

# FOCAL's Research Forum on Cuba

## Chronicle on Cuba

May 2010

### Highlights

**Domestic Affairs:** Cuba's Roman Catholic Church intervenes with authorities in favour of dissidents and political prisoners. The Sugar and Transportation ministers are removed from their posts. Authorities report an increase in the number of patients suffering the A H1N1 influenza virus. Cuba joins the international campaign against homophobia. Cuba's problems in food production and distribution are analyzed in the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Cuban Association of Small Farmers. Dissident Guillermo Farinas continues his hunger strike.

**Economy:** An import program that brought cars to Cuba has been cancelled. Authorities announce plans to allow foreigners to develop golf courses, marinas and related land projects to boost the nation's tourism industry. The sugar harvest is Cuba's worst since 1905. Cuba faces shortage of rice. Farm and livestock production plummets. A severe drought is affecting the water supplies of more than half a million people. Cuban experts watch closely the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

**Exile Community:** From 2006 to 2009, over 25,000 Cubans settled in Spain. Several exile organizations in different countries march in support of Cuban dissidents. The exile organization Cuba Democracia Ya! accuses the Cuban Government of "entertaining" the international public opinion with false promises about political prisoners.

**Foreign Affairs:** The Vatican's foreign minister is traveling to Cuba in June. Cuba has already given medical assistance in Haiti to 345,689 patients since the earthquake. A Cuban delegation headed by the Cuban vice president participates in the swearing-in ceremony of the new Costa Rican head of state. Raul Castro meets with the vice chairman of the Russian Duma. A group of Spanish writers and intellectuals present a platform for democracy in Cuba. The Foreign Affairs Minister heads the Cuban delegation to the Sixth European Union-Latin America and Caribbean Summit in Madrid. Raul Castro chairs in Havana the official meeting to mark Africa Day.

**Security:** Venezuela President Hugo Chavez acknowledges that Cuban officials are involved in Venezuela's armed forces. Meteoro 2010, a national civil defence drill, takes place from May to June. Cuban President Raul Castro presides over a meeting of the National Defence Council.

**US-Cuba Relations:** The US and Cuba are holding talks on how to respond to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The Cuban National Assembly issues a statement against the Arizona immigration law. Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister says Cuba sent the US a proposal for bilateral

talks. Cuba has yet to open a legal case against the US government contractor imprisoned in the island.

### **Lo más relevante**

**Asuntos domésticos:** La Iglesia Católica Romana de Cuba interviene con las autoridades a favor de los disidentes y los prisioneros políticos. Los ministros de Transporte y del Azúcar son removidos de sus cargos. Las autoridades informan acerca de un incremento en el número de pacientes con el virus de influenza A H1N1. Cuba se une a la campaña internacional contra la homofobia. Los problemas de la producción y distribución de alimentos en Cuba son abordados durante el 10mo Congreso de la Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños. El disidente Guillermo Fariñas continúa su huelga de hambre.

**Economía:** Fue cancelado un programa de importación de autos a Cuba. Autoridades anuncian planes que permitirán a extranjeros invertir en campos de golf, marinas y proyectos relacionados en otros terrenos para impulsar la industria del turismo. La zafra azucarera es la peor de Cuba desde 1905. Cuba enfrenta escasez de arroz. Desciende la producción de productos agrícolas y pecuarios. Una severa sequía afecta el abastecimiento de agua de más de medio millón de personas. Expertos cubanos siguen con atención el derrame de petróleo del Golfo de México.

**Comunidad de exiliados:** Más de 25,000 cubanos se instalaron en España de 2006 a 2009. Varias organizaciones de exiliados marchan en apoyo a la disidencia cubana. La organización de exiliados Cuba Democracia Ya! acusa al gobierno cubano de “entretener” a la opinión pública internacional con falsas promesas sobre los prisioneros políticos.

**Asuntos exteriores:** El ministro de Exteriores del Vaticano viaja a la isla en junio. Cuba le ha brindado asistencia médica a más de 345,689 pacientes en Haití desde el terremoto. Una delegación presidida por el vicepresidente cubano asiste a la toma de posesión de la nueva Jefa de Estado en Costa Rica. Raúl Castro se reúne con el vicepresidente de la Duma rusa. Un grupo de intelectuales y escritores de España presentan una plataforma para la democratización de Cuba. El ministro de Asuntos Exteriores preside la delegación cubana a la 6ta Cumbre Unión Europea-América Latina y el Caribe en Madrid. Raúl Castro preside las celebraciones en La Habana por el Día de África.

**Seguridad:** El presidente venezolano Hugo Chávez reconoce que oficiales cubanos están involucrados en las fuerzas armadas venezolanas. Meteoro 2010, un ejercicio de la defensa civil, tiene lugar de mayo a junio. El presidente cubano Raúl Castro preside una reunión del Consejo Nacional de Defensa.

**Relaciones Cuba-Estados Unidos:** Los EEUU y Cuba sostienen conversaciones sobre cómo enfrentar el derrame de petróleo en el Golfo de México. La Asamblea Nacional de Cuba emite una declaración contra la ley de inmigración de Arizona. El ministro de Exteriores de Cuba dice que Cuba le envió a EEUU una propuesta para un diálogo bilateral. Cuba no ha abierto legalmente el caso del contratista del gobierno de EEUU prisionero en la isla.

## Domestic Affairs

**May 1:** Thousands packed Havana's Revolution Square for International Workers' Day, drawing hordes of Cuban demonstrators, spectators, and trade unionists from around the world -- including the United States and the United Kingdom. In a carefully choreographed show of force, thousands took to the streets, carrying placards with the faces of Che Guevara, Fidel Castro and Raul Castro, and waving Cuban flags as they sang and sweated beneath the hot Caribbean sun. Cuba had billed this year's march as a rebuke to international criticism from Europe and Washington over human rights issues recently bubbling up in the Communist nation. There was no sign of discontent among the islanders who thronged the plaza, with lead demonstrators carrying a giant banner reading "Unified in Duty." Some marchers sang, others waved cardboard signs declaring "We are the people of Fidel and Raul" or decrying the United States. A few screamed "Long Live Fidel!" until they lost their voices. Wearing a straw hat and white dress shirt, President Raul Castro grinned and waved from a high wooden podium as marchers streamed past. Officials at government schools, offices and factories that employ that vast majority of Cuban workers strongly urge everyone to attend the yearly rallies and organize transportation. The march was over in barely two hours, far less time than it used to take Fidel Castro to get through one of his May Day speeches of years past (*CNN, AP, 1/5/10*).

**Mayo 1:** Colectivos de la Red Protagónica Observatorio Crítico, junto a otros grupos solidarios, marcharon el 1º de Mayo en la Plaza de la Revolución, pese a los fallidos intentos de la burocracia estatal por impedir que semejante cosa sucediera. El grupo, integrado por unas 25 personas, se insertó de manera diáfana con el bloque de los vecinos del Cerro. La rumba que formaron fue acogida con alegría por los que los rodeaban, y así avanzaron junto a la muchedumbre que asistía al desfile. Entre los curiosos estaban sencillos paisanos interesados, y otros cuyas miradas suspicaces y tonos autoritarios rebelaban fácilmente quiénes eran. A varios entregaron unas letras que decían, "la Red Protagónica Observatorio Crítico está conformada por proyectos socioculturales que desde una red de colectivos autogestionarios contribuyen al desarrollo de los contenidos liberadores y populares latentes en la sociedad cubana. Investigadores, críticos, profesores, artistas, promotores culturales, activistas comunitarios, comunicadores, integrantes de movimientos emergentes y activistas de proyectos socioculturales compartimos un espacio de diversidad, diálogo y protagonismo solidario para analizar y articular vivencias, prácticas y saberes liberadores en los actuales escenarios de Cuba y el planeta, así reivindicando alternativas culturales liberadoras frente a alienaciones capitalistas, autoritarias y coloniales". Las consignas del 1º de Mayo eran: "Lucha tu yuca, taíno", "Socialismo es democracia", "Pal latón la burrocacia", "Socialismo de verdad. Paz, amor y libertad", y "@" ([El Observatorio Crítico dijo lo suyo](#); *Nota de Observatorio Crítico, 1/5/10*).

