2006. El portavoz de la Plataforma Cuba Democracia Ya, Rigoberto Carceller, compartió su sentimiento de satisfacción por la

libertad de Aguiar y Angulo con su convicción de que "la maquinaria de la represión continuará" (*EFE*, 21/10/09).

Octubre 25: La Plataforma Internacional Cuba Democracia Ya criticó al ministro de Asuntos Exteriores español, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, por dar "un segundo desplante a los defensores de los derechos humanos" en Cuba con los que no se reunió durante su visita a la isla los pasados días 17 y 18 de octubre. "¿Cómo poder saber si ese rumor de que Obama pidió a Zapatero, o si fue Zapatero quien le arrancó a Obama una palabrita para justificar el viaje de Moratinos a La Habana y su segundo desplante a los defensores de los derechos humanos en la isla?", se preguntó el presidente de la organización, Rigoberto Carceller, en un comunicado. Moratinos, que se reunió con el presidente cubano, Raúl Castro, así como con su homólogo, Bruno Fernández, no se reunió en cambio con ningún representante de la disidencia en la isla, como tampoco hizo en su primer viaje a la isla, en abril de 2007 (*Europa Press*, 26/10/09).

October 25: Juanita Castro, sister of Cuban rulers Fidel and Raúl Castro, cooperated with the CIA in the 1960s -- a time when the US agency was plotting to assassinate Fidel and overthrow his revolution -- according to an exclusive *Univisión-Noticias 23* report on her newly published book. The report also revealed that Juanita, who broke with her brothers' revolution in 1964, hid government opponents in her home; that Fidel refused to visit her because the house was "surrounded by worms;" and that their mother often intervened with Raúl to help Castro critics, jailed or fugitive. Described as the Castro family's best-kept secret in the weeks that preceded the release of her book, Juanita's revelation of her link with the CIA came as a short teaser at the end of a *Univisión-Noticias 23* report on the book. Juanita told the program that a person close to her and Fidel told her that "The CIA wanted to talk with me (...) because they had interesting things to tell me and interesting things to ask of me (...) I was left half-shocked, but in any case I told them yes." There was no immediate reaction to her revelation from the US authorities or the Cuban government, which routinely dismisses critics as mercenaries in the pay of Washington (*The Miami Herald, Reuters*, 26/10/09).

Octubre 28: El grupo Consenso Cubano, que reúne a las principales organizaciones políticas del exilio, afirmó que "casi todas las medidas" para beneficiar a las familias, prometidas por Estados Unidos, han sido puestas en marcha y otras están en "proceso de negociación con las autoridades cubanas", pero "poca" ha sido la respuesta del régimen. "Hoy la familia cubana continúa esperando por esos pasos que hace tres años fueron solicitados y que se hacen impostergables", dice el documento "Diez medidas en beneficio de la familia cubana", presentado por Marcelino Miyares, del Partido Demócrata Cristiano, en una conferencia de prensa celebrada en Miami. También participaron Julio Pich, de la Fundación Nacional Cubano Americana, Oscar Viciado, del Instituto de Estudios Cubanos y Tomás Rodríguez, de Agenda Cuba. Las diez medidas propuestas por Consenso Cubano se enfocan en tres áreas principales: reunificación, derechos de movimiento y residencia, el derecho a la comunicación y el derecho al envío y recepción de ayuda ([Ten Measures to Benefit the Cuban Family](#); *Cubaencuentro*, 29/10/09).

Foreign Affairs

Octubre 1: La Asociación Internacional de Radiodifusión (AIR) reiteró su condena a la "permanente campaña de hostigamiento, persecución, represión y reclusión de periodistas independientes" en Cuba. En la isla antillana, bajo el gobierno de Raúl Castro, "persisten todas las restricciones para el libre acceso de los ciudadanos al ejercicio del periodismo y la existencia de medios de comunicación libres e independientes", dice una resolución aprobada por la AIR en la clausura de su XXXIX Asamblea General, celebrada en Brasilia. En ese marco, la AIR, integrada por 17,000 emisoras de radio y televisión de América, Asia y Europa, reiteró también su "reclamo por la libertad de los periodistas arrestados por el régimen cubano" (*EFE*, 1/10/09).

October 1: The Prime Minister of Lesotho, Pakalitha Mosisili, arrived in Havana for an official visit at the invitation of the Cuban Government. During his stay in the Caribbean nation, the distinguished visitor will hold official talks with Cuban First Vice President Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, *Granma* newspaper reported (*ACN*, 1/10/09).

October 1: The President of Zambia, Rupiah Bwezani Banda, concluded an official visit to Cuba at the invitation of his counterpart Raul Castro. Bwezani was seen off at the Jose Marti International Airport by Deputy Foreign Minister Ana Teresita Gonzalez Fraga. The African leader held official talks with Raul and he and his accompanying delegation paid tribute to Cuban National Hero Jose Marti and to several African independence heroes. In addition, the Zambian head of state bestowed the Eagle Order of Zambia in its First Degree on Fidel Castro. The distinction was received by Raul Castro during a ceremony at the Revolution palace in Havana. Also during his stay in the Caribbean nation, Bwezani visited the Pharmaceutical Laboratories (Labiofam) and other places of social and historic interest (*ACN*, 1/10/09).

October 2: Cuba's First Vice President Jose Ramon Machado Ventura received Lesotho's Prime Minister Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili. The Lesotho Prime Minister was accompanied by M.K. Tsekoa, Foreign Affairs and International Relations Minister, and Doctor Mphu K.Ramatlapeng, Health and Social Welfare Minister, among other members of the delegation. Accompanying Machado Ventura were José Ramón Balaguer, Health Minister; Bruno Rodriguez, Foreign Affairs Minister; and Christian Jimenez, president of the Cuban National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation; and other officials (*ACN*, 1/10/09).

October 2: Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla and His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, his counterpart from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), signed an agreement to expand cooperation between the two foreign ministries. "This is the first official visit, of bilateral nature, of a high-ranking official from the UAE to Cuba and we are very satisfied," said Rodriguez Parrilla upon welcoming the distinguished visitor and his accompanying delegation at the venue of the Cuban Foreign Ministry in Havana. "That is why, although his visit is very short, it has a special connotation," he added and explained why – due to its history and culture – Cuba is very close to the Arab world. "Cuba deeply respects Islam and we are very happy for the UAE's extraordinary

achievements,” he stressed and noted that this is an opportunity to further improve relations between the two peoples (ACN, 3/10/09).

October 3: The President of the Republic of Mali, Amadou Toumani Toure, expressed his satisfaction at the results of his visit to Cuba and said it would contribute to the further strengthening of bilateral relations between the African and the Caribbean nations. Minutes before leaving the island, the Malian leader thanked Cuban President Raul Castro and all those who contributed to the success of his second visit to Cuba. He added that it was an honor for him to receive the Jose Marti Order, the highest award granted by the Cuban Council of State and recognized Cuba’s contribution and support of his country over the past 50 years. “That is why the government and the people of Mali decided to bestow the Great Cross of the National Order of Mali on Cuban President Raul Castro,” he stressed. The Malian president was seen off at the Jose Marti International Airport by Cuban deputy Foreign Minister Marcos Rodriguez Costa (ACN, 3/10/09).

October 3: Cuban President Raul Castro met with the Prime Minister of Lesotho, Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, minutes before the African head of government concluded an official visit to the Caribbean nation. During the talks, the two leaders spoke of topics of bilateral interest. Raul asked the distinguished visitor to pass on greetings to the King of Lesotho, His Majesty Letsie III, while the Mosisili ratified his country’s solidarity with Cuba and expressed his gratitude for the Caribbean nation’s cooperation with Lesotho. Present in the meeting were Cuban Vice President Esteban Lazo Hernandez, Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla and his counterpart from Lesotho, M. K. Tsekoa (ACN, 5/10/09).

October 5: Cuba's President Raul Castro will attend the next Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) meeting in Cochabamba, Bolivia. The event has been scheduled for 16-17 October. According to Bolivian president Evo Morales, the meeting will be attended by six more Latin American presidents, and is Castro's first official visit to the Andean country since taking over from his brother Fidel in 2008. Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, as well as his Ecuadorian and Paraguayan counterparts, Rafael Correa and Fernando Lugo, will attend the meeting of the leftist bloc, which Morales has branded an "anti-imperialist trade union" of socialist presidents. The ALBA wants to implement an alternative trade system based on bartering that will be called "The People's Trade Treaty" (TCP) as opposed to the US-backed free-trade agreements. These and other issues, such as the support for ousted Honduran leader Manuel Zelaya will be discussed in the next regional meeting. Morales confirmed that presidents and delegations of all ALBA countries (Ecuador, Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica, Honduras, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Antigua) will attend the meeting, as well as guest countries such as Uruguay, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Russia (*Global Insight*, 5/10/09).

October 6: Benin’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration, Francophonie and Beninese Abroad, Jean-Marie Ehouzou, arrived in Havana for an official visit at the invitation of his Cuban counterpart Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla. The Beninese diplomat will

hold official talks with Rodriguez Parrilla and will also meet with other State and Government officials (ACN, 6/10/09).

October 6: Cuban Culture Minister Abel Prieto led a delegation attending the 35th General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) underway in Paris. The Cuban minister will address the conference during a discussion on general politics that will take place for a few days, *Prensa Latina* reported. Prieto is accompanied by the Cuban ambassador to UNESCO, Hector Hernandez Pardo, and the island's representative before the body's Executive Council, Maria de los Angeles Florez (ACN, 6/10/09).

October 6: Cuba's permanent representative to the United Nations, Pedro Nuñez Mosquera, reiterated that a reform of the UN would not be complete until there is a true reform of its Security Council. Speaking during a plenary session of the UN General Assembly, the diplomat stressed the need to have a really equitable and representative Security Council. "We need a body that acts on behalf of everybody and within the mandates of the UN Charter; not one that interferes – as it has frequently happened in the past - with the role and prerogatives of other UN bodies," said Nuñez Mosquera. *Prensa Latina* reported that the Cuban official urged the General Assembly to revitalize its governing role. "The General Assembly is the only UN body where there is no room for hegemonies. We all have a say in all matters and there are no rights of veto here," he stressed (ACN, 7/10/09).

October 6: The Cuban Revolution wouldn't exist without African solidarity, stressed Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez upon receiving his counterpart from Benin, Jean-Marie Ehouzou, in Havana. Rodriguez recalled that Cuba and Benin "have fought together for decolonization and national independence and against Apartheid in Africa". Ehouzou, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration, La Francophonie, and Beninese Abroad, was received along with his delegation at the main office of the Cuban Foreign Ministry, an occasion in which the bilateral bonds deeply rooted in the blood and culture of the two peoples was underscored (ACN, 7/10/09).

Octubre 7: Fidel Castro alabó el poderío militar de China y su política exterior, a la que contrastó con la de Estados Unidos en un nuevo artículo publicado en la prensa oficial. El desfile militar que tuvo lugar en Pekín el pasado día 1 fue "una demostración de poderío", dice en el texto. "Fue motivo de asombro el hecho de que China presentara 52 nuevos tipos de armamentos, entre ellos la última generación de carros de combate, vehículos anfibios, radares, aviones de exploración y equipos sofisticados de comunicación", afirmó Castro. "Los medios de prensa resaltaban la presencia de los cohetes intercontinentales DF-31, capaces de golpear con cabezas nucleares blancos situados a 10 mil kilómetros de distancia, así como los cohetes de alcance medio y las defensas anticoheteriles", agrega el ex gobernante, de 83 años. Pekín "no tiene que cerrar centros de torturas, no está en guerra con ningún otro Estado, no envía sus soldados a más de 10,000 kilómetros de distancia para intervenir y matar con sofisticados medios de guerra, no posee cientos de bases militares en otros países ni poderosas flotas que surcan todos los océanos". También destaca que China, segundo socio comercial de Cuba, tras

Venezuela, "no debe millones de millones de dólares, y en medio de una colosal crisis financiera internacional ofrece al mundo la cooperación de un país cuya economía no está en recesión y crece a elevados ritmos" ([La historia no puede ser ignorada](#); *EFE*, 7/10/09).

Octubre 7: José Ledesma, gobernador del departamento de San Pedro, el más pobre de Paraguay, le pidió al presidente Fernando Lugo que gestione la llegada de médicos cubanos para atender a las comunidades de escasos recursos. "Le pedí al presidente que gestione la cooperación de las brigadas médicas de Cuba", dijo Ledesma a periodistas, poco después de entrevistarse con el jefe de Estado en el palacio de Gobierno. El gobernador dijo que los médicos paraguayos "no se acostumbran y no quieren vivir en lugares muy alejados, con falta de comunicación y malos caminos", y "esta gente de Cuba está acostumbrada a trabajar en las áreas rurales", destacó (*AFP*, 7/10/09).

Octubre 7: El músico francés Manu Chao realizará dos conciertos en Cuba en homenaje a Ernesto Che Guevara, tres años después de su última presentación en la isla. Manu Chao es considerado uno de los iconos de la música alternativa en el mundo (*IPS*, 7/10/09).

October 7: Esteban Lazo, Vice-president of the Cuban Council of State, met with Jean-Marie Ehouzou, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Integration, La Francophonie, and Beninese Abroad, who is on an official visit to Cuba. Accompanying the Beninese Foreign Minister were, for Benin, Gregoire Laitan Houde, Benin's ambassador to Cuba; and Eusebe Agbangla, Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Integration, La Francophonie, and Beninese Abroad; and for Cuba, Bruno Rodriguez, Minister of Foreign Affairs; the director of Sub-Saharan Africa of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ivan Mora; Cuba's ambassador to Benin, Oscar Coet; and Norberto Escalona, an official from the Foreign Ministry (*ACN*, 7/10/09).

October 7: More than 40 youngsters from the Pacific Islands have arrived in Havana since last September to start higher studies on medicine in Cuba through a new program for medical training. According to CubaCoopera, a website of the Cuban Foreign Ministry, the students to attend the 2009-2010 year course come from Vanuatu (10), Tuvalu (10), Nauru (8), Kiribati (11) and Tonga (3). With this latest group, there are in all 148 students from the small Pacific Island nations studying in Cuba, with another group from Salomon Islands (*ACN*, 7/10/09).

October 8: Bolivia's president participated in a tribute to the guerrilla leader Ernesto "Che" Guevara, who was captured and killed by Bolivian soldiers 42 years ago while trying to foment revolution in this Andean nation. President Evo Morales, a close ally of the leftist governments in Venezuela and Cuba, has often expressed admiration for Guevara, an Argentine who joined in Fidel Castro's successful revolution in Cuba and has become an icon for many on the left. Guevara is "invincible in his ideals," Morales said at a ceremony in Vallegrande, the town in central Bolivia where the slain rebel's body was displayed after he was killed on October 8, 1967. "And in all this history, after so many years, he inspires us to continue fighting, changing not only Bolivia, but all of Latin America and, better, the world," Morales said (*AP*, 9/10/09).