**May 1:** General Secretary of the Cuban Workers' Confederation (CTC), Salvador Valdes Mesa, gave the opening speech at the May Day celebrations in Havana's Jose Marti Revolution Square. Valdes Mesa pointed out that only a few days ago more than eight million people also showed their support of the Cuban revolutionary process going to the polls to elect delegates for municipal governments, which he described as another expression of a true participatory democracy. The workers' leader referred to the difficult times that the world faces today with frequent and devastating natural disasters and the current world crisis that emerged from capitalist policies. In addition to this, he added, Cuba has to face the effects of the US economic

blockade, the consequences of the economic crisis and the problems resulting from the country's own faults. The CTC General Secretary urged all workers to support ongoing measures that aim at improving the Cuban economic model and to regard work as the source of all material and spiritual richness in order to guarantee the social and economic development of the country ([Discurso de Salvador Valdes Mesa; ACN, 1/5/10](#)).

**Mayo 1:** El estado de salud del periodista independiente Guillermo Fariñas ha empeorado en los últimos días debido a una nueva infección bacteriana que ha obligado a los médicos a retirarle la nutrición parenteral, informó la madre del disidente, Alicia Hernández. Los médicos indicaron que la infección se produjo después de retirarle un catéter para cambiarlo por otro nuevo, lo que facilitó la entrada de la bacteria, aún no identificada, en el debilitado organismo del periodista. Fariñas, psicólogo de profesión, inició su ayuno el pasado 24 de febrero, un día después de la muerte del preso político Orlando Zapata Tamayo tras una huelga de hambre de 86 días. El disidente pide al régimen la liberación de 26 presos políticos enfermos ([Europa Press, 1/5/10](#)).

**Mayo 2:** Cuba celebró la segunda ronda de sus elecciones municipales con una participación superior a 80 por ciento, según datos preliminares de la Comisión Electoral Nacional. La nueva cita ante las urnas tuvo lugar en 2,121 circunscripciones -del total de 15,093- en las que hace una semana se produjo un empate entre los candidatos o ninguno de ellos recibió más de 50 por ciento de los votos, según reportó la agencia alemana *DPA*. La presidenta de la Comisión Electoral, Ana María Mari, dijo a la televisión que hubo una "asistencia masiva" y dijo que si en alguna circunscripción se produjo un empate, habrá una tercera ronda ([Europa Press, 2/5/10](#); [Télam, 3/5/10](#)).

**May 2:** Cuba allowed a small group of dissidents to hold a protest march after the country's top Roman Catholic clergyman negotiated with authorities, ending three straight weeks of ugly confrontations. The government's decision was a victory for the Damas de Blanco — or Ladies in White — who had marched peacefully and with little fanfare down Havana's Quinta Avenida boulevard for seven years before the government suddenly forbade the protests on April 11. The group is comprised of the wives and mothers of some 75 dissidents jailed in a 2003 crackdown, as well as supporters who joined them later. This march followed a Mass at Santa Rita de Casia Church presided over by Cardinal Jaime Ortega, who told parishioners, including 13 Damas, that he had intervened with authorities to allow the women to resume their small protests. Ortega said he assured authorities that the Damas would not try to expand their activities, but would return to their normal Sunday routine. "I gave a sort of guarantee that they are going to do what they have always done," and no more, the cardinal told reporters. The government's unusual decision to negotiate, he said, "is a slightly new way of acting. Before, one was answered with silence. Now, we have an answer." Laura Pollan, the Damas' leader, said authorities have agreed to let the women march during the month of May, and will review their decision after that. "For us, it is a little victory," Pollan said after the march. "We feel partially satisfied because we don't have to ask for permission and we are going to continue marching. But we will be most satisfied only when our relatives are freed" ([AP, Diario de Cuba, 2/5/10](#)).

**Mayo 2:** La Iglesia Católica de Cuba pidió al periodista opositor Guillermo Fariñas que "flexibilice" su posición y desista de la huelga de hambre que cumple desde hace 68 días, según declaró el cardenal Jaime Ortega. Afirmó que no han intercedido con el gobierno respecto al

disidente en huelga de hambre. “Depende un poco de él, más de una vez el obispo del lugar lo ha visitado, tres veces, hay sacerdotes que lo visitan, a petición de su madre pidiéndole que deje la huelga de hambre, pero él no la ha dejado”, lamentó Ortega, arzobispo de La Habana, en declaraciones a la prensa. El jerarca católico recordó que no sólo la Iglesia ha hecho varias gestiones “sino también funcionarios de la Embajada de España” y subrayó que la solución del “caso Fariñas” depende de que el opositor “flexibilice su posición”, pues su “conciencia no se le puede violentar”. Fariñas, un sicólogo de 48 años, se declaró en huelga de hambre para exigir la liberación de 26 prisioneros políticos enfermos el pasado 24 de febrero, un día después de la muerte del preso opositor Orlando Zapata, que estuvo 85 días de huelga de hambre por mejores condiciones carcelarias. Ortega dijo que el tema de los presos políticos “siempre es tratado” con el gobierno. “Diría en un lenguaje eclesiástico: por los siglos de los siglos”, apuntó. Tras la muerte de Zapata, los obispos pidieron a las autoridades tomar “las medidas adecuadas para que situaciones como éstas no se repitan” (*El Nuevo Herald, BBC Mundo, 3/5/10*).

**Mayo 3:** Tras vacunar a más de un millón de ciudadanos contra la gripe porcina, Cuba inicia la segunda etapa de vacunación a niños para evitar que la enfermedad se expanda. Unos 150,000 niños entre seis meses y nueve años de edad considerados de “alta vulnerabilidad” recibirán la segunda dosis de la vacuna contra la gripe porcina, informó la agencia cubana de información. La campaña de vacunación contra la influenza AH1N1 inició el 1 de abril y abarcó a 1,2 millones de personas seleccionados por su mayor vulnerabilidad, explicó la agencia de corte estatal. La jefa del Programa de Infecciones Respiratorias del Ministerio de Salud Pública, María Josefa Llanes Cordero, señaló que Cuba se encuentra en una “zona muy activa en la transmisión del virus”. En una entrevista al diario dominical *Juventud Rebelde* informó que hasta la fecha “se han confirmado 1,243 casos” de la gripe atribuida al virus AH1N1. No precisó el número de decesos por tanto el último dato oficial disponible es de 41 muertos por gripe porcina, ofrecido en diciembre. La vacuna fue donada a la isla por la Organización Mundial de la Salud (*AP, 3/5/10*).

**May 3:** Friends and admirers of Cuban renowned tobacco grower Alejandro Robaina, who passed away last April 17, attended a ceremony in his honor at the Presidente Hotel in Havana. According to the president of the smokers club Balcon Bayamanaco and maitre of the Presidente hotel, Jose Luis Calderon, Robaina’s most outstanding virtue was his love for the land. Robaina’s son Carlos Robaina Pacheco told *ACN* that the ceremony was a tribute to all Cuban tobacco growers who have contributed to the prestige of the Habano cigar and have worked hard to contribute to the economy of the country (*ACN, 3/5/10*).

**Mayo 3:** Cuba celebrará a partir del 17 de mayo diversas actividades sobre los derechos de los homosexuales y transgeneros, en apoyo al día mundial contra la homofobia. “Este año tenemos menos recursos pero más fuerzas de instituciones y de personalidades implicadas en el proyecto”, dijo en rueda de prensa la directora del Centro de Educación Sexual (Cenesex), Mariela Castro, hija del presidente Raúl Castro. El Cenesex convocó a una serie de debates y manifestaciones culturales para celebrar por tercer año consecutivo celebra la jornada contra la homofobia en Cuba, país donde prevalece una sociedad machista. “Se han ido juntando varias instituciones, más gente se implica, a medida que van perdiendo el susto y el prejuicio relacionado con la homofobia” expresó Castro. La actividad central se celebrará el 17 de mayo en Santa Clara, a unos 350 kilómetros al este de la capital, ciudad donde se hizo “un trabajo

sostenido en los temas de promoción de salud sexual y de los derechos sexuales”, agregó. En las jornadas de 2009, por primera vez en la isla centenares de gays, lesbianas y activistas salieron a una manifestación callejera en la capital cubana (*AP*, 4/5/10).