October 8: Cuba asked the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) to implement more international cooperation policies based on solidarity. Cuban Culture Minister Abel Prieto addressed the 35th UNESCO General Conference in Paris, where he said the only way the international organization could reach its objectives and goals would be by undertaking more solidarity-based policies, *Prensa Latina* reported. The Cuban official emphasized the role that could be played by UNESCO in the fight against climate change and, he added, the organization should lead actions aimed at facilitating scientific access, eradicating militarization of science and contributing to the solution of big health and environmental problems the world faces today (ACN, 9/10/09).

October 8: Cuban Culture Minister Abel Prieto left Paris for Moscow on an official visit, after participating in the 35th General Conference of the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO), held in the French capital. In Moscow, the Cuban minister will tackle issues related to Russia's presence as Guest of Honor of Havana's International Book Fair in 2010 (ACN, 9/10/09).

Octubre 8: El gremio de los médicos de Paraguay encabezó una protesta por la llegada a ese país de 30 doctores enviados por el gobierno cubano y que atenderán a poblaciones en extrema pobreza del departamento de San Pedro. "Los cubanos no están integrados al sistema de salud de Paraguay; es una intromisión en el programa de asistencia primaria que realiza el Ministerio de Salud Pública", dijo Hugo Arza, presidente del Círculo Paraguayo de Médicos. El departamento de San Pedro cuenta con pueblos en estado de miseria, rodeados de grandes fincas de soja, trigo y girasol, la mayoría propiedad de inmigrantes brasileños (AP, 9/10/09).

October 8: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez officially welcomed a group of 240 Cuban doctors who will join the South American country's health program 'Barrio Adentro Mission'. *Granma* newspaper reported that the Cuban doctors will be distributed to support the work, as instructors, in primary health care centers - 7,000 in all - that have been opened across the country. Rogelio Polanco, Cuba's ambassador to Venezuela, who also attended the ceremony, said training doctors in the community is a way to make them feel committed to the people (ACN, 8/10/09).

October 9: The 7th International Symposium on Arab Culture is scheduled for October 20-24 in the Cuban capital with the participation of experts from several countries. The forum will take place at the venue of the Cuban Arab Union (UAC) and it will be part of a series of events to celebrate the 30th anniversary of this organization, "which works for the unity, identity and culture of the Arab community and their descendants living in Cuba," said UAC Vice President Maria Deriche in a press conference. The UAC was founded in April 1979 when the Cuban-Arab communities of Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian origin united to preserve their identity, culture, customs, traditions and affective bonds with the homelands of their ancestors. Currently, the UAC brings together nearly 50,000 people and has venues in Havana, Ciego de Avila, Camaguey and Santiago de Cuba (AP, 9/10/09).

October 9: Popular singer Manu Chao held a concert on the staircase of the University of Havana, dedicated to the 42nd anniversary of the assassination of Che Guevara. More than 20,000 people attended to the concert, bringing flags from different nations and singing to many of the songs played by Manu Chao and other local musicians from the Nueva Trova movement who shared the stage with the singer. Artists from Cuba and around the world painted a giant mural in four panels set next to the stage in the staircase of the University of Havana, in honor of Che Guevara (ACN, 10/10/09).

October 11: The Prime Minister of Guinea Bissau, Carlos Gomes, arrived at Havana's Jose Marti International Airport, where he was welcomed by Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Marcos Rodriguez. "I bring special greetings to our brother Commander Fidel Castro, to President Raul Castro and to the people of Cuba," said the leader of the African country. After recalling that Cuba and Guinea Bissau fought together for the liberation of his nation, he thanked Cuba's traditional assistance to his country, mainly in the fields of health and education. Gomes is accompanied by a delegation that includes the Minister of Foreign Business, Cooperation and Communities, Maria Adiatu Djaló Nandinga; and the Minister of National Education, Culture and Sciences, Aristides Ocante Da Silva (ACN, 12/10/09).

October 12: Cuba's First Vice President Jose Ramon Machado Ventura met with Guinea Bissau's Prime Minister Carlos Gomes, who is on an official visit to Cuba. Conversations took place in a cordial and friendly environment in which the two officials discussed the development of bonds between their countries. Carlos Gomes was accompanied in the meeting by Minister for Foreign Business, Cooperation and Communities Maria Adiatu Djaló Nandigna, Minister of National Education, Culture and Science Arístides Ocante da Silva, Minister of Public Health Camilo Simoes Pereira, and Guinea Bissau's ambassador to Cuba Abel Coelho, among other members of the among other members of the delegation. On the Cuban part were present in the meeting Public Health Minister Jose Ramón Balaguer Cabrera; the head of the International Relations Department of the Cuban Communist Party's Central Committee, Jorge Martí Martínez; Foreign Affairs Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla; Rodrigo Malmierca Díaz, Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment; Cuba's ambassador to Guinea Bissau Pedro Doña; and other officials of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ACN, 12/10/09).

October 13: El ministro español de Asuntos Exteriores, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, no se reunirá con los colectivos de disidentes cubanos durante la visita que realizará a La Habana los días 18 y 19 de octubre, señalaron fuentes de su departamento. Moratinos viaja a Cuba con el objetivo de avanzar en el diálogo político con el régimen castrista, incluida la situación de los derechos humanos en la isla. Está previsto que se reúna con el ministro cubano de Relaciones Exteriores, Bruno Rodríguez, y no se descarta que mantenga un encuentro con el presidente del país, Raúl Castro, aunque esta cita aún no está confirmada, explicaron las fuentes. Será la segunda visita del titular de Exteriores de España a La Habana después de la que hizo en abril de 2007, con la que abrió una nueva etapa en las relaciones entre ambos países. Como ocurrió en aquella ocasión, Moratinos no se verá con los disidentes y, previsiblemente, delegará esta tarea en su director general

para Iberoamérica, cargo que ocupa en la actualidad Juan Carlos Sánchez (*EFE*, 13/10/09).

October 13: Amnesty International called on the government of Cuba to lift the travel restrictions on Cuban blogger Yoani Sánchez, preventing her from traveling to New York to receive an international journalism award. “The immigration office has just confirmed that they maintain the prohibition on letting me leave the country”, wrote Yoani Sánchez on her Twitter page on 12 October. This is the fourth time that Yoani Sánchez has been refused permission by the authorities to travel outside Cuba in the past two years, AI said. “The Cuban authorities often routinely deny exit visas and bar from leaving their country those who, like Yoani Sánchez, express critical views of the government,” said Amnesty International’s Kerrie Howard, Americas Program deputy director. “Restricting freedom of movement by denying an exit visa to Yoani Sánchez constitutes an unnecessary punitive measure for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression and association,” Kerrie Howard said (*AI Press Release*, 13/10/09).

October 13: Representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Cuba and Turkey met in Turkey for the yearly political consultation mechanism. The Cuban delegation was headed by Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Dagoberto Rodríguez Barrera and the Turkish Delegation by Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Namik Tan. Dagoberto Rodríguez Barrera laid a wreath at the mausoleum that honors Kemal Atatürk, founder and first president of the Republic of Turkey, and was received by Turkish First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Feridun Sinirlioglu (*ACN*, 13/10/09).

October 14: The 7th Summit of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) will begin on October 16 in Bolivia. Cuba, one of the organizations’s founding members, will be represented. The meeting, of key importance in today’s world context, will also include the participation of Social Movements and Indigenous Peoples, and will be held in the city of Cochabamba, the capital of the Department of the same name, located in the central part of the South American nation. Important regional and international issues will be debated during the two-day meeting of the heads of state or governmental representatives of ALBA member countries, like Ecuador, Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica, Honduras, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Antigua and Barbuda. This mechanism of integration, proposed by Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, now takes another step forward, with the inclusion of social organization and movements representing the peoples in the region. With this purpose, the Summit has scheduled a mass meeting at the Félix Carriles Stadium, the Venezuelan Communication and Information Ministry reported on its web site (*ACN*, 14/10/09).

October 14: A Cuban delegation currently visiting China confirmed the willingness of this Asian country to continue strengthening technical-scientific relations with the Caribbean nation in areas of common interest such as nano-science and nano-technologies. The delegation, headed by Dr. Fidel Castro Díaz-Balart, scientific adviser of the Cuban Council of State, was welcomed in Beijing by Dr. Wan Gang, the Chinese Minister Science and Technology. The meeting with the also vice chairman of the 11th Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference took place at the Residence

of State Guests, where the Cuban technical-scientific delegation was warmly welcomed (ACN, 14/10/09).

October 14: Fidel Castro spoke by telephone with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, while the latter was inaugurating the National Center for Genetics created with the help of Cuba in the northern state of Miranda. Chavez made reference to this conversation in a broadcast made by *Venezolana de Television* and cited at the Round Table program aired by Cuban radio and television. The Venezuelan head of state was touring the center accompanied by Cuban Deputy Health Minister Marcia Cobas, when he said that Fidel was sending greetings to everybody and congratulating them. Chávez said goodbye to Fidel with the words “Our Homeland or Death, We will Win”, announcing that “we’ll meet very soon”, the television channel reported. Chavez described the National Center for Medical Genetics, as an example of what science at the service of the people is (ACN, 14/10/09).

October 14: Installation of 1,630 kilometers (1,013 miles) of fiber optic cable between Cuba and Venezuela has started, Venezuela's science and technology chief said. Cuba claims that not having access to US Internet firms' services has kept it from extending Internet access to all Cubans. But critics say whatever bandwidth the government has available, most Cubans still cannot gain free access to all information available on the web. Venezuelan Science and Technology Minister Jesse Chacon said “we will be laying the cable which is a really vital element of relations between the two countries.” “This is something that we hope will be ready in two years' time,” Chacon said in a statement. The hookup will have a 640-gigabyte capacity and multiply Cuba's ability to connect by 3,000, experts from both countries say. The project, set to lay cable from near La Guaira in Venezuela's Vargas state to Siboney, outside the Cuban city of Santiago de Cuba, is expected to cost 63.4 million dollars (AFP, 10/09).

October 15: Spanish aid to Cuba, which has climbed from 17 million euros (\$25.36 million) in 2007 to 34 million euros (\$50.7 million) this year, figures to be touted during the upcoming visit to the island by Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos as a key aspect of the growing cooperation between the two nations. Both countries have said they are satisfied with the increase in aid, which the coordinator of Spanish cooperation in Havana, Juan Diego Ruiz, told the press has primarily funded food security, services such as education and health, potable water projects and the protection of cultural heritage. The Spanish government resumed aid flows to Cuba after bilateral relations were normalized during Moratinos' previous visit to the island in April 2007. Cooperation had been suspended for four years after Cuba jailed 75 dissidents for allegedly conspiring with the United States to undermine the communist system. However, despite the lack of direct cooperation between the central governments from 2003 to 2007, aid has never stopped flowing to Cuba from Spain's autonomous communities, provinces and municipalities. In 2010, the total amount of Spanish cooperation with Cuba is expected to be equivalent to that of 2009 due to the impact of the global financial crisis, “but it won't fall either,” Ruiz said (LAHT, 15/10/09).

Octubre 15: México repatrió a cuatro de 14 cubanos que fueron secuestrados y algunos de ellos torturados por contrabandistas de indocumentados que exigían un rescate monetario a sus familiares en Estados Unidos y Europa, informó la organización no gubernamental Sin Fronteras. La decisión fue tomada pese a que los indocumentados tenían derecho a regularizar su situación en México por haber sido víctimas de un delito, advirtió la organización desde Ciudad México. Se teme que los demás también sean deportados a Cuba (*El Nuevo Herald*, 21/10/09).

Octubre 16: El presidente de la Comisión Cubana de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional (CCDHRN), Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz, considera que la actual administración española es "la más distante hacia el movimiento de los derechos humanos y pro democracia en Cuba en los últimos 25 años". El activista, quien hizo estas declaraciones a propósito de la visita a la isla del ministro de Exteriores español, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, denunció que pese a que el nuevo embajador, Manuel Cacho, lleva ya casi un año en su puesto, "a estas alturas no le conocemos". En opinión de Sánchez Santacruz, se ha producido un "alejamiento visible" que no ocurre con otros países europeos ni con Estados Unidos. Según el activista, la política adoptada por el gobierno de Zapatero hacia el régimen "totalitario" cubano es "equivocada" y sus autores "quedarán sujetos al juicio de la historia" (*Europa Press*, 16/10/09).

Octubre 16: La actual presidencia sueca de la Unión Europea dijo estar "sorprendida" con los supuestos planes del gobierno español de modificar la Posición Común con respecto a La Habana, durante su próximo mandato, y manifestó su rechazo a la propuesta. "No tenemos noticias directas sobre el asunto, pero semejante cambio requerirá el apoyo de los Veintisiete, y nosotros no apoyaremos el cambio si se llega a proponer dentro del Consejo", dijo Elisabeth Eklund, directora adjunta de Asuntos Latinoamericanos del Ministerio de Exteriores sueco. Eklund agregó que la Posición Común cuenta con el "apoyo absoluto" de su gobierno. "No vemos razón alguna para alejarnos de nuestros compromisos. La defensa de los derechos humanos es un principio fundamental de la Unión, y no se puede ignorar ese compromiso", señaló la política. La ministra sueca opinó que "hasta que se puedan garantizar las libertades civiles dentro de la Isla", no les "parecerá adecuado que la UE establezca otro tipo de relación con Cuba". Asimismo, afirmó que "para Suecia los derechos humanos son fundamentales" y para la "presidencia son una prioridad". "Nuestro cuerpo diplomático mantiene contacto estrecho con la disidencia y las familias de los presos políticos, y cuando visitan altos cargos siempre se reúnen con el gobierno y la disidencia", opinó (*El Mundo*, 16/10/09).

Octubre 16: Reporteros sin Fronteras ha emitido un comunicado en el que señala que el médico cubano y periodista independiente, Darsi Ferrer, cumple en la cárcel de Valle Grande ochenta días de prisión preventiva. Señala la organización defensora de los periodistas, que los motivos del arresto de Ferrer van contra las propias leyes cubanas y que el prisionero inició una huelga de hambre el pasado 13 de octubre para protestar por las condiciones de su detención. Apunta el comunicado que aunque a nivel diplomático el régimen de La Habana pretenda presentar una imagen de apertura progresiva y de diálogo, la realidad en la isla niega cualquier progreso en cuanto a las libertades públicas ([RWB Press Release](#); *Martí Noticias*, 16/10/09).