**May 4:** A new shakeup has occurred in the Cuban government with the removal of the minister of transportation, Jorge Luis Sierra Cruz, and sugar minister Luis Manuel Avila Gonzalez. An official note says Sierra was guilty of “errors” and Avila of “deficiencies.” Sierra, 48, was also removed as vice president of the Council of Ministers. The note did not say whether he would still sit on the powerful Communist Party Politburo or lose his seat in the country’s parliament. The new Council of Ministers VP is eighty-year-old General Antonio Erique Lusson. Cesar Ignacio Arocha Masid, 51, with a military background and who worked for three years as the head of a Foodstuffs transport company affiliated with the ministry, takes over as the new Transport Minister. Orlando Celso Garcia Ramirez, 53, is the new Sugar Minister, having held the post of vice minister. The official note said that the demoted Sierra and Avila would be assigned other tasks (Official note; *Havana Times*, 4/5/10).

**Mayo 4:** La inédita mediación de la Iglesia Católica cubana que permitió manifestar en La Habana a Las Damas de Blanco, esposas de presos políticos, confirmó el buen momento que pasa en la difícil relación de medio siglo con el gobierno comunista, aunque reclama más apertura y cambios en la isla. “Son gestos que van paulatinamente, pero esperamos que sigan avanzando. En estos momentos hay conversaciones, siempre planteamos las necesidades que tenemos para cumplir nuestra misión, en particular la situación de los presos”, dijo el sacerdote Emilio Aranguren, encargado de la Pastoral Penitenciaria de la Iglesia. Por su parte, Aranguren, obispo de Holguín (este), consideró que las Damas de Blanco “ante la situación de sus familiares tienen esa manera de expresarse (marchas) y es una postura que merece respeto y consideración”. “El comportamiento que tiene la Iglesia con los presos, incluidos los denominados de conciencia, es inherente a su misión. Ante ellos mantenemos atención de sus necesidades y la de sus familias”, agregó. “Ha habido que vencer ciertas resistencias, rezagos de desconfianza (...) Las relaciones (...) se encuentran en un periodo de expresiones y gestos nuevos (...). Ha habido un salto cualitativo, pero falta mucho por andar”, dice la última edición de la revista católica *Palabra Nueva*. Desde esa revista, la Iglesia se ha permitido alzar la voz sobre la situación del país, advirtiendo del “colapso” de la economía y reclamando “cambios” en lugar de ajuste y “recentralización ideológica”. “La Iglesia mantiene las esperanzas en ese diálogo, y algunos gestos recientes de parte de las autoridades del país, potencian esa esperanza”, dijo *Palabra Nueva*. “El Estado cubano no tiene en la Iglesia ni un aliado ni un enemigo”, subrayó (*El Nuevo Herald*, 4/5/10).

**Mayo 4:** Anyer Antonio Blanco Rodríguez, prisionero político confinado en la prisión de Boniato, informó desde ese centro penitenciario, que el día 23 de abril, el preso Elier Fon Ramis, comenzó una huelga de hambre en apoyo a las demandas del opositor Guillermo Fariñas Hernández, quien se abstiene de ingerir alimentos y agua desde el 24 de febrero, exigiendo la liberación de presos de conciencia que se encuentran en mal estado de salud. Fon Ramis pide además la libertad de todos los prisioneros políticos. Elier Fon Ramis, de 41 años de edad, está sancionado por un delito de tráfico de drogas que, según Anyer Antonio Blanco, fue prefabricado por la policía política. Cumple la condena en el destacamento 16 de la cárcel de Boniato, Santiago de Cuba. Padece de varias enfermedades crónicas como artrosis generalizada,

miopía con desprendimiento de retina y epilepsia. Es miembro del Movimiento Cubano de Derechos Humanos “Miguel Valdés Tamayo” (*Cubanet*, 4/5/10).

**Mayo 4:** El cantautor cubano Carlos Varela condenó enérgicamente en Miami los actos de repudio contra las Damas de Blanco en la isla y dijo que el opositor Guillermo Fariñas, en huelga de hambre desde febrero, merece ser escuchado con respeto. “Nunca me han gustado los actos de repudio dentro y fuera de Cuba. Creo que es algo que deberíamos borrar de la memoria de los cubanos”, dijo Varela en una conferencia de prensa en el Aeropuerto Internacional de Miami. Varela también elogió la reciente gestión de la Iglesia Católica para que las Damas de Blanco pudieran marchar por las calles de La Habana sin ser agredidas por turbas organizadas por el gobierno. “Las Damas de Blanco merecen todo el respeto y tienen derecho de luchar por los suyos”, dijo. Al preguntarle si creía que la huelga de hambre que Fariñas lleva a cabo desde el 24 de febrero, así como la muerte también en huelga de hambre de Orlando Zapata Tamayo pudieran suavizar la actitud del gobierno cubano, Varela precisó que “cualquier ser humano que está dispuesto a morir por una causa debe ser escuchado con respeto”. Destacó que admiraba a su colega Pablo Milanés, quien recientemente ha hecho fuertes críticas a las autoridades cubanas, sobre todo después de la muerte de Zapata, un evento que conmovió a la opinión pública mundial. “Estoy totalmente de acuerdo con su pensamiento, con su manera de defender las ideas”, dijo. “Las ideas se combaten, no se tienen que meter en prisión”. Varela destacó que la solución a los problemas de Cuba es un asunto que concierne exclusivamente a los cubanos de dentro y fuera de la isla, y no tanto a la presión internacional. Precisó que no se opondría a una renovación en la cúpula del régimen cubano, cuyos principales líderes son septuagenarios y octogenarios. “Sería ideal un poco de oxígeno, pero no conozco a los políticos jóvenes”, aseguró Varela. Añadió que el ciudadano de a pie de la isla está más preocupado en resolver sus problemas del día a día que en seguir el pulso de la política cubana (*El Nuevo Herald*, 5/5/10).

**Mayo 5:** La Arquidiócesis de La Habana anunció que el pasado viernes 30 de marzo sesionó en esta capital la Comisión Nacional de Justicia y Paz. Durante la cita -que estuvo presidida por monseñor Emilio Aranguren, obispo de Holguín- se hicieron precisiones sobre la celebración de la X Semana Social que auspiciará la Iglesia Católica en Cuba. La misma tendrá por sede a la Arquidiócesis de La Habana, y se realizará del 16 al 20 de junio próximos. La X Semana Social Católica estará estructurada en cuatro paneles, donde se abordarán diversos ámbitos de nuestra realidad nacional. La presencia pública y el quehacer pastoral de la Iglesia Católica en Cuba, la necesidad del diálogo y la reconciliación entre cubanos y los retos de la economía nacional, serán algunos de los tópicos que marquen el encuentro. A ello se sumará una reflexión sobre las complejidades actuales de la sociedad cubana y su incidencia sobre el quehacer pastoral y social de la Iglesia (*Espacio Laical*, 5/5/10).

**Mayo 5:** El activista de derechos humanos Nelson Vázquez, preso en la provincia de Guantánamo, se encuentra en huelga de hambre desde el 5 de abril, y según se conoció por una fuente confiable, como consecuencia del ayuno, el reo tuvo que ser trasladado para la sala de penados del hospital provincial, en la que se encuentra ingresado actualmente. Vázquez inició su huelga de hambre como protesta porque no se le brindaba asistencia médica adecuada para sus múltiples padecimientos, entre ellos problemas digestivos, fuertes dolores abdominales, vómitos y sangramiento anal. También el recluso ha pedido que ser trasladado a Cienfuegos, su provincia natal (*Cubanet*, 5/5/10).