October 16: Cuba and Bolivia reaffirmed the excellent state of relations between the two countries in the 3rd meeting for bilateral policies consultation held by representatives from both nations in Cochabamba, Bolivia. In the meeting, both parties signed a joint statement and an agreement that recognizes higher education studies and diplomas as valid in both countries. Rogelio Sierra Diaz, Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister, told the press that Cuba and Bolivia enjoy the privilege of being two of the nine members of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of the Americas (ALBA), whose 7th Summit is taking place in Cochabamba (ACN, 16/10/09).

Octubre 16: Fidel Castro opinó que el mandatario boliviano Evo Morales merece recibir el Premio Nobel de la Paz y sostuvo que el presidente de Estados Unidos, Barack Obama, "sabe que ese premio no lo ha ganado todavía". Sin embargo, tras reconocer que la concesión despertó polémica, Castro indicó que el jefe de la Casa Blanca "no puede ser juzgado moralmente de igual forma si conocía o no previamente la asignación" del Premio el pasado 10 de octubre. "Si a Obama se le otorgó el premio por ganar las elecciones en una sociedad racista, a pesar de ser afroamericano, Evo lo merece por ganarlas en su país, a pesar de ser indígena, y cumplir además lo prometido", dijo Castro en un artículo publicado por la prensa. En su Reflexión titulada "Un premio Nobel para Evo", Castro reseñó los méritos del gobernante boliviano, "un campesino indígena muy pobre", así como su trayectoria política y social los avances bajo su gobierno, y vaticinó que en las elecciones de diciembre próximo se incrementará su apoyo popular ([Un premio Nobel para Evo](#); *Notimex*, 16/10/09).

October 16: Cuban First VP Jose Ramon Machado Ventura is heading the island's delegation to the 7th Summit of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of the Americas (ALBA) beginning in Cochabamba, Bolivia. Also attending the meeting in representation of Cuba is the Vice President of the Council of Ministers Ricardo Cabrisas and other government officials.) Bolivian President Evo Morales sent greetings to Fidel Castro during the inauguration the Summit. Best wishes to comrade Fidel, who has devoted his life to his country's Revolution, said the Bolivian head of state, after which he described Cuba as "the seedbed of revolution in all of Latin America." Tackled during the Summit will be the grand national enterprises, as well as the different projects they carry out, and the establishment of the Economic Complementary Zone agreed at the 6th Summit held in Maracay in June. Likewise, the creation of the ALBA Bank and the probable signing of the Constituent Agreement of the Single System of Regional Compensation (SUCRE), among other aspects, will also take up part of the time of delegates in their sessions. Also Morales pointed out that the coup d'etat against constitutional president Jose Manuel Zelaya in Honduras "is a clear sign that they (the United States) want to stop our development with ALBA". The Bolivian president also made reference to the presence of US military bases in the region, particularly in Colombia (ACN, 16/10/09).

October 17: La próxima cumbre de la Alianza Bolivariana para las Américas (ALBA) se celebrará en Cuba con motivo de su quinto aniversario, a propuesta del presidente de Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, quien pidió que Fidel Castro participe en el evento por ser el "padre" de la alianza. Chávez propuso que los mandatarios del bloque se reúnan en la isla caribeña, lo que fue dado por aprobado por el primer vicepresidente cubano, José Ramón Machado Ventura, durante la segunda sesión de la VII Cumbre de la ALBA, que se celebra en la ciudad boliviana de Cochabamba. Chavez subrayó que la ALBA debe fijarse como meta formar "un polo de fuerza mundial", un asunto que en su opinión debe tratarse, precisamente, en la cumbre del quinto aniversario, que también sería la quinta cita del bloque en 2009 si se celebra antes de que acabe el año. "Nos convocaríamos todos, pero sin derecho a que falte nadie, ni siquiera Fidel porque es el padre de la ALBA", insistió Chávez. El mandatario venezolano planteó que en adelante todos los presidentes de los países de la ALBA deben asistir a las cumbres para mantener fortalecida la alianza y que, si uno no pudiera acudir, la cita debe ser suspendida o aplazada (*EFE*, 17/10/09).

October 17: In the political arena, the 7th Summit of the Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) made important decisions. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said at the end of the meeting that the bloc is progressing towards the "exorcism of imperial doctrine" in their countries in order to "recover the liberating doctrine of Bolivar." In this area, the chief resolution was for ALBA to impose new trade and migratory sanctions on the government of Roberto Micheletti in Honduras, where the bloc demands the unconditional reinstatement of deposed President Manuel Zelaya. The regional group also asked the Colombian government in its final statement "to reconsider the installation" of US military bases and demanded that the territory occupied by the United States at Guantanamo be returned to Cuba. ALBA reaffirmed its request that the US economic, trade and financial embargo against Cuba end "unconditionally, unilaterally and immediately" (*LAHT*, 17/10/09).

Octubre 18: Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos said in Havana that the aim of his second visit to Cuba was to strengthen bilateral relations and prepare for Spain's assumption of the rotating European Union presidency during the first half of 2010. Moratinos said that his first visit to the communist island two-and-a-half years ago came about "in the context in which Cuba was isolated from the international community" and opened "a new road, a new way of strengthening relations" with this country, which has "enormous importance" for Spain. "On this second visit, I can express that it's normal to visit Cuba. Not just the Spanish foreign minister, but there have been many European, Latin American visitors, presidents, heads of state, ministers," Moratinos said. The 2007 trip "was a controversial visit," but now "it's a normal visit, which has as its objective to continue strengthening relations with a great country for Spain, such as Cuba is, and it also is an opportunity to continue preparing (for) the Spanish presidency of the European Union," Moratinos said. Spain in 2008 pushed for the lifting of diplomatic sanctions imposed by the EU on the Havana government in 2003, as a result of three executions and the imprisonment of 75 dissidents, two-thirds of whom remain behind bars (*AFP, EFE*, 18/10/09).

Octubre 18: El vicepresidente de Ecuador Lenin Moreno llegó a Cuba a conocer los avances de la medicina cubana para personas con discapacidades físicas y agradecer el apoyo del gobierno de la isla en una campaña que se realiza en el país sudamericano sobre la materia. Moreno agradeció "de la forma más sentida al pueblo cubano y a su gobierno por haber colaborado con una campaña muy especial en Ecuador (...) que por primera vez piensa en la solución a los problemas que tienen las personas con discapacidades y en sus derechos que fueron ocultados hasta el día de hoy". Moreno usa una silla de ruedas desde 1998, cuando fue baleado durante un asalto y quedó paraplégico. A su llegada a la isla, Moreno fue recibido por la vicescanciller cubana Ana Teresita González (*AP*, 18/10/09).

October 18: The first Cuban ambassador to El Salvador since the early 1960s has presented his credentials, the government of leftist President Mauricio Funes said. Funes re-established diplomatic relations with the island after taking office in June, almost a half-century after ties were broken at the height of the Cold War. The Salvadoran Foreign Relations Ministry said that Ambassador Pedro Pablo Prada Quintero presented his accreditation to Foreign Minister Hugo Martínez (*AP*, 18/10/09).

Octubre 19: El XIII Encuentro Latinoamericano de Facultades de Comunicación Social tendrá lugar por primera vez en Cuba, hasta el 22 de octubre, bajo el lema: "La comunicación en la sociedad del conocimiento: desafíos para la Universidad". Auspiciado por la UNESCO-Cuba y la Asociación Cubana de Comunicadores Sociales, el principal evento de la Federación Latinoamericana de Facultades de Comunicación contará con la presencia de 350 delegados cubanos y 934 extranjeros procedentes de 23 países. La realización del encuentro en Cuba, prototipo de modelo alternativo hace ya cinco décadas, pudiera impulsar el avance de la comunicación hacia posiciones más acordes con los cambios que, en el terreno político, económico, social y cultural experimentan los países de América Latina, expresó el doctor Julio García Luis, decano de la Facultad de Comunicación de la Universidad de La Habana (*Granma*, 19/10/09).

Octubre 19: La disidencia cubana en España y el principal partido de la oposición criticaron la visita del canciller Miguel Ángel Moratinos a Cuba y le acusaron de favorecer el aislamiento de la isla. El portavoz de relaciones internacionales del conservador Partido Popular, Jorge Moragas, aseguró que usar la palabra normalidad en Cuba le pone los pelos de punta y calificó de insultante que Moratinos insista en su interlocución con el actual gobierno de Raúl Castro, olvidando a la disidencia. Poco antes de su visita a Cuba, Moratinos aseguró que el contacto con la disidencia es fluido a través de la embajada en La Habana y afirmó que el gobierno español abordaría con las autoridades cubanas la cuestión de los derechos humanos y las libertades. Sin embargo, Carlos Payá, hermano del opositor cubano Oswaldo Payá, consideró que la represión en Cuba se ha intensificado y acusó a Moratinos de aislar a parte del pueblo cubano. "Antes, durante y después del viaje de Moratinos, la represión en Cuba se ha intensificado", dijo Payá en una entrevista telefónica. "Cuando se va a ver al régimen y no se tiene en cuenta al resto del pueblo, se contribuye a la política de aislamiento del propio régimen con respecto a la disidencia" (*AP*, 19/10/09).

Octubre 19: El líder disidente Oswaldo Payá consideró que la nueva visita a la isla del ministro español de Asuntos Exteriores, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, no traerá ningún beneficio para el pueblo cubano. "Si miro las visitas anteriores no puedo hablar de esperanza, porque hay un esquema atrasado de que el objetivo son las mejores relaciones con el gobierno cubano por parte del español. Eso no incluye ningún beneficio para el pueblo, son a costa de silenciar la exigencia de liberar a los presos políticos y el respeto a los derechos humanos", dijo Payá, coordinador nacional del Movimiento Cristiano Liberación (MCL), en una entrevista concedida al diario español *ABC* (*Cubaencuentro*, 19/10/09).

October 19: Cuban President Raul Castro, met with Miguel Angel Moratinos, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Spain, who was on an official visit to the island at the invitation of his Cuban counterpart. Also present in the meeting was Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez, according to information broadcast by the national television newscast (*ACN*, 19/10/09).

October 19: Spain's foreign minister said President Raul Castro affirmed his commitment to economic reform and expressed his desire to continue improving relations with the United States. Castro also promised to pay about \$450 million in back payments to Spanish companies doing business on the cash-strapped Caribbean island, said Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos. Moratinos, speaking to reporters at the end of a two-day trip to the former Spanish colony, described wide-ranging talks on topics ranging from Cuba-European Union relations to improvements in Cuba's human rights. "I have found in President Castro a commitment to reform, to advance the process of reform in the whole country, to improve the economic situation of Cuba," he said. "Today he reiterated his will to continue the process." Moratinos said Castro had good words about US President Barack Obama and was pleased at recent Obama-initiated talks on migration issues and the possible resumption of direct US-Cuba mail service broken off since 1963. He said Castro "had personally committed and given instructions" that Spanish companies awaiting payments for about \$450 million in goods and services would be paid. Moratinos said human rights were discussed "in general". Spain takes over the revolving presidency of the European Union in January and Moratinos said its "principal objective" will be moving the 27-nation bloc away from a 1996 resolution that conditioned dialogue with Cuba on its "transition to a multi-party democracy" (*Reuters*, 19/10/09).

October 19: The Iberomeric General Secretary, Enrique Iglesias, arrived in Cuba for a working visit. *Granma* newspaper reported that Iglesias will hold meetings with Cuban Authorities, and he will visit places of historic and scientific interest (*ACN*, 20/10/09).

October 19: Esteban Lazo, Vice-president of the Cuban Council of State, met with Lenin Moreno Garces, Vice-president of the Republic of Ecuador, who was on an official visit to the island. The Ecuadorean VP acknowledged the island's support of the efforts made by the government of current President Rafael Correa to carry on with a social project that allows for a better quality of life for his country's citizens, and thanked Cuba for the training of hundreds of Ecuadorian professionals on the island, who will contribute to the

progress of their nation. For his part, Lazo thanked the fraternal people of Ecuador for its solidarity with Cuba's struggle against the US blockade and for the release of the five Cubans incarcerated in the United States. The visiting VP was accompanied by Ecuador's ambassador to Havana, Universi Zambrano Romero. Accompanying the Cuban VP was First Deputy Foreign Minister Marcelino Medina and other officials (ACN, 20/10/09).

Octubre 20: El líder cubano Fidel Castro indicó que la situación actual para la especie humana debido al cambio climático es de "vida o muerte" y no de "patria o muerte", la tradicional consigna con que finalizaba sus discursos. En un nuevo artículo de sus "Reflexiones" divulgado por medios oficiales, Castro resalta la importancia que tendrá la conferencia sobre el Cambio Climático de Copenhague en diciembre próximo y afirma que los países de la Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (ALBA) y del tercer mundo estarán allí "luchando por la supervivencia de la especie". Castro opina que "en ningún otro momento de la historia humana se presentó un peligro de tal magnitud" como el cambio climático. "Ya no es cuestión de 'Patria o Muerte'; realmente y sin exageración, es una cuestión de 'Vida o Muerte' para la especie humana", afirmó el ex presidente de 83 años ([El ALBA y Copenhague](#); EFE, 20/10/09).

October 20: Over a thousand students, professors and researchers gathered at Havana's Convention Center to inaugurate the 8th Latin-American Meeting of Social Communication Faculties. Gustavo Cobreiro, Rector of the University of Havana, highlighted the honor and responsibility it represents for Cuban university students to have the opportunity to exchange ideas with experienced specialists in the field. Julio García Luis, Dean of the Havana University Communication Faculty, said that the scientific program of this meeting includes 107 papers in 20 working panels, as well as 14 parallel events. "This is the first event of this kind in Cuba," said Maria Teresa Quiroz, president of the Latin American Federation of Social Communication Faculties, and added that this meeting will set the path for the public and social function of Latin American universities, and requested a better training of the students to enable them to face today's challenges (ACN, 21/10/09).

October 20: Bolivian President Evo Morales met in the presidential residence of San Jorge with Cuban First Vice President Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, who is on official visit to the South American nation. *Granma* newspaper reported that Morales highlighted the positive results of the 7th Summit of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of the Americas (ALBA) recently held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, where the members adopted important agreements. The Bolivian leader stressed the importance of the upcoming celebrations in Havana – on December 13 – of the fifth anniversary of ALBA, a mechanism for regional integration that emerged as an initiative by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and his then Cuban counterpart Fidel Castro. The Cuban high-ranking official reaffirmed Cuba's willingness to increase its cooperation with the South American nation in the fields of health and education, particularly in the post-literacy campaign, among others (ACN, 21/10/09).

October 20: Iran's Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki praised the increasing and progressive links between his country and Cuba, and expressed confidence regarding

greater bilateral cooperation, diplomatic sources reported. Mottaki welcomed new Cuban Ambassador to Iran William Carbo Ricardo, who presented a copy of his credentials, and expressed satisfaction with the positive and constructive development of diplomatic relations between Havana and Tehran. According to sources, the Iranian diplomat said that links between both countries and the continued consultations between their respective foreign affairs ministries, about bilateral and international issues, "have always grown progressively." Mottaki said he hoped that consultation and exchange would extend in the future, with new opportunities and capacities. Carbo, who still has to present his credentials before other top Iranian authorities, praised the increasing and proactive bilateral ties, and said they would be strengthened from now on (*Prensa Latina*, 20/10/09).

Octubre 20: La violencia en México y una dictadura inamovible con libertad de prensa inexistente en Cuba significaron la colocación de ambos países entre los peor clasificados por la organización Reporteros Sin Fronteras, que defiende la libertad de expresión en todo el mundo. Cuba y México fueron los países peor colocados en la clasificación de la organización, con los sitios 170 y 137 respectivamente. Los siguieron Honduras, con el lugar 128, Colombia en el 126 y Venezuela en el 124. De Cuba, RSF dijo que las escasas esperanzas suscitadas por el acceso oficial de Raúl Castro a la presidencia, en febrero de 2008, se perdieron rápidamente. Dijo que en la isla persiste una "inamovible dictadura del continente donde la libertad de prensa es inexistente". "Dos nuevos encarcelamientos, llevando a 25 el número de periodistas detenidos en la isla, frecuentes bloqueos de sitios e interpelaciones a blogueros muestran de forma más general una ausencia de evolución de la situación de los derechos humanos y de las libertades", agregó ([Press Freedom Index 2009](#); *AP*, 21/10/09).

Octubre 20: El relator de las Naciones Unidas sobre la Tortura, Manfred Nowak, dijo estar "decepcionado" por no haber podido concretar con el gobierno cubano las fechas del viaje que La Habana le invitó a realizar a principios de año. Nowak dijo que el gobierno cubano no pudo acomodar las diferentes fechas de viaje que él propuso, después de que se le invitara oficialmente en febrero a realizar un viaje oficial a la Isla antes de finales de 2009. "El proceso normal es que me sienta con el embajador en Ginebra para acordar las fechas. Les propuse primero septiembre, luego octubre, entonces me dijeron que era demasiado temprano, que era mejor noviembre", explicó Nowak durante una conferencia de prensa, tras presentar su informe anual a la Asamblea General de la ONU. El jurista austríaco comunicó a las autoridades cubanas que necesitaba unas fechas precisas, porque Naciones Unidas tarda al menos un mes en llevar a cabo los complejos preparativos del viaje, que incluyen la contratación de expertos independientes. "La respuesta que me dieron es que soy todavía muy bienvenido, pero que trataron de preparar la visita para 2009 y no pudo ser. Que harán lo posible para que pueda cumplir mi misión en la primera mitad de 2010", dijo el relator de la ONU. Nowak, sin embargo, aseguró que confía en que "el gobierno cubano cumplirá la promesa" formulada en la carta que le enviaron en febrero, al tiempo que recordó que La Habana comunicó la invitación a la comunidad internacional durante el llamado Examen Periódico Universal al que la Isla se sometió ese mismo mes en el Consejo de Derechos Humanos (CDH) de la ONU, con sede en Ginebra (*EFE*, 20/10/09).

October 21: Cuba's commitment to a frank and open dialogue regarding the topic of human rights was reaffirmed by the Cuban permanent representative before the United Nations, Pedro Nuñez Mosquera. Speaking before the Third Commission of the UN General Assembly, the diplomat recalled Havana's support of the creation of the current Human Rights Council after the former Human Rights Commission failed to comply with its purpose due to the politicization and manipulation that it was subjected to. "We have always defended the noble causes of the peoples and we have prioritized cultural, social and economic rights so that they are on the same level as civil and political rights," the Cuban ambassador said (ACN, 21/10/09).

October 21: The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize, Wilfred Elrington, arrived in Cuba for an official visit at the invitation of his Cuban counterpart, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla. *Granma* newspaper reported that during his stay in Cuba, the distinguished visitor will hold official talks with Rodríguez Parrilla and he will head his country's delegation to the 12th Cuba-Belize Intergovernmental Meeting (ACN, 21/10/09).

October 21: The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, arrived in Cuba for an official visit at the invitation of her Cuban counterpart, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, *Granma* newspaper reported (ACN 21/10/09).

October 21: Beatriz Bouza, an official of the sector's Cuban ministry told the press that representatives of this government's body and of its Angolan counterpart, signed in Havana a memorandum of understanding and collaboration in the field of information and communication technologies. The memorandum establishes the exchange of experiences and cooperation in the universal services of telecommunications, postal activity, e-government, the creation of an information society and the development of policies in the technology area (ACN, 21/10/09).

October 21: Cuba will implement in Zambia its program against malaria, which is successfully applied in other African nations. In this regard, an agreement was signed in Lusaka between the director of Cuba's LABIOFAM enterprise, José Antonio Fraga, and Zambian authorities, *Granma* newspaper reported. Fraga, who heads a Cuban delegation to that city, said that the plan has the objective of controlling the mosquito that transmits the disease by way of the use of a biochemical product against the larvae, adding that the accord also includes the technical assistance of specialists from his institution (ACN, 21/10/09).

Octubre 21: Venezuela y Nicaragua reclamaron en la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) el fin del embargo contra Cuba, lo que provocó un intercambio de críticas entre sus representantes y el de Estados Unidos. El presidente Barack Obama debería revocar el embargo y así tendría "una excelente oportunidad de ganarse el Premio Nobel de la Paz", ironizó el representante de Venezuela, Roy Chaderton, durante una reunión de la OEA. "La humanidad entera no tiene precedentes similares de la

prolongación de una política cruel, inhumana, puesta en práctica por el poder imperial", dijo por su parte el representante de Nicaragua, Denis Moncada. El representante alerno de Estados Unidos, Lewis Amselem, respondió: "Como el embajador de Venezuela es mi amigo, le voy a pedir al presidente Obama que cierre inmediatamente todos los medios de prensa opositores, para que así pueda sentirse en casa". Amselem dijo que es incomprensible como "en estos tiempos de internet y Google" los representantes de Venezuela y Nicaragua cometen una "serie de errores" en sus aseveraciones. Estados Unidos es el "cuarto socio comercial más grande de Cuba y (...) el surtidor más grande de alimentos", subrayó (*AFP*, 22/10/09).

Octubre 21: Cuba presentó en Estrasburgo ante el Parlamento Europeo un informe sobre la resolución adoptada por la Asamblea General de la ONU que condena el bloqueo económico impuesto por Estados Unidos a la isla hace casi 50 años y exige el levantamiento de estas restrictivas medidas. Una delegación de La Habana, encabezada por el embajador cubano ante Bélgica y la Unión Europea, Elio Rodríguez, denunció en un encuentro con eurodiputados que, pese a las promesas del gobierno de Barack Obama, el embargo comercial sigue "intacto". Rodríguez recordó que hace un mes Obama anunció su intención de mantener el bloqueo financiero que está amparado por la "Ley de comercio con el enemigo", en vigor desde 1917, que prohíbe cualquier intercambio comercial con países que han sido considerados una "amenaza". En la actualidad esta medida sólo es aplicada a Cuba (*Europa Press*, 22/10/09).

Octubre 21: Por primera vez desde los tiempos de la Unión Soviética, que fue el principal aliado de Cuba hasta hace dos décadas, comenzó en La Habana una semana de cine ruso, informaron medios oficiales de los dos países. La semana ha sido organizada por el Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográfico (ICAIC), con apoyo de la embajada de Rusia en La Habana y otras entidades de los dos países. Se está organizando también una semana de cine cubano en Moscú, según las mismas fuentes (*EFE*, 21/10/09).

October 22: Fidel Castro held a fraternal meeting with Lenín Moreno Garces, Vice President of Ecuador, *Granma* newspaper reported. In a lively conversation, Castro and Moreno exchanged about the international situation and, in particular, that of Latin America and about the growing collaboration between Cuba and Ecuador, especially in the health sector. Moreno gave Castro the Manuela Espejo Order, granted by the Ecuadorian vice presidency in recognition of the Cuban's efforts for the development of this important social mission that is currently underway in Ecuador (*ACN*, 22/10/09).

October 22: Guyana's Foreign Affairs Minister Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett paid tribute to Cuban National Hero, Jose Marti. The Guyanese minister placed a floral wreath at the Jose Marti Monument in the Revolution Square accompanied by Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Rogelio Sierra Díaz. Rodrigues-Birkett arrived in Havana for an official visit at the invitation of his Cuban counterpart Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla. The Vice President of the Cuban Council of Ministers, Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz, met with visiting Guyanese Foreign Minister, and also with Rodriguez Parrilla (*ACN*, 22, 23/10/09).

Octubre 23: El presidente ecuatoriano, Rafael Correa, dijo que el sistema político de Cuba requiere cambios, aunque anotó que su homólogo Raúl Castro avanza en ello y elogió el "espíritu de resistencia del pueblo cubano". "Por supuesto que hay cosas que no se pueden repetir, yo creo que debe haber cambios en el sistema político, el propio Raúl está pensando en eso", dijo Correa en una entrevista televisiva con el canal estatal. "Pero yo no seré el que le diga eso al pueblo cubano, serán los propios cubanos los que resuelvan sus problemas", añadió el mandatario. Correa indicó que Ecuador tiene mucho que copiar de Cuba en "materia social", destacando que "los logros en educación y salud son extraordinarios". El presidente recordó sin embargo que el líder cubano Fidel Castro, a quien visitó el pasado 25 de agosto, "ha dicho que el modelo cubano es irreplicable". Pero es susceptible de copiar "la dignidad del pueblo cubano, su espíritu de resistencia, no se puede juzgar la situación de Cuba o el éxito o fracaso de un sistema sin considerar 50 años de embargo. Nosotros no resistimos ni cinco meses si Estados Unidos nos embarga", afirmó (*La República*, 23/10/09).

October 23: Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla met with his Belizean counterpart Wilfred Elrington, who arrived in Havana for an official visit to the Caribbean nation. During the official talks at the headquarters of the Cuban Foreign Ministry, both diplomats analyzed the development of bilateral relations, which they described as excellent. Rodríguez Parrilla noted that cooperation plans between Cuba and Belize are on the right track and that they will be boosted by this visit of the Belizean foreign minister, who will preside over his country's delegation to the 12th Cuba-Belize Intergovernmental Meeting (*ACN*, 23/10/089).

October 23: The 12th Cuba-Belize Intergovernmental Meeting ended in Havana with the signing of a Cooperation Protocol for the 2009- 2010 period. The document was signed by Cuban Minister for Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment, Rodrigo Malmierca, and Belizean Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Wilfred Elrington. The joint responsibility in sectors like health, education, agriculture, sugar, foreign affairs, trade, transportation and disaster management was agreed at the end of the working sessions. Minister Elrington met the Vice-president of the Cuban Council of Ministers, Ricardo Cabrisas, at the building of the Council of Ministers. During the meeting, Cabrisas highlighted the fraternity his country receives from all Caribbean nations (*ACN*, 23/10/089).

October 23: Cuban President Raul Castro expressed thanks for Vietnamese assistance after Vietnamese Construction Minister Nguyen Hong Quan pledged further cooperation and help to Cuba in all fields, especially in agricultural projects for its food security. The duo met in Havana, where the Cuban leader emphasised on the need for the two countries to facilitate the exchange of experiences in economic development and socialist construction. Quan was in Cuba for a meeting of the Inter-Governmental Committee on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation as head of the Vietnamese sub-committee. The meeting was wrapped up on the day with Quan and his Cuban counterpart, Fidel Figueroa, signing a protocol on budget disbursement and financial management related to a programme on rice production in Cuba for 2009-2015.

During his stay in Cuba, the Vietnamese head delegate had separate working sessions with the Minister for Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment, Minister of Tourism, Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Information Technology and Communication. The Vietnamese guests also visited the Centre of Molecular Immunology and the Institute for Vaccine and Serum Production (*VOV News*, 25/10/089).

Octubre 23: La Fundación Panamericana para el Desarrollo hizo entrega del premio "Héroes del Hemisferio" a la bloguera Yoani Sánchez, autora del sitio *Generación Y*, por "luchar por la libertad de expresión". Las "barreras" que impone el gobierno cubano, como el excesivo costo de internet (10 dólares la hora) y el control de los servidores, no "pararon a Yoani Sánchez, una cubana de 33 años que escribe un blog independiente llamado *Generación Y*", opinan los organizadores del premio, que acaba de ser instituido. La distinción fue recogida en nombre de Sánchez por el músico Gorki Águila, líder del grupo de punk-rock Porno Para Ricardo, quien durante su intervención en la ceremonia de entrega del premio en Miami, dijo: "Es una molestia, una pena y una rabia que Yoani, mi amiga, no este aquí recibiendo este premio" (*Cubaencuentro*, 26/10/09).

October 24: Cuba is present at the ministerial meeting The World Drug Problem, Safety and Cooperation, to strengthen regional cooperation in the struggle against drug trafficking. Ministers and representatives from Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago, began a two-day meeting in Mexico City. The meeting seeks the strengthening of regional cooperation, by way of the coordination of policies against money laundering and the trading of arms and chemical precursors. It also seeks the strengthening of institutions and the reduction of demand, and the identification of drug tendencies and routes (*ACN*, 24/10/089).

October 24: The Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Margaret Chan, is expected in Havana for a four-day visit, during which she will tour important health and scientific institutions in the country. The top official's working program will include a ceremony of acknowledgement for her years of service in that organization, as well as a presentation on the island's health system and health cooperation, *Prensa Latina* news agency reported. The centers for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, Molecular Immunology, and Immunoassay; the Pedro Kouri Tropical Medicine Institute; the Ramon Pando Ferrer Ophthalmology Institute; the Latin American School of Medicine; the Rampa Polyclinic; and a center for the disabled, are among the institutions to be visited (*ACN*, 24/10/089).

October 24: The Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Margaret Chan, said that Cuba is a country of great importance for her organization. Chan, who arrived in Havana for a four-day official visit, was welcomed at the Jose Marti International Airport by the island's Public Health Minister, Jose Ramon Balaguer. "It's an enormous pleasure for me to visit Cuba for the first time and to learn from the excellent results of the Cuban public health system," she said. "A great deal of the work that you carry out, including the primary health care mechanism in communities and the

equal and free access to the health care system, are topics of interest for the WHO," Chan told Balaguer (ACN, 26/10/09).