**May 5:** The Council of State of the Republic of Cuba has called for the constitution of the Municipal Assemblies of the People's Power. "The delegates elected in the elections held on 25 April, or the second or third round, form the People's Power municipal assemblies, meeting in their own right, proceed to constitute these assemblies on 19th May for another term of two and a half years (ACN, 5/5/10).

**Mayo 5:** El preso político, Nelson Vázquez Lima, en huelga de hambre, se encuentra en grave estado de salud. La salud de Vázquez Lima se ha ido deteriorando paulatinamente y ha recibido varias golpizas por parte de las autoridades comunistas del penal. Entre las demandas que está planteando el prisionero político, en huelga de hambre desde el cinco de abril, están el poder recibir visitas familiares, asistencia religiosa y que cesen los maltratos por parte de la guarnición (*Cubamet*, 6/5/10).

**Mayo 6:** La policía detuvo al menos a una decena de integrantes de la Alianza Democrática Oriental cuando realizan una reunión de la junta directiva en la Plaza de la Revolución de Santiago de Cuba, informó el periodista independiente Luis Felipe Rojas. Los activistas lograron llegar a la plaza y reunirse por unos minutos, hasta que la policía disolvió el grupo y detuvo al menos a diez personas. La reunión, a la que asistían opositores de varias provincias, acordó apoyar a Reina Luisa Tamayo, madre de Orlando Zapata, y al huelguista Guillermo Fariñas. Los miembros de la Alianza Democrática Oriental que quedaron en libertad, unos 15, según Rojas, caminaron hasta la sede central de la Universidad de Oriente, donde se concentraron para protestar (*Diario de Cuba*, 6/5/10).

**Mayo 6:** Un tribunal cubano para delitos contra la seguridad del estado aplazó la audiencia de apelación de una periodista independiente detenida, enjuiciada y sentenciada en dos días por tener un altercado con su hija. Dania Virgen García, de 41 años, fue detenida el 22 de febrero y sentenciada al día siguiente a 20 meses de prisión por "abuso de autoridad materna" durante una pelea con su hija de 23 años, que vive con ella en La Habana. El hecho de que su apelación estuviera el 6 de mayo en el calendario de un tribunal para delitos contra la seguridad del estado "confirma la sospecha de la connotación política del asunto", dijo el activista de derechos humanos Elizardo Sánchez. Sánchez y unos seis activistas se presentaron en la sala para la audiencia y protestaron al ver que no se había presentado ningún abogado defensor, indicó Sánchez desde La Habana. Los activistas argumentaron ante el presidente del tribunal que la audiencia no sería justa, y poco después las autoridades anunciaron que la sesión se había postergado. No se anunció el día de la nueva audiencia. Sánchez había informado previamente que la familia de García criticaba sus actividades disidentes. También dijo que la hija había declarado que García abusaba de ella y que discutían con frecuencia, algunas veces llegándose a las manos (*El Nuevo Herald*, 6/5/10).

**Mayo 7:** La organización Reporteros Sin Fronteras (RSF) denunció la detención y el encarcelamiento sin juicio previo del periodista cubano Calixto Ramón Martínez Arias, acusado de "desacato" por las autoridades de La Habana. "La represión continúa" en la isla caribeña, según un comunicado difundido por RSF, en el que precisa que Calixto Ramón Martínez fue arrestado "violentamente" el pasado 23 de abril cuando cubría la conmemoración de la muerte del disidente Orlando Zapata Tamayo. Aunque en principio se le acusó de "desacato", precisa la

organización de defensa de la libertad de prensa, ahora le responsabilizan de haber golpeado a un agente de policía en el momento de su detención. El periodista “se encuentra a la espera de que le juzguen por violencia agravada contra un agente de policía ('atentado'), aunque no se han precisado las circunstancias en que se produjo el incidente”. Según RSF, “la vaguedad de la acusación demuestra que las propias autoridades no están seguras de lo que dicen”. El 30 de abril, cuando le trasladaban a la cárcel de Valle Grande en La Lisa, en los alrededores de La Habana, el periodista dijo que esos cargos carecían de base. “Es un invento para interrumpir mi trabajo y ni la policía ni el Ministerio Público se ponen de acuerdo sobre las mentiras por las que quieren condenarme”, denunció (*EFE*, 7/5/10).

**Mayo 8:** El actor cubano Jorge Perugorría dirige en Cuba una película musical protagonizada por la cantante Cucu Diamantes, a propósito de la primera gira que realiza la artista por la isla y que finalizará con un concierto en La Habana. Perugorría, que debutó tras las cámaras en 2009 con el filme *Afinidades*, aún por estrenar, anunció a medios oficiales cubanos que su nueva cinta es “un sueño hecho realidad” y un “homenaje” al cine cubano, aprovechando los conciertos de su compatriota por todo el país. “Primero pensamos hacer un documental, pero después surgió la idea de filmar una historia de ficción paralela al viaje de ellos, donde el protagonismo es la música de Cucu y su viaje por la isla”, indicó el actor, que saltó a la fama con la película cubana *Fresa y chocolate* (1994), de Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. La producción, que se titula *Amor Crónico*, está enmarcada en el género musical y contará una historia diferente ubicada en cada una de las provincias donde ha actuado Cucu Diamantes desde que inició su tour por Cuba el pasado 28 de abril con el espectáculo “Bienvenidos a Cuculand” (*EFE*, 8/5/10).

**May 8:** Cuban blogger Dania Virgen Garcia, who says she is an independent journalist, said that she was released after being sentenced in April to 20 months in prison for a crime related to a family quarrel. The Miami-based Inter-American Press Association reported last week that Garcia had been sentenced irregularly “for a family quarrel” that masked a “criminal or political trick” of the Cuban government against her. Garcia, 41, said that she had been released the day before after spending 15 days in Manto Negro women’s prison in Havana charged with “arbitrary exercise of law,” because of an argument with her 23-year-old daughter. “It was all premeditated and planned by them, because of my work as an independent journalist and blogger,” said Garcia from her home, with reference to the action taken by the Cuban authorities. She also said that she still has not had access to the documents of the case, such as the formal accusation and the prosecutor’s statement about why she was arrested. At the same time she denounced being held incommunicado for three days in a cell and several “arbitrary procedures” in the judicial process. The blogger said that the charge for which she was sentenced has never before been applied on the island, according to what prison officials told her, and said she still has not received a summons for the appeal that should take place in the next few days. The Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation said in Havana that it was investigating the “not so clear” case of Dania Virgen Garcia (*LAHT*, 8/5/10).

**Mayo 8:** Dos representantes de la jerarquía católica visitaron al disidente en huelga de hambre Guillermo Fariñas, en el hospital Arnaldo Milián Castro, de Santa Clara, donde se encuentra ingresado en terapia intensiva. Según Fariñas, sus visitantes fueron monseñor José Félix Pérez Viera, secretario adjunto de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Cuba (COCC), y monseñor Ramón Suárez, canciller del Arzobispado de La Habana, informó *Radio Martí*. “Vinieron para

saber hasta qué límite iba a llevar esta protesta. Les dije que hasta las últimas consecuencias”, declaró Fariñas, quien inició su huelga el pasado 24 de febrero para exigir la liberación de 26 presos políticos enfermos. El disidente está hospitalizado desde el 11 de marzo y recibe alimentación y medicación por sueros. Fariñas dijo que los sacerdotes sugirieron los posibles pasos que puede dar la Iglesia para evitar su muerte y mediar en el conflicto con el gobierno. “Yo les planteé que (...) mi interés era la liberación de los presos políticos, por encima de cualquier otra cosa”, indicó el disidente. Añadió que los sacerdotes mostraron comprensión hacia su petición y dijeron que coincide con el interés de la Iglesia (*Diario de Cuba*, 10/5/10).