October 25: Fidel Castro met with Carlos Alberto Libanio Christo, a Dominican friar from Brazil popularly known as "Frei Betto," a statement published by Cuban state media said. "It gave Fidel much satisfaction to meet with a friend who for more than 30 years has maintained a solid relationship with the Cuban Revolution," the statement said, adding that the two men had "a deep exchange of opinions" during the meeting. "Ethics in human relations and the exercise of government and the development of progressive social movements in Latin America, and issues related to the influence of mass media in society were discussed during the course of the animated dialogue," the statement said. The 65-year-old Frei Betto, a writer, anthropologist and philosopher, is one of the founders of Liberation Theology, which has been condemned by the Vatican (*LAHT*, 26/10/09).

Octubre 26: La Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) enviará a Cuba vacunas contra la gripe porcina, aseguró la directora de la institución Margaret Chan. "Cuba estará incluida en esta lista" dijo la funcionaria al explicar que en noviembre la OMS realizará una entrega masiva de dosis de vacunas para varios países en vista del avance de la segunda ola de la pandemia de influenza A H1N1. La isla cuenta con "el total apoyo" de la OMS y de su regional la Organización Panamericana de la Salud (OPS), indicó Chan durante una conferencia magistral ante expertos del Instituto de Medicina Tropical Pedro Kourí, quien está monitoreando los casos en la isla. Chan no ofreció detalles de cuántas dosis de la vacuna, desarrollada en los últimos seis meses, se entregarán a Cuba (*AP*, 27/10/09).

Octubre 26: El presidente del Consejo de Comunicaciones Sociales del Vaticano, el arzobispo italiano Claudio María Celli, visitará Cuba del 4 al 8 de noviembre, informó la conferencia de obispos católicos de la isla. El prelado estará presente en una asamblea de los obispos cubanos, visitará centros religiosos e intervendrá en una reunión de la Comisión de Medios de Comunicación Social de la conferencia episcopal de la isla, que sesionará en esos mismos días. Además, dictará el viernes 6, en una iglesia de La Habana, una conferencia titulada "Iglesia, comunicación y cultura digital", indica la página de Internet de los obispos cubanos (*EFE*, 26/10/09).

Octubre 27: Un grupo de 37 presos políticos cubanos criticó la actual política española hacia Cuba y consideró un "menosprecio" la actitud del ministro español de Asuntos Exteriores, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, por negarse a reunirse con la oposición pacífica durante su reciente viaje a la isla. Todos los prisioneros son miembros del Grupo de los 75 (seis se encuentran en la calle con una "licencia extrapenal" por motivos de salud) y firman una declaración en la que condenan la "actitud de complacencia con el totalitarismo". Los 37 firmantes (condenados en abril de 2003 a penas de hasta 28 años de cárcel) agradecen al gobierno español las gestiones que han permitido la liberación del preso Nelson Aguiar, así como la autorización para salir de la isla a dos opositores, pero subrayan que estos gestos "no deben considerarse demostrativos de voluntad de cambios en general del gobierno cubano, que merezcan modificaciones en la política de España y

la Unión Europea". Se refieren al propósito expresado por Moratinos de "superar" la Posición Común de la UE, que condiciona las relaciones con Cuba a los cambios democráticos y el respeto a los derechos humanos (*El País*, 27/10/09).

Octubre 27: Las autoridades mexicanas liberaron a 10 de los cubanos secuestrados por contrabandistas de indocumentados, y algunos de los cuales fueron torturados para presionar a sus familiares en Estados Unidos a que pagaran su rescate. "Queremos comenzar una nueva vida después de todo el sufrimiento por el que hemos pasado", dijo a la prensa desde México Yurizán González, a quién sus captores le hicieron un corte en la oreja y le tomaron una fotografía con el rostro sangrante para enviarla a sus familiares en Estados Unidos. González, de 31 años, fue liberado junto con nueve compañeros de cautiverio luego de que el gobierno mexicano permitió que se acogieran a una norma que facilita la regularización de la situación migratoria de indocumentados que han sido víctimas de un delito. Según González, los castigos y torturas fueron realizados por tres cubanos y un mexicano (*El Nuevo Herald*, 27/10/09).

Octubre 27: El Salvador votará por primera vez en las Naciones Unidas a favor del levantamiento del embargo de Estados Unidos a Cuba, informó la cancillería salvadoreña. "Así como nos sumamos al consenso hemisférico sobre las relaciones diplomáticas con Cuba; es el momento de sumarnos también al consenso mundial para poner fin al bloqueo contra la hermana república caribeña", manifestó el canciller Hugo Martínez, en un comunicado (*AP*, 28/10/09).

October 27: Fidel Castro met with the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Margaret Chan, and with the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Mirta Roses, who concluded an official visit to the Caribbean nation after an intensive program of exchanges with Cuban health professionals and visits to scientific and health institutions in Havana. In her dialogue with Castro, Dr. Chan expressed her admiration for the Cuban health system and recognized Cuba's preventive measures and efforts to fight the pandemic of Influenza A H1N1. In addition, she emphasized that the WHO is willing to assist the island's efforts in this regard (*ACN*, 28/10/09).

October 27: The new Cuban ambassador in Spain said that his country needs no "intermediaries" to speak with the United States, having already expressed its willingness to discuss their differences directly on a basis of respect. Alejandro Gonzalez Galiano gave a press conference at the Cuban Embassy in Madrid. Gonzalez was serving as Cuba's deputy foreign minister when President Raul Castro named him in August as the next ambassador to Spain. Days after a visit to Cuba by Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos to consolidate bilateral ties, the ambassador stressed the "positive moment" of Spanish-Cuban relations after overcoming "old misunderstandings." In that regard, he said that he will make "the greatest effort" to promote their relations in all possible spheres. He said that Cuba is a "victim" of Washington's 47-year-old economic embargo and that they have already expressed their "willingness to discuss directly" with the United States all of their differences, as long as it is done on the "basis of respect for their sovereignty and independence," and for that reason there was no need for

“intermediaries.” “We are not disposed to discuss with third parties what is up to Cubans to resolve,” he said. Nonetheless, he described as “positive” Moratinos’ visit to Cuba and emphasized the “great respect” of the Spanish minister towards the communist government, which showed its appreciation by releasing two political prisoners (*LAHT*, 28/10/09).

October 28: The Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miguel Angel Moratinos, received Adriana Perez and Olga Salanueva, the wives of two of the five Cubans incarcerated in the United States for 11 years now. The meeting with the wives of Gerardo Hernandez and Rene Gonzalez, arrested in 1998 along with Ramon Labañino, Fernando Gonzalez and Antonio Guerrero, took place at the Foreign Ministry’s office in Madrid. The FM expressed his interest in the situation of The Five, as they’re internationally known (*ACN*, 28/10/09).

October 28: Several European Union countries have asked Spain to clarify what kind of policy it will pursue in relation to Cuba during its EU presidency in the first half of 2010, government sources said. Countries including Germany, the Czech Republic and Lithuania had asked for a clarification, the sources said. Spain would like to modify the EU’s 1996 ‘common position’ on Cuba, which links relations to democracy and respect for human rights on the Caribbean island, the sources explained. Spain will seek a bilateral agreement similar to the ones the EU has with countries such as China and Russia, under which Havana would no longer be subjected to a ‘constant scrutiny’ (*Europe News*, 28/10/09).

Octubre 28: La Comisión Europea recordó que las relaciones de la Unión Europea con Cuba es algo que deciden "conjuntamente" todos los Estados miembros, después de que el ministro de Asuntos Exteriores, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, expresara la intención de España de modificar la Posición Común de los Veintisiete ante La Habana aprovechando la presidencia española de la UE, el próximo semestre. El Ejecutivo comunitario considera que el lanzamiento de un diálogo político y la reanudación de la cooperación al desarrollo con la Isla "podría, eventualmente, crear las condiciones políticas para un marco contractual que enmarcara las relaciones entre la UE y Cuba", explicó el portavoz comunitario de Cooperación, John Clancy. Sin embargo, recalcó que cualquier decisión debe ser fruto del trabajo conjunto entre los Estados miembros. Clancy insistió en que la posibilidad de avanzar en las relaciones con Cuba, tal y como quiere España, es algo sobre lo que tendrá que "trabajar conjuntamente con todos los Estados miembros" durante su presidencia de turno (*Europa Press*, 28/10/09).

October 28: The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly condemned the 47-year US trade embargo on Cuba, an annual ritual that serves to highlight near unanimous global opposition to America’s hard-line policy toward the communist island, but which has done little to change Washington’s stance, even with a new administration. This year’s vote was 187-3 in opposition to the embargo, with only Israel and the tiny Pacific island nation of Palau supporting the United States — just as they did last year. It was the 19th year in a row that the General Assembly has taken up the symbolic measure, with Washington steadily losing what little support it once had. Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno

Rodriguez ticked off a long list of grievances in his speech before the world body, saying the embargo — which the Cubans refer to as a blockade — had cost the island's fragile economy tens of billions of dollars over the years and prevented Cuban children from getting needed medical care (*AP*, 28/10/09).

October 29: Amnesty International renewed its call for President Obama to lift economic sanctions against Cuba, following a vote by the United Nations General Assembly condemning the decades-old embargo. The human rights organization, in a recent report, found the embargo was putting the lives of millions of Cubans at risk by blocking access to vital medicines and medical technologies. “The US embargo against Cuba is putting at risk the lives of millions by preventing them from accessing vital medicines and medical technologies,” said Kerrie Howard, deputy director of Amnesty International's Americas program. “These sanctions are immoral and should be lifted immediately” (*AI Press Release*, 29/10/09).

October 29: Esteban Lazo, Vice-President of the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba, met with Sir Cuthbert Montraville Sebastian, General Governor of the Federation of Saint Kitts and Nevis, who is on an official visit to Cuba. During the exchange, Sir Cuthbert Montraville Sebastian thanked Cuba for its cooperation, especially in the fields of health and education, and highlighted the work carried out by the medical brigade now in Saint Kitts and Nevis, as well as Cuba's contribution in the professional training of youngsters from his country. Also present in the talks were Cuban Foreign Minister ad interim Marcelino Medina and other officials from the Foreign Ministry (*ACN*, 29/10/09).

Octubre 29: El gobierno de Venezuela denunció que la dirección de inteligencia de Colombia (DAS) desarrolla planes de espionaje en su contra, así como contra Cuba y Ecuador, según documentos que presentó el ministro del Interior, Tareck El Aissami. El Aissami informó ante la plenaria del Parlamento venezolano que el 2 de octubre fueron detenidos tres agentes del DAS en la ciudad de Maracay, 80 km al oeste de Caracas. Según El Aissami, una investigación interna del DAS realizada entre abril y mayo de este año, y obtenida de una manera no aclarada por las autoridades venezolanas, mostró que existen al menos tres proyectos de espionaje en el extranjero: el Salomón en Ecuador; el Falcón en Venezuela; y el Fénix en Cuba. El ministro leyó a los diputados una declaración de Carlos Orjuela, funcionario del organismo de inteligencia colombiano, según quien los proyectos Falcón y Fénix fueron presentados al presidente Alvaro Uribe y a altos jefes de Bogotá. El DAS respondió rechazando las acusaciones y señaló que sus "funcionarios tienen expresa prohibición de desplazarse a territorio de ese país" (*AFP*, 29/10/09).

Octubre 30: El comisario europeo de Cooperación y Ayuda al Desarrollo, el belga Karel De Gucht, comenzará el 31 de octubre en Cuba la quinta visita a la isla en año y medio de un representante de alto nivel de la Comisión Europea (CE), informaron fuentes diplomáticas. De Gucht, que aún no tiene confirmada una entrevista con el presidente cubano, general Raúl Castro, -aunque tampoco se descarta-, evaluará la cooperación de Bruselas con La Habana, que se desarrolla "satisfactoriamente", declaró el representante de la CE en la isla, Javier Niño. El comisario sí tiene confirmadas reuniones de trabajo

con uno de los vicepresidentes del Consejo de Ministros de Cuba, Ricardo Cabrisas, y con los titulares de Exteriores, Bruno Rodríguez, y Comercio Exterior e Inversión Extranjera, Rodrigo Malmierca, entre noviembre 2 y 3. "La visita se inscribe en el proceso de intensificación de las relaciones entre la Comisión Europea y Cuba", agregó el representante de la CE. De Gucht no se reunirá con la disidencia interna cubana, como es habitual desde que Bruselas normalizó recientemente sus relaciones con La Habana (*EFE*, 30/10/09).

October 31: Fidel Castro sent his best wishes to the members of the "Moto Méndez" Brigade that will join the study carried out in Bolivia on people with disabilities. Public Health Minister and Politburo member José Ramón Balaguer was the bearer of Castro's message during a meeting with that group of professionals, part of the "white coat army" that swore to be faithful continuators of the ideas and example of Fidel and Ernesto Che Guevara. "Only a Revolution is capable of training men and women to thoroughly look after the humble and the poor", Balaguer told the 73 voluntary workers who will leave for Bolivia to join other specialists and then form a group of 155, who will carry out a clinical, genetic and psychosocial study (*ACN*, 31/10/09).

Security

October 12: Colonel Portia Ntsoaki More, from the National War College of South Africa's Defense Ministry, is visiting Cuba. After laying a wreath at the Pantheon of the Veterans Fallen in Defense of their Homeland, Colonel Portia Ntsoaki told the press that she and her accompanying delegation wanted to come to the island to express their recognition for the social contribution maintained by the Cuban authorities with her government and people. Accompanied by Major General Urbelino Betancourt Cruces, director of the Maximo Gomez Academy of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), Ntsoaki More and the rest of the group learned more about the creation of the mausoleum, located at Havana's Cristobal Colon cemetery. The South African delegation travelled to Cuba at the official invitation of the Ministry of Revolutionary Armed Forces. This is the first activity carried out by these visitors since their arrival in Havana, where they will remain until October 17, when they will be received at the ministries of Tourism and Foreign Affairs as well as at the Cuban Parliament. The delegation will also visit FAR military schools (*ACN*, 13/10/09).

October 17: The declaration of the 7th summit of the Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) proposed the founding of a "Permanent Committee for the Sovereignty and Defense of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America ALBA-TCP," except for the islands, which belong to a "regional security system made up of countries of the eastern Caribbean." That committee has as its chief objectives the definition of a "combined strategy for comprehensive popular defense and the founding of a School for the Dignity and Sovereignty of the Armed Forces of the ALBA-TCP nations." During the meeting, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez insisted that a "defensive military alliance" be created to face "threats from the empire." "Why not? Who can stop sovereign nations from forming a defensive military alliance and exchanging soldiers and officers and

training and materiel and logistics?” Chavez asked. Bolivian President Evo Morales, who was heading the meeting, disagreed with Chavez, and asked the participants to study the topic further avoiding to approve a “hasty resolution” (*LAHT, BBC Mundo*, 17/10/09).