**Mayo 9:** Las Damas de Blanco, familiares de presos políticos en Cuba, dijeron que esperan algunas excarcelaciones de sus parientes y presos comunes durante la visita que hará el canciller del Vaticano, Dominique Mamberti, a mediados de junio. “El representante del Vaticano sí puede influir sobre la liberación de muchos hombres, no sólo presos políticos, sino también comunes, como pasó (...) durante la visita del Papa Juan Pablo II” en 1998, señaló a la prensa Berta Soler, una de las líderes de las Damas. Tras marchar este domingo con seis decenas de Damas por la 5ta Avenida, en el oeste de la Habana, Soler indicó que “tenemos esperanza que aunque no salgan todos los 53 hombres (que restan en las cárceles de los 75 condenados en 2003), por lo menos salgan los que están enfermos”. Soler ponderó el “papel importante” que está jugando la Iglesia católica, en referencia a la mediación realizada hace dos semanas por el cardenal Jaime Ortega, que logró que se levantara la prohibición oficial a las Damas de marchar si antes no solicitaban un permiso oficial. La marcha de este domingo, Día de las Madres, fue encabezada por Reina Luisa Tamayo, madre de Orlando Zapata, el preso de 42 años que murió el 23 de febrero pasado tras 85 días de huelga de hambre por mejoras carcelarias. La mitad de las 60 mujeres que marcharon son Damas de Apoyo, mujeres que sin familiares presos se solidarizan con las otras. En las negociaciones con el Cardenal las autoridades solicitaron que se “limitaran” a marchar sólo las familiares, dijo otra de sus líderes, Laura Pollán. Pero “las Damas de Blanco no le diremos jamás a una mujer de apoyo que no venga”, indicó Pollán y aseguró que si las autoridades no lo desean “que las repriman” (*El Nuevo Herald*, 10/5/10).

**May 10:** The founding director of the Cuban National Ballet, prima ballerina assoluta Alicia Alonso, has been nominated to the Prince of Asturias Awards in Arts, one of the most prestigious awards in Ibero-America. The website Cubadebate notes that Alonso has received doctorates from the University of Havana, the Cuban Higher Institute of Arts and the Poly-Technical University of Valencia in Spain. She is also a Member of Honor of the Spanish Association of Stage Directors and she has received other awards such as the Royal Order of Isabel the Catholic, awarded by Spanish King Juan Carlos I; the Gold Medal of the Fine Arts Circle of Madrid; the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Order of Arts and Letters) of France; and UNESCO's Pablo Picasso Medal, among others. The Prince of Asturias Awards is a series of annual prizes given in Spain by the Prince of Asturias Foundation to individuals, entities and/or organizations from around the world who make notable achievements in the sciences, humanities, or public affairs (*ACN*, 10/5/10).

**Mayo 10:** Las autoridades informaron que se han registrado en la isla 69 muertes por gripe A desde el inicio de la epidemia. Además, se ha vacunado a más de un millón de personas para evitar que la enfermedad se expanda. El semanario oficial *Trabajadores* reportó 1,243 casos confirmados. Las autoridades lanzaron el 1 de abril una campaña de vacunación contra la

influenza AH1N1, que abarcó a 1,2 millones de personas seleccionadas por su mayor vulnerabilidad. La vacuna fue donada por la Organización Mundial de la Salud y fue suministrada de forma gratuita (*Diario de Cuba*, 10/5/10).

**May 10:** Cuba will upgrade its equipment in order to detect earthquakes more quickly with technology donated by China, which also sent specialists to take charge of the installation, official labor weekly *Trabajadores* said. The director of the National Seismological Research Center, Bladimir Moreno Toiran, said that the renovation of detection and monitoring services will guarantee the transmission of signals “in real time.” The Chinese equipment, which is already on the island, includes high-sensitivity seismometers, accelerometers, radio plants for voice communications and portable stations for seismic engineering studies. The installation of this equipment comes at a time when the island’s civil defense system has adopted measures to strengthen response capability at the onset of powerful earthquakes and tsunamis, in a year that has seen devastating temblors in Haiti and Chile. Moreno said that in Cuba the most dangerous seismic zone is in the southeast, owing to its proximity to the divide between the tectonic plates of North America and the Caribbean (*EFE*, 10/5/10).

**May 11:** Cuban national experts insist on the need to strengthen personal and collective hygienic measures as the most effective tool against the the A H1N1 influenza pandemic. During a meeting with reporters in Havana, specialists with the Cuban Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP) said that over the last six weeks there has been an increase in the number of patients suffering from respiratory diseases, particularly the A H1N1 influenza virus, introduced in the island on April 24, 2009. The national director of Epidemiology, Dr. Manuel Santin, warned that the pandemic is not over and he criticized the lack of risk perception among the people, particularly among the most vulnerable groups (*ACN*, 11/5/10).

**May 11:** Cuba launched a program of scientific and cultural activities to join the international campaign against homophobia. The activities call on Cuban citizens to be more tolerant, as male chauvinism and prejudice against homosexuality and transsexuals are rampant in Cuban society. Mariela Castro Espin, director of the National Center for Sex Education (CENESEX), said the main objective of this program is to call for reflection and dialogue to eliminate discriminatory statements against people because of their sexual orientation. The scientific and cultural activities will be held from May 11 to 18 under the auspices of CENESEX. The main activity will be held on May 17, the International Day Against Homophobia, in the city of Santa Clara, about 270 km east of Havana. The activities, to be attended by a panel on sexual diversity with university students, will include educational campaigns such as “HIV and homophobia” and “Homosexuality is not a threat, homophobia is.” This is the third consecutive year that Cuba is observing the International Day Against Homophobia. This date was chosen because on May 17, 1990, the World Health Organization removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders (*Xinhua*, 11/5/10).

**Mayo 11:** La Comisión Cubana de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional (CCDHRN) denunció la detención “arbitraria”, durante el pasado mes de abril, de un total de 162 opositores al gobierno de Raúl Castro e identificó como las principales víctimas de la represión a las Damas de Blanco, que reclaman la liberación de los presos políticos, informó *Europa Press*. En su informe correspondiente al mes pasado, la CCDHRN informó de 47 “actos de represión política

que dieron lugar a la detención arbitraria de al menos 162 opositores”. El dato eleva el número de arrestos registrados en marzo (83), aunque rebaja las cifras de febrero (235) y enero (117). La organización recoge las cuatro excarcelaciones registradas durante abril y detalla cada uno de los actos de represión o abusos de derechos humanos, entre los que distingue entre detenciones de corta duración —la mayoría— y actos de repudio. En la lista destaca la presión ejercida en las últimas semanas sobre las Damas de Blanco, cuyas marchas dominicales sufrieron la persecución ejercida por las fuerzas de seguridad y por simpatizantes del castrismo. Además, la CCDHRN también menciona medidas represivas contra marchas de homenaje al preso disidente fallecido Orlando Zapata Tamayo e incluye, entre otras víctimas de estas actividades, a la propia madre del opositor, Reina Luisa Tamayo. En relación con los “incidentes en prisiones”, la CCDHRN recoge 13 casos, como el del médico Darsi Ferrer, que abandonó en abril una huelga de hambre después de que las autoridades le prometiesen que será sometido a juicio y que se le proporcionará el tratamiento médico que necesita. El informe cita además las muertes de Pedro Márquez Bell, fallecido de un infarto masivo tras no recibir “el tratamiento médico adecuado”, el de Lorenzo Pérez Hernández, quien pidió durante horas una asistencia médica que no se le concedió, o el de Alexander Carreras, víctima de un derrame cerebral que le causó la muerte (AP, 11/5/10).

**Mayo 12:** Tras más de setenta días de huelga de hambre y de sed, el mundo entero vive la agonía del opositor cubano Guillermo Fariñas como propia. Desde una cama del hospital provincial de Santa Clara, en el centro de la isla, Fariñas atendió preguntas vía telefónica, luego de una semana con fiebres altas, además de una gran debilidad que se ha ido acrecentado con los días. Su diagnóstico es de gravedad. Clara Pérez Gómez, esposa de Fariñas, informó que el periodista independiente padece también de dolencias en todo el cuerpo, desde que inició su ayuno el pasado 24 de febrero para condenar la muerte del preso de conciencia Orlando Zapata Tamayo y exigir la liberación de 26 prisioneros políticos que se encuentran enfermos en las cárceles cubanas. “Es importante que el mundo comprenda el nivel de crueldad y la falta de humanismo de los hermanos Castro. Si mi huelga ha servido para poner en evidencia, una vez más, la esencia fascista y asesina del castrismo, entonces ha valido la pena”, dijo Fariñas. “Es importante que Dios se apiade de Cuba y que la transición se realice sin demora y sin derramamiento de sangre. Si muero mañana, mi último deseo seguirá siendo que los cubanos consigan el perdón y la reconciliación de todos para pasar de una vez esta página negra de nuestra historia”, dijo (Entrevista a Fariñas; *Diario de Cuba*, 12/5/10).

**May 13:** A dissident group calling itself the Orlando Zapata Tamayo Committee announced a campaign to collect signatures to ask Cuba's National Assembly to free the island's political prisoners. The group, created after the death of dissident prisoner Orlando Zapata Tamayo after an 85-day hunger strike, is appealing to the solidarity of Cubans to defend human rights on the communist-ruled island. In addition, the group is expressing the urgency of “defending respect for the right to life of those valiant countrymen who believe that the hunger strike is the most efficacious resource to pressure the authorities regarding the dramatic and systematic violation of our rights.” Manuel Cuesta Morua, one of the leaders of the initiative, told *Efe* that the effort intends to “initiate the collection of signatures to deliver them” to parliament. The campaign is aimed at securing an amnesty for political prisoners and the ratification of various UN rights conventions signed by the Cuban government in 2008. In addition, it asks for the reform of

articles in the Penal Code such as the so-called crime of “pre-criminal dangerousness,” a charge often used against government opponents (*AP*, 14/5/10).

**May 13:** Given Cuba's problems in food production and distribution, the government is ascribing much importance to the national congress of farmers. The meeting “will be the perfect stage to design strategies about the variety of problems” already debated in regional farmers' forums, the daily *Granma* said. Those problems “demand structural changes in – and the resizing of – the managerial system, the creation of new entities and the dissolution of others.” “The ministries of Agriculture and Sugar are already working on the critical observations, proposals and suggestions made by the farmers.” More than 1,000 delegates will attend the Congress, “but none will bring demands or justifications, only the willingness to produce more with the available resources,” *Granma* said. “Everyone knows that, along with the problems of organization and structure, there are others of an objective nature, given the financial situation affecting the purchase of fertilizers, pesticides and other supplies at higher prices in the international market,” the article said. Organic farming is a solution, according to Orlando Lugo Fonte, president of the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP). “In this world, he stressed, there are infinite reserves to feed the land and the crops, and make them less dependent on chemical products.” Farm production is “the Number One patriotic duty” of farmers, the article concluded. “As Army General Raúl Castro stated, it is an issue of national security” (*The Miami Herald*, 13/5/10).

**May 14:** Finding ways to increase productivity, replace imports and speed up the commercialization process of agricultural products will be some of the main topics to be discussed during the Tenth Congress of the Cuban Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) that began in Havana. The program of the event began with working meetings among the 860 delegates attending the congress. On May 15, they will also hold discussions in working commissions and finally, next day, they will meet in a plenary session. Participants will analyze ways to introduce new mechanisms leading to an increase in the production of, for instance, pork, milk, rice and other crops, and the efficient use of human, technical and material resources. Raúl Castro and top aides attended the first session of the Congress in a gesture that emphasized the importance of the gathering. Marino Murillo, minister of the Economy and Planning, and Ulises Rosales del Toro, minister of Agriculture, “summarized the situation involving the economy and the development of agriculture, and exchanged opinions with some of the participants,” the daily *Granma* said (*ACN*, 14/5/10; *The Miami Herald*, 15/5/10).

**May 14:** Over 1,240 poets from 41 countries, including 80 Cubans, will participate in the 18th International Poetry Festival scheduled for Havana from May 24 to the 30. Speaking to national and foreign reporters at the ALBA Cultural House in the Cuban capital, poet Nancy Morejon said that the week-long event will be dedicated to the bicentennial of the beginning of the independence struggles in Latin America the centennial of the births of Cuban writer Jose Lezama Lima and Spanish poet Miguel Hernandez. A highlight will be a concert dedicated to the bicentennial of the Latin American struggle for independence at the local Lazaro Pena Theater, the same place where Spanish poet Rafael Alberti and late Cuban National Poet Nicolas Guillen chaired a meeting supporting the nascent Cuban Revolution 50 years ago (*ACN*, 14/5/10).

**May 14:** A Cuban appeals court wiped out a 20-month jail sentence against a blogger with ties to the Ladies in White dissident group who had been convicted of mistreating her grown daughter, ordering the woman to pay a fine of about \$14 dollars instead. Dania Garcia had already been released from the high-security Manto Negro jail, on the southwestern outskirts of Havana, where she had been ordered to serve her sentence. A judge ruled at the time that she could await the verdict from home, a strong sign the sentence would be thrown out. The appeals court voided the prison sentence altogether but ordered Garcia to pay the 300 pesos (\$14) fine — about 70 percent of the average monthly wage in Cuba — according to Elizardo Sanchez, a human rights activist who was monitoring the trial. Garcia, 41, was convicted April 23 of “abuse of authority” for throwing her 23-year-old daughter out of the house. She had been arrested two days earlier. Human rights groups charged that the case was politically motivated. Garcia is a vocal supporter of the Ladies in White, made up of the wives and mothers of 75 dissidents who were arrested and sentenced to lengthy prison terms in 2003. Garcia also writes for dissident and opposition websites including *Primavera Digital* and *CubaNet*, and runs a blog, [daniavirgengarcia.blogspot.com](http://daniavirgengarcia.blogspot.com), which Reporters Without Borders said is “linked to a radical anti-Castro group based in Miami.” The site is blocked in Cuba. Sanchez, who is head of the independent, Havana-based Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation, called the case against Garcia the result of “political manipulation of her relatives by the government” (*AP, Diario de Cuba*, 14/5/10).

**Mayo 14:** Un sismo de 4,1 grados de magnitud en la escala de Richter fue perceptible en tres localidades de la región occidental de Cuba, sin que se hayan reportado daños humanos ni materiales, según informó la televisión estatal. El sismo se registró a las 13.30 hora local (17.30 GMT) y se sintió en las localidades de Artemisa, Guanajay y Candelaria, a unos 60 kilómetros de La Habana, según el informe de los servicios sismológicos de la isla citado por la fuente. A este temblor de tierra, cuya profundidad ha sido de 5 kilómetros, siguieron dos réplicas de 3 y 2,8 grados Richter, indicó el reporte. A principios de esta semana, medios oficiales informaron que el sistema sismológico de la isla modernizará su equipamiento para detectar estos fenómenos con más rapidez mediante tecnología donada por China, que enviará también a especialistas para su instalación. Esa decisión se produce en momentos en que el sistema de defensa civil de la isla ha adoptado medidas para reforzar su capacidad de respuesta ante sismos de gran intensidad o maremotos, en un año en el que se han registrado devastadores terremotos en países como Haití y Chile (*EFE*, 14/5/10).

**Mayo 15:** Dio inicio la V Olimpiada Nacional del Deporte en Cuba con duración hasta el 29 de mayo, considerado el evento deportivo más importante para el país, luego de la renuncia a participar en los Juegos Centroamericanos y del Caribe. A pesar de que los deportistas cubanos se encontraban ampliamente preparados para ganar en el certamen caribeño, no podrán hacerlo por lo que su participación en el evento nacional es muy importante y está integrado por los mejores del país, entre los que se incluyen 49 medallistas olímpicos y mundiales. Además contarán con la participación de 41 locales clasificados para los Juegos Olímpicos de la Juventud que se realizarán del 14 al 28 de agosto en Singapur, a excepción de los atletas e integrantes del equipo de voleibol varonil, que tienen eventos internacionales programados. Para la justa deportiva cubana están inscritos dos mil 400 deportistas con edad promedio de 22 años. Mientras que en total se contabilizan 3,300 deportistas de 21 países para participar en 30 deportes (*Notimex*, 15/5/10).