US-Cuba Relations

October 1: Former US President Bill Clinton, now appointed as UN special envoy to Haiti, praised the support given by Cuba and Venezuela to this Caribbean nation to help palliate its precarious social and economic situation. *Granma* newspaper reported that the acknowledgement is part of a report presented by Clinton to the Americas Conference sponsored by *The Miami Herald* newspaper in Miami. Clinton said that the last time he was in Haiti he inquired about what was being done in terms of prevention prior to the hurricane season and he learned that “(Venezuelan president) Hugo Chavez had donated 87 million dollars.” Haiti used the money to purchase machinery to remove land at the places that were affected by the floods caused by last year’s hurricanes. The report highlights that “Latin America is helping Haiti now like it never did before.” An article published by *Radio Habana Cuba*’s website states that, up to date, over 2100 Cuban health professionals have helped the Haitian people since 1998 (*ACN*, 1/10/09).

October 1: The US is resisting a judge's order that could force disclosure of classified documents and other material sought by three men who are seeking reduced prison sentences for their 2001 convictions in a politically charged spying case. Federal prosecutors have asked for an emergency stay and appealed a magistrate judge's disclosure order in the so-called Cuban Five case, contending it is far too broad and could produce sensitive material not required in a criminal case. The order requires US officials to search for any national security damage assessments of the Cubans' actions, which could bear on whether three of the five get a more lenient sentence. The three Cubans — Antonio Guerrero, Ramon Labanino and Fernando Gonzalez — are to be resentenced by a Miami federal judge on October 13. The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the convictions of all five Cubans in 2008, but vacated the life sentences for Guerrero and Labanino because there was no evidence they had obtained or transmitted top secret material. Gonzalez, also known as Ruben Campa, had his 19-year sentence vacated because he was wrongly labeled a manager or supervisor of the spy ring known as the “Wasp Network.” The five men are hailed as heroes in Cuba, where government officials regularly claim they are victims of political persecution (*AP*, 1/10/09).

October 1: The leader of Cuba’s National Assembly said that US President Barack Obama has softened Washington’s “language” toward the island but that its decades-old economic embargo remains as much intact as on his first day in office, the official *Prensa Latina* news agency reported. Ricardo Alarcon said the 47-year-old embargo “remains in force” even though there have been some minor changes since Obama was inaugurated in January. Speaking at the opening of a meeting of the Latin American Parliament in Havana, the parliamentary speaker noted that the United Nations’ General Assembly once again will denounce the embargo this month, as it has every year since 1992 (*Latin American Herald*, 1/10/09).

October 1: The New York Philharmonic scratched its trip to Cuba at the end of October because the United States Treasury Department said it would deny permission for a group of patrons to go along. Without them and their donations, the orchestra said, it cannot afford to go. About 150 board members and other donors had promised to pay \$10,000 each to spend October 30 to November 2 in Havana, where the orchestra was to play two concerts, said Zarin Mehta, its president. The money was to have covered the cost of the proposed trip, which came at the Cuban government's invitation. The travel amounts to high-class tourism along with a chance to make business connections in foreign capitals. "The patrons were excited about giving us the money with the opportunity of going to see Havana and be a witness and support their orchestra," said Zarin Mehta, the Philharmonic's president. "This is what's important to them." Mr. Mehta said he would not consider taking the patrons' money while leaving them behind. "I wouldn't want to insult them," he said. "I think it's most likely they would say, 'Go another time.'" That's what the orchestra will try to do, Mr. Mehta said. He said he had hoped that pressure applied by New York elected officials, including Senator Charles E. Schumer and Representatives Steve Israel and Charles B. Rangel — who have supported the trip — would help to have the decision overturned (*The New York Times*, 1/10/09).

Octubre 1: Cuba y Estados Unidos dieron un pequeño paso más hacia el diálogo al facilitar en La Habana un encuentro entre artistas de la isla y diplomáticos de Washington, en la prolongación de una especie de diplomacia cultural, paralela a las conversaciones oficiales entre los dos gobiernos. Por primera vez en casi una década varios creadores cubanos de primer nivel asistieron a una recepción que ofreció el jefe de la Sección de Intereses (oficina diplomática) de Estados Unidos, Jonathan D. Farrar. Un día antes el canciller Bruno Rodríguez anunció en la Organización de Naciones Unidas que la isla propuso al gobierno de Barack Obama una agenda de 12 puntos para un eventual proceso de diálogo. Semejante cóctel sería rutinario en cualquier otra parte del mundo, pero en La Habana es un termómetro político. En este caso, y según las reglas no escritas del sistema cubano, la presencia numerosa de artistas es un indicio de que el contacto tuvo la simpatía oficial (*La Jornada*, 1/10/09).

October 1: A US president has limited ways to ease the embargo on Cuba -- unless he or she certifies that Havana is moving toward democracy or Congress overturns US laws on the sanctions, according to a report by the US Government Accountability Office. "The bottom line is that the president and Congress have done about as much as they can for now" to ease the sanctions, said a US government official who studied the report. "So, unless Cuba takes steps [toward democracy] the ball is in Congress' court." The report comes amid a debate between supporters of the sanctions, who argue that current laws make it all but impossible to change them, and sanctions opponents who argue the president has the power to significantly ease the embargo. Some have argued, for example, that President Barack Obama could allow all Americans to travel to Cuba by simply allowing tourism under the "general licenses" that do not require specific reasons for traveling to Cuba. The GAO report was requested by three supporters of easing the Cuba sanctions: Representative Charles Rangel (Democrat-New York); Representative

Jeff Flake (Republican.-Arizona), and Representative Barbara Lee (Democrat-California) (*El Nuevo Herald*, 1/10/09).

Octubre 1: El gobierno de Estados Unidos mantiene sin ningún cambio su norma de invitar a la Sección de Intereses en La Habana a los opositores cubanos, según dijo Charles Luoma-Overstreet, portavoz del Departamento de Estado. Luoma se refería a una reciente recepción diplomática en La Habana, a la que no fueron invitados disidentes políticos cubanos pero sí artistas y figuras del mundo cultural de la isla. Aclaró que se trataba de una función especial para el mundo cultural, debido a la llegada a La Habana de especialistas en ese sector. Por otra parte dijo que la secretaria de Estado Adjunta para Latinoamérica, Bisa Williams, se había reunido con disidentes durante su estancia de seis días en Cuba en septiembre (*Marti Noticias*, 1/10/09).

October 5: US restrictions on travel to Cuba that led to the New York Philharmonic calling off a trip to the communist country are outrageous and should be ended, a senator who has long recommended lifting trade and travel restraints said. "This is almost unbelievable what we are still doing with respect to travel policy with Cuba," Democratic Senator Byron Dorgan said in a speech on the Senate floor. Dorgan represents North Dakota, an agricultural state that stands to gain substantially from freer trade with Cuba. Dorgan, who has introduced legislation to lift prohibitions on travel to and from Cuba, said he has written the Treasury Department office that issues travel licenses to "see if we couldn't get them to think straight just a bit" (*Canadian Press*, 6/10/09).

October 6: Omara Portuondo, the sultry-voiced diva of the Buena Vista Social Club, has been granted permission to visit the US for the first time since 2003 and hopes a dose of her sensuous sound can inspire both countries to improve frozen relations. The US Treasury Department has granted Portuondo, who turns 79 this month, permission to perform at the San Francisco Jazz Festival on October 20 and give a concert three days later at the University of California, Los Angeles. "Cuban music is the best medicine," Portuondo said in a recent interview. "It's good to be able to share culture, which is the soul of a people" (*AP*, 6/10/09).

Octubre 6: El gobierno de Cuba aseguró que ha tenido pérdidas agropecuarias por 149 millones de dólares anuales, debido al embargo comercial y financiero que Estados Unidos aplica a la isla desde hace casi medio siglo. El viceministro de Agricultura, Alcides López, citado por medios oficiales, dijo que los sectores más afectados son el tabacalero (93 millones), el porcino (28 millones) y el avícola (24 millones), según datos del periodo que va de abril de 2008 a marzo de 2009. Precisó que las pérdidas incluyen 61 millones de ingresos no recibidos porque los puros habanos y otros tabacos cubanos no pueden entrar al mercado estadounidense, el mayor del mundo. López recordó que a principios de esta década Washington eliminó las restricciones para la venta a Cuba de productos agrícolas, pero no para la compra (*EFE*, 6/10/09).

October 6: On the 33rd anniversary of the bombing of the Cubana Air flight, the US National Security Archive released new CIA documents about Luis Posada Carriles. The documents show Posada, code name "AMCLEVE 15" had volunteered to spy on exile

groups in the mid 1960s. And he snitched on Jorge Mas Canosa, who he says had planned bombings in Mexico. "In July of that year, Posada reported that he had completed two ten-pound Limpet bombs for a Mas Canosa operation against Soviet ships in the port of Veracruz, Mexico, using eight pounds of Pentolite explosives and a pencil detonator," the archive's director Peter Kornbluh reported. He also told his CIA handlers that he would help control other exiles who he could keep from doing embarrassing things like blowing up Russian freighters. "Posada was trying to ingratiate himself with the CIA," Kornbluh said. "Notice that he mentions a pencil detonator, which is the same kind used years later in the Cubana Air bombing" (*The Miami Herald*, 7/10/09).

October 6: Cuban President Raul Castro and his army are running Cuba like a "military corporation" and former leader Fidel Castro maintains a powerful voice on the board, a Cuba expert said in a new book. *Without Fidel. A Death Foretold in Miami, Havana and Washington* by journalist, author and Cuba-watcher Ann Louise Bardach seeks to shed light on the circumstances surrounding Fidel Castro's near-death from colon surgery in 2006 and his handover last year to his younger brother, Raul Castro. Bardach, who has met both Castros in a dozen research and writing trips to Cuba, says the February 2008 handover and a government purge in March this year put the Communist-run island's immediate future in the hands of Raul Castro, 78. She describes him in the book as a "socialist reformer of sorts" equipped with a "Darwinian imperative of survival" but says he has "an indisputable charisma deficit" in his public persona when compared with his more famous elder brother. Bardach says former defense minister Raul Castro, backed by Cuba's powerful Revolutionary Armed Forces and a clique of pro-Castro revolutionary veterans in their seventies and eighties, are trying to keep intact and afloat a Cuban economy that she says is "crumbling like a stale cookie" (*Reuters*, 6/10/09).

Octubre 7: El asentamiento de los inmigrantes cubanos en Estados Unidos costará un mínimo de \$1,300 millones en subsidios y programas de asistencia para refugiados durante los próximos cuatro años, con un preocupante incremento del desempleo y la población inactiva en el sur de la Florida. "A los niveles actuales de la inmigración, el costo directo mínimo para poder subsidiar las necesidades de los inmigrantes cubanos durante sus primeros doce meses en Estados Unidos sería de \$1,300 millones por los próximos cuatro años fiscales (2009-2012)", indicó un informe del Instituto de Estudios Cubanos y Cubano Americanos (ICCAS) de la Universidad de Miami. La investigación repasó el impacto y las implicaciones de la inmigración cubana hacia el sur de la Florida entre 1994 y el 2008, pero concentró el análisis en el período fiscal del 2008 (concluido en septiembre de 2008), cuando 49,500 cubanos recibieron oficialmente su residencia permanente en Estados Unidos (*El Nuevo Herald*, 7/10/09).

Octubre 7: El fortalecimiento de la vigilancia y la crisis financiera global han reducido drásticamente este año las cifras de inmigrantes cubanos que intentan llegar a Estados Unidos por vía marítima, dijo la Guardia Costera estadounidense. En el año fiscal 2009, que culminó el 30 de septiembre, unos 799 cubanos fueron interceptados, desde los 2,199 detenidos el año pasado y los 2,868 en el 2007, según cifras de la Guardia Costera. El teniente comandante Matt Moorlag de la Guardia Costera estadounidense dijo que la aplicación de medidas contra el éxodo ilegal y la crisis económica en ambos países estaba

amortiguando las salidas ilegales del territorio cubano. Moorlag dijo que tribunales estadounidenses fueron más severos al juzgar a contrabandistas de inmigrantes a quienes impusieron fuertes condenas. Pero el funcionario agregó que la recesión económica que afecta tanto a Cuba como a Estados Unidos también está fustigando el negocio del tráfico de personas, en el que los contrabandistas exigen tarifas de 10,000 dólares o más por persona (*Reuters*, 8/10/09).

Octubre 8: El gobierno de Barack Obama mantiene restringido el intercambio científico entre Cuba y Estados Unidos, como lo hicieron gobiernos anteriores, aseguró un directivo local. No "ha habido en el sector nuestro nada que evidencie un cambio en esa política", dijo José Fernández, directivo del ministerio de Ciencia, Tecnología y Medio Ambiente (CITMA), en conferencia de prensa. Añadió que, durante décadas, la política de Estados Unidos hacia Cuba ha estado dirigida a "tratar de obstaculizar los contactos científicos entre ambas naciones" y evitar "el acceso de los centros de investigación cubanos a equipamiento novedoso" de procedencia estadounidense. Fernández precisó que, no obstante esa política, se logró "mantener un intercambio mínimo en el sector de la meteorología", que se realiza regularmente en el caso de ciclones "sobre la base del respeto", en el marco multilateral de la Organización Meteorológica Mundial (*AFP*, 8/10/09).

October 8: Nearly 180 people from 20 countries have confirmed their participation in an international colloquium on the five Cubans who remain imprisoned in the United States since 1998. The colloquium will take place in November, in the eastern city of Holguin. Amauri Torno Gonzalez, from the Cuban Friendship Institute (ICAP) in Holguin province, said the event is scheduled for November 19-23 and that delegations will be coming from the United States, Austria, Germany, Canada, France and Puerto Rico, among other countries *Granma* newspaper reported that this is the fifth occasion the event is held (*ACN*, 8/10/09).

Octubre 8: El sector cubano de la vivienda tuvo pérdidas por 47,2 millones de dólares entre abril de 2008 y marzo de 2009 debido al embargo comercial y financiero que aplica Estados Unidos a la isla desde hace casi medio siglo, informaron medios oficiales. "Esas pérdidas incidieron de manera negativa en los propósitos de cumplir los programas de fabricación de casas previstos y lograr la recuperación de las afectaciones provocadas por el azote de tres huracanes en 2008", asegura la agencia estatal *Prensa Latina*. Fuentes oficiales cifraron en 149 millones de dólares las pérdidas agropecuarias por el embargo durante el mismo periodo de abril de 2008 a marzo de 2009. La campaña informativa cubana se produce en vísperas de una nueva votación sobre el bloqueo estadounidense en la Asamblea General de la ONU. (*EFE*, 9/10/09).