**Mayo 14:** La bloguera Yoani Sánchez publicó en su blog, *Generación Y*, evidencias de los abusos sufridos por ella y su hermana Yunia, durante una “detención arbitraria” el pasado 24 de febrero, cuando ambas se dirigían a firmar un libro de condolencias tras la muerte en huelga de hambre del preso político Orlando Zapata Tamayo. “Hace más de 60 días envié a varias instituciones cubanas una denuncia por detención ilegal, violencia policial y encarcelación arbitraria”, dice Sánchez en un post que acompaña a la grabación de la detención, hecha con su teléfono celular. La bloguera recuerda que tras la muerte de Zapata, el 23 de febrero, decenas de disidentes fueron arrestados para impedir que participaran en las actividades relacionadas con su funeral. “Estuve entre los muchos que terminaron en un calabozo”, dice. “El grado de violencia empleado contra mí y la contravención de los procedimientos para recluir a un individuo en una estación de Policía, me hicieron interponer una demanda con pocas esperanzas de que fuera ventilada en un tribunal”, añade. “Durante todo este tiempo he esperado la respuesta tanto de la Fiscalía Militar como de la Fiscalía General, haciendo un esfuerzo por no sacar a la luz este testimonio revelador, evidencia dolorosa de cuán vulnerados son nuestros derechos”, dice. “Afortunadamente, mi teléfono móvil registró el audio de lo ocurrido aquel miércoles gris, e incluso después de ser confiscado grabó las conversaciones que tenían los agentes de la Seguridad del Estado y los policías —sin placas— que nos habían encerrado a la fuerza en la estación de Infanta y Manglar”, explica la bloguera, que también publica una transcripción de las conversaciones ([Mi última pizca de fe](#); *Diario de Cuba*, 15/5/10).

**May 15:** Cuba called on its population to contribute in an effective way to the reduction of health costs by buying only those medications prescribed by doctors. President of the Health and Sports Commission of the National Parliament Jorge González Pérez told ACN that they carried out studies that proved that as average in every Cuban household people keep seven different medicines they never use. “Sometimes people buy drugs only to stockpile, and that causes instability in the market” said Gonzalez Perez. “Using medications is not important but to look after your health to avoid using them.” He added that the unnecessary use of medication translates into considerable expenditure by the government since it needs to import them or the raw materials to produce them. Whatever we don’t have to buy abroad will benefit Cuba since those monies can be used to buy food, means of transportations among other things, said Gonzalez Perez (*ACN*, 15/5/10).

**May 15:** Representatives of Cuban farmers and the Ministry of Agriculture debated on the actual problems Cuba is facing in this sphere, where the lack of communication, added to objective adversities, prevent them from achieving their social purpose: to supply enough food to the population. Cuban Agriculture Minister Ulises Rosales del Toro called on farmers to diversify their productions as well as increasing them, and to work on commercialization. He urged producers from outside Havana to help on supplying larger amounts of food to the city, which lacks the land to be self-sufficient. Several participants at the X Nacional Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) Congress, underway in Havana, spoke of lost harvest due to the inefficiency of the commercialization system implemented by the Ag Ministry, and the lack of containers to pack their produces. ANAP President Orlando Lugo Fonte stressed on the need to eliminate bureaucracy at all levels which cripples the possibilities of producing and supplying food to the people. Farmers tackled the gaps between them and the Agriculture officials which translate in lack of control and support from the enterprises belonging to this Ministry. They also requested

the implementation of a practical and comprehensive system that tends to their problems, to provide them with specialized training and better prices (ACN, 15/5/10).

**May 15:** Hundreds of gay and lesbian activists, some dressed in drag and others sporting multicolored flags representing sexual diversity, marched and danced through the streets of Havana along with the daughter of Cuban President Raul Castro as part of a celebration aimed at eliminating homophobia around the world. Some of the marchers played drums and others walked on stilts as they made their way down a wide avenue in the capital's hip Vedado neighborhood, where they have held a series of debates and workshops ahead of the May 17 celebration of the International Day Against Homophobia, which participants say marks the day in 1990 when the World Health Organization stopped listing homosexuality as a mental illness. "We have made progress, but we need to make more progress," said Mariela Castro, a campaigner for gay rights on the island and the leader of Cuba's National Sexual Education Center (CENESEX). Cuba has come a long way in accepting homosexuality. In the 1960s, shortly after the revolution, homosexuals were fired from state jobs and many were imprisoned or sent to work camps (AP, 15/5/10).

**Mayo 15:** La sexóloga cubana Mariela Castro, hija del presidente Raúl Castro, calificó de "difícil" la lucha por los derechos de los homosexuales que ella lidera en su país, en unas declaraciones realizadas antes de encabezar una Marcha de Orgullo Gay por una céntrica avenida de La Habana. "Ya estamos celebrando la tercera jornada cubana por el Día Internacional contra la Homofobia en muchas ciudades de este país y como hemos comprobado esta lucha es difícil", dijo Mariela Castro al inaugurar un taller sobre el tema. "Debemos reconocer que hemos avanzado, pero no todo lo que deseamos, y por tanto seguimos poniendo nuevos retos a la sociedad", añadió la sexóloga, tras subrayar que en la "lucha por la inclusión" de los homosexuales conviven "los pensamientos más avanzados y dialécticos, y también los más dogmáticos y retrógrados". En el taller sobre Familia y Sociedad participaron unos 500 gays, lesbianas, travestis y transexuales, que luego marcharon a ritmo de conga (danza popular de origen africano) y con banderas gay y de Cuba durante unos 200 metros de la céntrica avenida 23. El doctor Alberto Roque, cercano colaborador de Mariela Castro, destacó que "sigue en espera", entre otros reclamos, la modificación del Código de Familia, que examina el Parlamento desde 2005 a instancias del CENESEX, y que permitiría "el reconocimiento legal a las parejas del mismo sexo" y su "legítimo derecho de adopción." La homosexualidad sigue considerándose en Cuba "un estado burgués contrario a la moral socialista", dijo Roque. "El asedio por parte de agentes del orden continúa", añadió Roque, quien propuso la elaboración de un plan de formación de un grupo de policías que ponga fin a estas conductas (AFP, ANSA, 16/5/10).

**Mayo 16:** Efectivos de la Seguridad del Estado han visitado a varias Damas de Blanco para decirles que mientras no aparten de sus actividades a las de apoyo no habrá liberaciones de presos políticos. "Nos plantean que hasta que no le digamos a esas mujeres que cesen su apoyo no habrá liberaciones", dijo una de las portavoces de las Damas de Blanco, Laura Pollán, en declaraciones a la emisora *Radio Martí*. Las Damas de Apoyo son un grupo de mujeres que se han unido a las madres, esposas y familiares de presos políticos y las acompañan en sus actividades y marchas para pedir la libertad de sus allegados. "Nosotras nos hemos mantenido en la posición de que esas mujeres son solidarias, a ellas nadie las obliga, por lo tanto es un derecho

que ellas tienen y nosotros no les vamos a limitar sus derechos”, dijo Pollán (*Diario de Cuba*, 16/5/10).