Octubre 9: El gobierno de Estados Unidos emitió una alerta de viaje a Cuba debido a las medidas de cuarentena que ha impuesto el gobierno de La Habana ante la gripe A. En un comunicado, el Departamento de Estado explicó que en abril el gobierno cubano puso en práctica una política que le permite poner en cuarentena a pasajeros que presenten fiebre u otros síntomas de la gripe. El gobierno destaca que aunque el porcentaje de estadounidenses a los que se le impone cuarentena es reducido, las

características del proceso de selección imposibilitan predecir en qué momento un viajero pueda ser aislado por parte de las autoridades (*EFE*, 9/10/09).

Octubre 9: A convicted Cuban intelligence agent who infiltrated the Boca Chica Naval Air Station in Key West -- but didn't obtain or pass along state secrets to his handlers in Havana -- could see his life sentence reduced to 20 years. Antonio Guerrero, convicted of espionage conspiracy in the highly publicized prosecution of the so-called ``Cuban Five" spy defendants in 2001, has reached an agreement with the US attorney's office to lower his sentence. The agreement still must be accepted by US District Judge Joan Lenard. Last year, she was criticized by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta for imposing the life sentence, which the court considered excessive because of insufficient evidence of harm to national security (*El Nuevo Herald*, 10/10/09).

October 10: Fidel Castro lauded the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to US President Barack Obama, saying it was "a positive measure" that was more a criticism of past US policies than a recognition of Obama's accomplishments. Castro said the prize made up for the blow Obama suffered last week when the International Olympic Committee awarded the 2016 Summer Games to Rio de Janeiro after Obama had flown to Copenhagen to pitch for Chicago, his adoptive hometown. "I don't always share the positions of that institution but I'm obligated to recognize that in this instance it was, in my judgment, a positive measure," Castro wrote in a column published in state-run media. The Nobel prize made up for "the reverse Obama suffered in Copenhagen (...)" which provoked angry attacks by his adversaries of the extreme right," Castro wrote. His comments were part of a long piece entitled "The Bell Tolls for the Dollar" in which he said the US dollar was losing its position as the preeminent world currency. Also, he criticized the United States, as he often does, for not doing more to cut emission of greenhouse gases said to be causing global warming ([The Bells are Tolling for the Dollar](#); *Reuters*, 10/10/09).

October 11: A man wanted in connection with the hijacking of a Pan Am flight to Cuba nearly 41 years ago was arrested in New York, a Justice Department official said. Luis Armando Pena Soltren was arrested at John F. Kennedy International Airport for suspected of involvement in the November 1968 hijacking of a Puerto Rico-bound Pan Am flight from New York, said Justice Department spokesman Richard Kolko. Kolko said Soltren, who has been in Cuba for almost 41 years, will appear in the Manhattan federal court (*Reuters*, 12/10/09).

Octubre 12: Many of the 75 activists jailed in a 2003 Cuban government crackdown on political dissent are congratulating Barack Obama for winning the Nobel Peace Prize. In a letter to international journalists, 29 of those imprisoned six years ago said Obama "has become a global symbol, especially for us who, under difficult conditions, are defending Cubans' right to democracy." In another letter, 21 of their wives, mothers and other female relatives also cheered Obama. Fifty-four dissidents remain imprisoned on allegations they conspired with the US to topple Cuba's government. Those freed were granted medical parole or forced into exile in Spain. One was released after completing a six-year sentence (*AP*, 13/10/09).

October 13: Cuba reiterated in the United Nations the situation of the five Cubans imprisoned in the United States since 1998 and that of their relatives. Cuban diplomat Claudia Perez presented the case before the Third Commission of the UN General Assembly which centered its discussions on women's progress and the implementation of the results of the fourth World Conference on Women. The Cuban official said the sentences imposed on Gerardo Hernandez, Antonio Guerrero, Ramon Labañino, Fernando Gonzalez and Rene Gonzalez, internationally known as the Cuban Five, were arbitrary. She referred as well to the situation of the wives of two of them who have not been allowed to enter the United States to visit their husbands. Claudia Perez explained that Hernandez' wife, Adriana Perez, was denied an entry visa to the US last July 15 for the 10th occasion (*ACN*, 13/10/09).

October 13: One of the Cuban Five defendants, initially sentenced to life in prison for espionage conspiracy, saw his term reduced to 22 years. The judge rejected an even lighter sentence recommended by prosecutors. At Cuban spy Antonio Guerrero's sentencing hearing in 2001, federal prosecutors pushed for the maximum life sentence, pointing to his resolute lack of remorse and his self-proclaimed loyalty to the Cuban regime. Advancing arguments sounding more political than legal, assistant US attorney Caroline Heck Miller urged a Miami federal judge to reduce Guerrero's life sentence to just 20 years, in keeping with an agreement reached between the government and defense. Heck Miller said the reduced sentence would show "the fairness of the United States' judicial system" to the rest of the world -- contrary to Cuba's very active public relations campaign to the contrary. But US District Judge Joan Lenard didn't buy it, sentencing Guerrero, 50, to nearly 22 years for espionage conspiracy and taking Heck Miller to task for singing such a different tune. In 2001, the judge pointed out, Guerrero's "conduct posed a serious threat to the national security of the United States" in the eyes of the government (*El Nuevo Herald*, 14/10/09).

October 14: The revised prison sentence imposed on Antonio Guerrero by a Florida court – 21 years and 10 months – was not lenient enough for the Communist Party daily *Granma*. Originally, Guerrero had been sentenced to life plus 10 years. Although the new sentence "is not as absurdly exaggerated as the previous one, it is still unjust," *Granma* says in an article taken from the antiterroristas.com website. It is "one proof of many that confirm the absolute arbitrariness of the process followed against those who are imprisoned in the United States solely and exclusively for fighting against the anti-Cuban terrorism promoted by the American authorities." The sentences imposed on the five Miami Cubans arrested in September 1998 on espionage-related charges reflected an "irrational disproportion" between crime and punishment, the newspaper said. Neither Fidel nor Raúl Castro had commented publicly on the news (*The Miami Herald*, 15/10/09).

October 13: A small Miami-based company said the US government has given it permission to lay the first optical communications fiber from the US to Cuba. That could drastically cut the cost of calling the island nation and make the Internet more accessible to Cubans. Treasury Department officials were unavailable to confirm that TeleCuba

Communications Inc. has received approval, which is necessary even though the Obama administration eased long-standing restrictions on telecom links to Cuba in April. TeleCuba said that its cable will be operating by the middle of 2011. It still needs final permission from the Cuban government to land the cable. A government official in Cuba, speaking on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak publicly, said Cuba has been waiting for the US to approve a "group of companies" seeking to build telecommunications infrastructure. But the official could not confirm whether Cuba would ultimately give them permission to enter the market. Cuba is the only nation in the Western Hemisphere that is not linked to the outside world by fiber optics. Instead, it relies on slow, expensive satellite links. While the cable could make calling very cheap, it would be up to the Cuban government to set rates, and it could keep restrictions on Internet access as well (*AP*, 13/10/09).

October 15: Cuba recently gave a top State Department official a long-blocked permission to visit dual US-Cuban citizens jailed on the island -- but it did not accept a US offer to relax travel restrictions on each other's diplomats. The two issues, though relatively minor in the broad sweep of decades of bilateral hostilities, underlined both the opportunities and limits for improved relations facing the new governments of Barack Obama and Raúl Castro. Havana's decision to allow the prison visits ``reflect the benefits that could accrue to both countries as a result of better communications and, conversely, how our interests are poorly served when we don't communicate," said Bob Pastor, the top Cuban expert in Jimmy Carter's administration. The State Department confirmed that acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Bisa Williams visited with jailed dual US-Cuban citizens there during her trip to Cuba last month to discuss a possible resumption of direct mail services between the two nations. No further details on the visits were available. Like other countries, including the United States, Cuba does not recognize dual nationalities. Cuba treats those cases as Cuban-only citizens and regularly denies foreign consular officials on the island access to the dual citizens jailed there (*El Nuevo Herald*, 15/10/09).

Octubre 16: La bloguera Yoani Sánchez, a la que se impidió por cuarta vez salir de Cuba para recibir un reconocimiento internacional, publicó un vídeo con su discurso de aceptación del premio María Moors Cabot de la Universidad de Columbia. "Lamentablemente no puedo estar junto a ustedes hoy", dice la conocida bloguera al comienzo de su discurso, filmado en lo que parece una plaza de la ciudad y con ruido de tráfico al fondo. "Lo lamento mucho, sin embargo me he acostumbrado a la idea de no poder moverme fuera de mi país desde hace más de un año". "Los cubanos somos como niños pequeños, necesitamos la autorización de papá para salir de casa", dice Sánchez durante la grabación. "En el caso de esa niña que se llama Yoani Sánchez, el precio y el costo personal y social por escribir en una página web mis impresiones de la realidad ha sido, sencillamente, la condena a la inmovilidad". "Me he convertido en una peregrina inmóvil dentro de esta isla", agrega la bloguera en su mensaje ([Video](#); *El Nuevo Herald*, 16/10/09).

October 16: The mayor of New Orleans flew to Cuba on a mission to study the island's respected disaster preparedness methods in another sign of easing diplomatic relations.

The visit comes a day after President Barack Obama promised New Orleans that the government would never repeat the "failure of government" seen after Hurricane Katrina ravaged the jazz city in 2005. Ray Nagin is the first US mayor to make a diplomatic visit to Cuba in 50 years, his office said. "We were victims of a tragedy. Now we want to be a model for response and preparedness," said spokeswoman Ceeon Quiett. The State Department gave approval to the mission because Cuba has been recognized internationally as a leader in emergency management, Quiett said (*AFP*, 16/10/09).

October 17: A steep drop in US payments for telephone calls to Cuba may have been caused by Cuban Americans' growing travel to the island, the US economic crisis or increased Internet communications, analysts say. US Treasury reports showed the payments plunged from \$122.5 million in the first half of 2008 to \$95 million in the same period this year -- a 22 percent drop. Treasury's reports are required by the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996. They are sent every six months to the office of the speaker of the US House of Representatives. The reports list the amounts paid by US-licensed companies for all "telecommunications," although the bulk of the money goes to pay the Cuban side of long-distance phone calls initiated in the United States. Calls to Cuba average about \$1 per minute, a high price by world standards and one largely driven by decades of political hostilities between Washington and Havana (*The Miami Herald*, 17/10/09).

October 18: In the six months after the 9/11 attacks, up to 20 Cubans walked into US embassies around the world and offered information on terrorism threats. Eventually, all were deemed to be Cuban intelligence agents and collaborators, purveying fabricated information. A White House official complained bitterly and publicly in 2002 that Fidel Castro's agents had tried to send US intelligence on "wild goose" chases that could cost lives at a time when Washington was reeling from the worst terrorism attacks in history. But now two former US government experts on Cuba have told *El Nuevo Herald* that the post-9/11 "walk-ins" were part of a permanent Havana intelligence program -- both before and long after 9/11 -- that sends Cuban agents to US embassies to mislead, misinform and identify US spies, perhaps even to penetrate US intelligence. "The Cubans periodically used walk-ins to continue to test US capabilities and reactions, but (...) later approaches were not as frequent as we saw in the immediate wake of the September 11 attacks," added a former top Bush administration official. Both asked that their names not be published because they were not authorized to speak on the topic (*The Miami Herald*, 19/10/09).

October 19: Agriculture leaders from Virginia are heading to Cuba to promote the state's offerings. Agriculture Commissioner Todd Haymore will lead the delegation to the Havana International Trade Fair in November. Officials say Virginia is pushing to expand international sales for its agricultural products. In 2008, Officials say Virginia's exports to Cuba have grown since federal law began allowing medical and agricultural exports to Cuba in 2000. In 2003, Virginia producers exported \$838,000 worth of agriculture products to Cuba. In 2008, that number grew to more than \$40 million (*AP*, 19/10/09).

Octubre 20: El voleibolista cubano Leonardo Leyva, quien desapareció durante el campeonato Norceca celebrado en Puerto Rico, pidió asilo político en la isla. La policía informó que Leyva llegó a las oficinas de migración en la capital acompañado por su abogado Sergio Ramos y un amigo. "Me propuse una meta y la cumplí. De ahora en adelante, a trabajar por un futuro mejor para mí y mi familia en Cuba", expresó Leyva, según el portal de internet del diario *Primera Hora* (AP, 21/10/09).

October 20: Under Cuba's communist system, the government calls all the shots all the time - but during monster hurricanes that may not be such a bad thing, New Orleans' mayor said. In an interview during his six-day trip to Cuba's capital to study the island's disaster-response system, Ray Nagin told the press that "one of the biggest weaknesses we had during Hurricane Katrina is it wasn't clear who was the top authority." "The president and the governor were going back and forth (...) in Cuba you don't have that problem," Nagin said. "The government says, 'This is what we're doing, these are the resources we are going to deploy,' and it pretty much happens." The mayor and 15 US city and state officials, including from police, fire and port agencies, met with Cuban civil defense authorities and saw presentations on how the island's military mobilizes during disasters. "I think they do a much better job than we do on knowing their citizens at a very, very detailed level, block by block," Nagin said. In Cuba, Revolutionary Defense Committees on nearly every corner watch their neighbors. They help with evacuations and provide social services such as vaccinations, but also are supposed to report any behavior considered subversive (AP, 21/10/09).

October 20: New Orleans hopes to cash in on an improvement in US-Cuba relations by getting direct charter flights between New Orleans and Havana, the US city's mayor said in Havana. Mayor Ray Nagin met with the head of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce and spoke to authorities at the top tourism monopoly and at the Port of Havana. In the late 1950s, Cuba was the top source of trade for the Port of New Orleans. "They don't have to go to Vietnam for rice, and China for this and that. They could get it directly from us," Nagin said. "We grow it all." "We see a huge opportunity if President (Barack) Obama continues to go in the direction he's headed," Ray Nagin said in an interview. "The first thing is to get the license from the US, then everything else falls into line," he added, saying word on the fate of the license could come as early as January. Nagin was heading a delegation of New Orleans officials in Cuba to talk with the government about topics ranging from hurricane preparation to commercial opportunities, including flights (Reuters, AP, 21/10/09).

October 21: New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin called for an end to the US embargo against Cuba during a trade mission to Havana. The head of the beleaguered Gulf Coast city, home to one of the biggest ports in the United States, told the press the decades-old embargo should be scrapped or loosened. Nagin said both the United States and Cuba would gain from trade, which has slowed to a trickle since the embargo was introduced in 1962 (AFP, 21/10/09).

October 21: Cuba is ready to ship 1 million cases of rum to America if Washington eases its 47-year-old embargo, but would hold off exporting its flagship Havana Club brand

because of US trademark battles, one of the island's top rum executives said. US trade sanctions have cost Cuba's rum industry \$95 million annually in lost sales and additional spending to import production materials including glass bottles and machinery from Europe instead of from its neighbor to the north, said Juan Gonzalez, vice president of Cuba Ron SA, the communist state's rum production monopoly. Cuban rums can't be sold in the United States, but they are available in more than 120 countries, Gonzalez said, noting that the company sold 4 million cases in 2008. Of that, Havana Club counts for all but about half a million cases. The global financial crisis should cut into sales this year, but Cuba still hopes sell 5 million cases a year by 2013, Gonzalez said. The government does not release figures on revenue (*AP*, 21/10/09).

October 21: An anti-Castro militant was released after nearly four years in federal custody. He spent the last year in an immigration facility after serving prison sentences for stockpiling weapons and refusing to testify against a fellow Castro foe. Santiago Alvarez, a Miami real estate investor, had been detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Georgia since last November, said one of his attorneys, Kendall Coffey. Alvarez, a legal US resident, fought ICE's bid to deport him. Alvarez and co-defendant Osvaldo Mitat pleaded guilty in September 2006 to conspiring to possess illegal weapons. They acknowledged that the arms were meant to battle Fidel Castro's totalitarian government. In late 2007, Alvarez, Mitat and three other associates of Cuban exile militant Luis Posada Carriles pleaded guilty to charges of obstruction of justice in an investigation linked to immigration fraud charges against Posada. The defendants refused to testify before the federal grand jury about Posada's entry into the United States in 2005 (*The Miami Herald*, 21/10/09).

October 23: Euro Group of Companies, Inc. announced that Europhone, the Company's telecommunications products and services subsidiary, has introduced its Clear Choice international calling program, offering dramatically lower per minute rates for worldwide calls from the United States. The Company has entered a marketing agreement with Blackstone Calling Card, Inc. to market the Clear Choice \$0.89 per minute rate for calls from the US to Cuba. The new Cuba rate is being introduced in advertising banners on the city bus fleet and in bus shelters, and on Spanish language television, in Miami, Florida, the US home of many Cuban nationals. Euro Group of Companies, Inc. is an operating company headquartered in Port Chester, New York, with offices in Shanghai, China and Athens, Greece (*Telecommunications Business*, 28/10/09).

October 23: Environmental Defense Fund will send a team of experts to Havana, Cuba, to discuss ways to eliminate overfishing, protect coral reefs, conserve coastal areas, and tap potential ocean energy - a signal that greater environmental cooperation may be on the horizon. EDF scientists and policy experts and Cuban scientists and environmental officials will have a series of meetings about how the United States and Cuba can work together to protect ocean waters and marine resources shared by the two countries. The meetings come on the heels of a September visit to the United States by Cuban environmental officials. EDF has asked the Obama administration to ease policies that limit scientific exchanges between US and Cuban scientists and conservation professionals (*PRNewswire*, 23/10/09).

October 24: Actor Sean Penn left Las Vegas for Havana in a private jet, the entertainment news website *TMZ.com* reported. "Sean is going to the land of Fidel as a journalist, writing a story for *Vanity Fair* about how the Obama administration has affected Cuba," the brief article said. Penn reportedly was traveling in a plane owned by Diana Jenkins, the wife of Barclays Bank executive Roger Jenkins. A spokesman for Penn told *TMZ.com* that there is "no appointment scheduled and no current plan" for Penn to meet with Raúl Castro's brother Fidel. Penn spent the day on the Isle of Youth, talking with Cuban artists, reported the official site *Cubadebate* in a lavishly illustrated article. His host was painter Alexis ("Kcho") Leyva. Others included singer Kelvis Ochoa, trumpeter Yasek Manzano and painters Ernesto Rancaño and Sándor González. Penn visited an arts gallery in the city of Nueva Gerona and toured an arts camp called The Second Front (*the Miami Herald*, 26/10/09).

Octubre 25: US President Barack Obama asked Spain to send a message to Cuba urging its president Raul Castro to step up efforts to improve relations with Washington, a Madrid newspaper reported. "Tell Raul that if he does not take steps, neither can I," Obama told Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, according to *El Pais*, which cited a diplomatic source. "We are making efforts, but if they do not make efforts, it will be very difficult for us to continue," said Obama during the meeting on October 13 at the White House, the newspaper added. The message was passed on to Havana the following week by Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos during a visit to Cuba, *El Pais* said (*AFP*, 25/10/09).

October 26: A top Cuban communications official said that the communist government is wary of a Miami company's plan to run a fiber optic cable to the island and it hasn't yet even been asked for permission. TeleCuba Communications Inc. announced on October 13 that it had received US Treasury Department approval to lay about 110 miles (175 kilometers) of cable from Florida to Cuban territory -- seemingly a significant dent in the US embargo against the island. But Francisco Hartmann, director of strategy for Cuba's national Office of Information, said his government has "no official knowledge that there is interest to negotiate" such a project, and he indicated they may frown on it if asked. "If all the information that we have passes by cable to Florida, that technological independence, the sovereignty that for us is so important, what will happen to it?" he asked at a news conference. TeleCuba said the cable, following the route of a defunct 1950s copper telephone cable from Key West, Florida, to the Havana suburb of Cojimar could be operational by the middle of 2011. It acknowledged that it had not obtained Cuban permission to bring the cable ashore. No one answered the phone at TeleCuba's office. Instead of the TeleCuba proposal, Hartmann said Cuba is content to wait for a much longer, 960-mile (1,550-kilometer) undersea cable that its socialist ally Venezuela plans to run to the island (*AP*, 26/10/09).

Octubre 26: El gobierno de Estados Unidos señaló que la libertad religiosa es "ampliamente respetada" en América Latina, "excepto" en Cuba, según su informe sobre Libertad Religiosa, que incluye también a Venezuela entre los países que ponen trabas a la libertad de culto. El Departamento de Estado analiza anualmente la situación mundial

respecto a la persecución y la discriminación por motivos religiosos, así como las iniciativas y leyes desarrolladas para promover el respeto confesional en el mundo. En su informe correspondiente a 2009, Cuba y Venezuela se encuentran entre el grupo de países en los que se ha detectado "restricciones y abusos" a la libertad religiosa, en el que también están, entre otros, Irán, China, Irak, Corea del Norte, Pakistán y Sudán ([International Religious Freedom Report: Cuba](#); *EFE*, 26/10/09).

October 27: Broward residents who want to fly to Cuba may have an option closer to home than Miami in the future. County Commissioners will vote on whether to ask the federal government to designate the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport as a point of entry for flights to and from Cuba. County officials also want to designate Port Everglades as another point of entry. Low cost carriers at the airport "can offer travelers an economical alternative to travel to Cuba that they might otherwise not be able to afford," states a draft letter written by County Mayor Stacy Ritter to the US Department of Treasury (*The Miami Herald*, 27/10/09).

October 27: US, Cuban and Mexican scientists have drawn up plans for joint research in the Gulf of Mexico, in another sign of improvement in long-hostile US-Cuba relations. In a meeting in Havana, they agreed on top priorities for collecting information about the Gulf, a body of water shared by the three countries but about which little cooperative research has been done in recent years. "This is a logical, low-risk area in which to begin discussions with Cuba. It is without question in our mutual interest to share science and ideas on our shared resources like the Gulf of Mexico," Environmental Defense Fund senior attorney Dan Whittle said. Whittle was among 30 Americans, 30 Cubans and six Mexicans at the meeting, held ahead of an international meeting on ocean science in the Cuban capital (*Reuters*, 28/10/09).

October 27: Michael Douglas staged an impromptu walking tour of the Cuban capital's historic district, posing for photos with construction workers and surprised residents. His visit came two days after fellow Oscar-winner Sean Penn arrived in Cuba, reportedly seeking an interview with 82-year-old Fidel Castro. Little was known about Douglas' plans for his four days in Cuba, but he was accompanied on his walk through Havana's old quarter by Patricia Rodriguez, an official at the city historian's office (*AP*, 28/10/09).

October 28: Charles Shapiro, the senior advisor for economic initiatives in the State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, is slated to be among the dozens of speakers at a three-day conference in Miami Beach on Cuba and other international issues. Organized by the American Bar Association's international law section, the annual event this year will take a close look at trade and investment opportunities in Cuba as relations between Washington and Havana begin to thaw. Some will argue the time is now for a change in how the neighboring adversaries interact. But others will argue that better relations won't come anytime soon. "There's the big question on when or if the embargo will be lifted or relations will be normalized (...)," said George Harper, a panelist and president of the Inter-American Bar Association. "I hate to say it, but I don't see anything new along on those lines" (*The Miami Herald*, 28/10/09).

October 28: The Obama administration defended the long-running US economic embargo against Cuba in the face of another overwhelming UN General Assembly vote condemning American policy toward the island nation. But administration officials also stressed efforts to reach out to the Cuba's communist government. Susan Rice, the US Ambassador to the United Nations, said the UN resolution did not reflect the "current realities" in Cuba. She said it was wrong to blame the US sanctions for deprivation among the Cuban people. "It is high time for this body to move beyond the rhetorical posturing of the past, to recognize the situation in Cuba for what it is today and to encourage progress toward genuine change," Rice told the General Assembly. In a sign of thawing ties, Obama has lifted limits on Cuban Americans traveling and sending money to Cuba, and initiated talks with Havana on migration and mail service, the latter aimed at reinstating direct postal service between Cuba and the United States suspended since August 1963. "These are important steps and we hope they can be the starting point for further change," Rice said (*VOA, Reuters*, 28/10/09).

October 28: Cuba is willing to hold talks with the United States "on any level," Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said in conciliatory remarks aimed at the Obama administration. Rodriguez said in an interview with the press the island nation was waiting for a response from Washington to Cuba's offer to broaden discussions. His comments came despite a testy exchange between the top Cuban diplomat and a senior US official just before the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to condemn America's 47-year trade embargo. "We are prepared to have a dialogue with the government of the United States at any level," the foreign minister told *AP* after the vote, adding that such talks must be held on the basis of mutual respect and sovereignty. He reiterated that Cuba formally offered in July to hold expanded talks with the United States to cooperate in combatting terrorism and drug trafficking, and to work together to fight natural disasters, among other things. "We are waiting for the North American response," Rodriguez said. He also said Cuba has been pleased by progress of ongoing talks on migration and re-establishing direct mail service. He called those discussions "productive and respectful" (*AP*, 29/10/09).

Octubre 28: Una jueza federal de Miami fijó para el 8 de diciembre las nuevas sentencias a dos espías cubanos en Estados Unidos cuyas condenas fueron consideradas excesivas por una corte de apelaciones, informó el tribunal. Los agentes de inteligencia cubanos Fernando González --condenado a cadena perpetua-- y Ramón Labañino --19 años de cárcel-- recibirán nuevas condenas por parte de la jueza federal Joan Lenard, al igual que ocurrió dos semanas atrás con otro miembro de los llamados "Cinco de Cuba", Antonio Guerrero. La condena de Guerrero, se redujo de cadena perpetua a 22 años de cárcel (*AFP*, 29/10/09).

October 28: Medications to combat cancer manufactured by a Chinese-Cuban biotechnology firm have managed to break Washington's 47-year-old economic embargo against Cuba, given that the good results achieved with their use to date have caused them to be approved for use in the United States. "The FDA (US Food and Drug Administration) approves these products ... in spite of the embargo," the head of engineering for Biotech Pharmaceutical, Jose Suarez Rivero, told the press in Beijing.

The United States is one of the countries where clinical trials on the products are being carried out – a required step prior to allowing them to be sold – along with about 100 hospitals in Japan, Canada, Germany, India, Malaysia, Brazil and Mexico (*LAHT*, 28/10/09).

October 29: The Treasury Department says it wants companies such as Microsoft Corp. and Google Inc. to resume instant messaging services in countries including Cuba and Iran that remain under US trade sanctions. Microsoft and Google cut off the use of instant messages by citizens of Iran, Syria, Cuba and Sudan, saying US regulations prohibit the required downloads. Now the Treasury Department is saying the online communications foster democracy and should be restored. Ensuring the flow and access to information available through the Internet and similar public sources is consistent with the policy interests of the United States. The company-imposed blackouts show how US trade restrictions can conflict with diplomatic goals, said James Lewis, an analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. “We want people to be able to communicate,” Lewis, who administered US export control rules in the 1990s, said in an interview. “But in the normal course of business this stuff is on autopilot. The sanctions system rolls on and generates an answer that is no.” The US began an “interagency effort” to make sure electronic communication is available in nations facing sanctions “to the extent permitted by current US law,” Szubin said in the letter to Sarah Stephens, executive director of the Washington-based Center for Democracy in the Americas (*Bloomberg*, 29/10/09).

October 30: Omara Portuondo's Latin Grammy Award-nominated "Gracias" was released in the United States in 2008, but she wasn't able to tour stateside in support of the album until now. Like other Cuban singers, Portuondo, best known as one of the stars of the "Buena Vista Social Club" album, had been barred from performing in the States since 2003, when the administration of President George W. Bush tightened visa regulations. Her recent shows in Los Angeles and San Francisco mark the start of what is expected to be a new wave of performances in the United States by Cuban artists (*Billboard*, 30/10/09).

October 31: Fidel Castro has found something to sneeze at in Washington's decision to ease visits by Cuban-Americans to his island: He says more Americans mean more swine flu. Castro wrote in state-controlled newspapers that many of Cuba's early cases of the virus were visitors from the United States and he used the occasion to take a jab at the US embargo. "We had the strange case where the United States on one hand authorized more trips for a large number of people carrying the virus, and on the other prohibited us from obtaining equipment and medicine to combat the virus," Castro said. He added, however, that President Barack Obama was not plotting to infect Cubans with the flu when, in April, he eased restrictions on Cuban-Americans who want to travel or send money to Cuba. "I don't think, of course, that it was the intention of the United States," Castro wrote. Health officials say that that swine flu is now spreading at a much faster rate and Castro said it has already infected patients in every Cuban province, "principally those with the highest number of relatives who reside in the United States" ([Noticias relevantes](#); *AP*, 31/10/09).