**May 16:** It's almost midnight at a roadside bar on the outskirts of Havana and young Cubans gather to listen to hip hop. A man with dreadlocks steps up, microphone in hand, to the roar of approval from a crowd of 150 fans. “I'm not going to turn my back on reality, even if they censor and repress me,” he chants to a driving beat, as the eager audience, which knows every word, sings along. “Days go by and I'm still locked up, censored. They look at me like a renowned dissident, rejected by the media.” The two-man Cuban rap group “Los Aldeanos” can sell songs on iTunes to followers abroad, but in Cuba they remain an underground band that has been playing mostly unadvertised gigs at unauthorized venues for seven years. They rap about prostitution, police harassment, social inequality and corruption, delicate issues rarely raised by Cuban musicians in the socialist state born of Fidel Castro's 1959 revolution. Cuba's communist authorities say their anti-establishment songs are too critical and cannot be played on Cuban radio stations, that are all state-run, or sold in the shops. The band has no access to Cuba's record labels either. Their 20 albums were recorded in a friend's makeshift studio a long bus ride and a two-mile walk from downtown Havana. “Los Aldeanos” was formed in 2003 by Aldo Rodríguez and elementary school teacher Bian Rodríguez. The rappers have become the abrasive voice of a disaffected generation of politically numbed Cubans who grew up during Cuba's post-Soviet economic crisis of the 1990s (*ACN*, 16/5/10).

**Mayo 17:** Lilvio Fernández Luís, presidente de la organización juvenil opositora Juventud Activa Cuba Unida (JACU), el cual fue detenido luego de que agentes de la policía practicaran un registro en su vivienda el pasado 14 de mayo, fue puesto en libertad al amanecer del 15, después de casi 24 horas. Fernández Luís fue llevado por agentes de la policía política a Villa Maristas, sede de la Seguridad del Estado en La Habana. Allí fue interrogado en dos ocasiones por el Coronel Águila, el cual le manifestó que el objetivo la Seguridad era destruir a JACU. Según Fernández Luis, el Coronel Águila le dijo: “Tenemos un expediente documentado que se encuentra en Fiscalía, si persistes en unificar a la juventud opositora, te aplicaremos la Ley 88” (conocida como Ley Mordaza). Lilvio Fernández Luís comentó vía telefónica que tiene una orden de restricción de movimiento la cual no firmó, le prohíben salir de Ciudad de La Habana y medir sus pasos fuera de Arroyo Naranjo. “Esto ha sido una ola represiva sobre miembros de JACU, varios dirigentes en la ciudad y en provincias fueron citados ese mismo día, para estaciones policiales. Quieren desintegrar a JACU y eso será imposible, si yo voy preso, la organización seguirá adelante con su empeño de brindar conocimientos y preparar a la juventud para la lucha pacífica”- concluyó el dirigente juvenil (*Cubanet*, 17/5/10).

**May 17:** Informatics and Communications Vice-Minister Jorge Luis Perdomo spoke of the improvements Cuba is undertaking on its technological infrastructure and the mass training of the population from early ages. At the Cuban celebration of the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day in Havana, Perdomo described the modest results Cuba has on this field as “examples of the huge efforts to make to computerize society.” He said Cuba consolidated these results despite the US economic, commercial and financial blockade. Perdomo said there are two ways to use ITs: the one that promotes development and boosts economic growth, and the one excluding the poor, multiplies the misery of millions of people and contributes to the elitism on knowledge. He spoke of the social character of the Cuban project, away from

consumerism, that aims at training a new kind of professionals, not under the patterns of neoliberalism. Perdomo said there are over 700,000 computers in Cuba (one every 15 people) and some one and a half million Internet users. He added that the enemies of the Cuban Revolution are using ITs as part of their media war against Cuba (*ACN*, 17/5/10).

**May 18:** The performers with El Mejunje, a cultural center in Santa Clara that has become a haven for Cuba's transvestites, took their show out onto the streets for the first time before hundreds of people who gathered to celebrate the International Day Against Homophobia. For the first time in its 26 years, El Mejunje managed to get the authorities to close one of the main streets in the central city of Santa Clara so the center could set up a stage displaying the Cuban flag and the rainbow banner of the gay movement, and bring together transvestites, musicians and dancers to celebrate sexual diversity on the island. Performing during the evening were veterans Roxy Rojo and Mimi, and about 10 other young stars, including Omega, Brenda, Shalimar and Zulema, who sang to an audience that included government and other officials, activists and local residents, many of whom had climbed up on balconies and nearby roofs to better view the show. The 47-year-old daughter of President Raul Castro inaugurated the evening from the stage with a call to "change all that" which people have not "known how to change." As the head of CENESEX, Castro in recent years has led an insistent campaign to raise awareness in political circles and among public opinion about the importance of respect for sexual diversity and, since 2007, she has promoted the celebration on the communist island of the International Day Against Homophobia. CENESEX has managed to push for sex change operations and has introduced into Parliament a bill that would modify the Family Code to allow same-sex marriage (*EFE, LAHT*, 18/5/10).

**May 18:** Improving the people's readiness and carrying out actions to face the consequences of technological or natural disasters will be the main goals of the Meteoro 2010 civil defense drill scheduled for May and June in Cuba. The General Staff of the Civil Defense announced that the exercise —carried out in Cuba since 1986— will take place in two stages: on May 21, 22 and 23 and on June 25 and 26 (*ACN*, 18/5/10).

**May 18:** The 169 Municipal Assemblies of the People's Power were constituted throughout the island, according to the work schedule of the National Electoral Commission (CEN) for the current period of partial elections. The Municipal Candidacy Commissions, constituted on March 28, have worked in the selection of the best candidates to occupy the posts of presidents and vice-presidents of these municipal governmental organs, which will be chosen during a meeting, according to information provided by Ana Maria Mari, president of the CEN. These commissions are made up by representatives of the mass organizations from the nation's 169 municipalities, and each of them is headed by a representative from the Confederation of Cuban Workers. The amount of delegates adds up to 15,093, elected in the same number of constituencies during the three rounds of elections carried out on April 25 and May 2 and 5 (*ACN*, 18/5/10).

**May 18:** A group of dissidents presented in Havana the Nuevo Pais (New Country) project, which proposes the "national refounding" of Cuba based on what they call "the new political feeling" that exists on the communist-ruled island. The leader of the social-democratic Arco Progresista group, Manuel Cuesta Morua, told the foreign press that this is a "citizens' platform"

with no ties to political groups that will seek signatures on a “New Country Charter” for its subsequent presentation to the Cuban parliament. The charter lists seven basic principles, including those that name citizens as “the main source of the nation's sovereignty” and those to whom “the chief responsibility for determining the nation's destiny belongs.” The declaration also includes the defense of individual rights, pluralism, the diversity of culture and identity, a market economy, policies of fair distribution and a social safety net. Cuesta said that the project also incorporates three economic elements: a “green reform” that gives ownership of the land to those who want to till the soil, liberalization of the market and the provision that land can be inherited. He said that the New Country project will also ask the National Assembly to ratify the UN agreements and pacts on civil, political, social and cultural rights that were signed by the government in February 2008 but have yet to be published in Cuba. “We're going to collect signatures to present them to the National Assembly to show citizens' wish to take part in reformulating a nation that is now at a stage of exhaustion,” Cuesta said (*EFE*, 18/5/10).

**Mayo 18:** El ex presidente de Cuba, Fidel Castro, calificó a José Martí como “uno de los más extraordinarios pensadores que han nacido en este hemisferio”, en una nota conmemorativa del 115 aniversario de la muerte de ese héroe nacional. El texto, publicado en el sitio digital oficial *Cubadebate*, con el título “La trascendencia histórica de la muerte de Martí”, es un repaso histórico en el que Castro abordó la obra y figura del filósofo alemán Carlos Marx y del líder de la revolución soviética en Rusia, Vladimir Lenin. Castro, quien en agosto próximo cumplirá 84 años y no se le ve en público desde julio de 2006, también se refirió a las figuras del cubano Antonio Maceo y del dominicano Máximo Gómez, héroes de las guerras de independencia de la nación caribeña ([La trascendencia histórica de la muerte de Martí](#); *Notimex*, 18/5/10).

**May 19:** Cuban Deputy Health Minister Luis Estruch described an ongoing nationwide vaccination campaign against the A H1N1 influenza virus whose second and final phase is about to conclude. Estruch told reporters that the vaccine, donated by the World Health Organization (WHO), has been administered to 1,265,807 people included in highly vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and those within the term of up to 42 days after labor (*ACN*, 19/5/10).

**May 19:** Over 10,000 patients from over a dozen countries, including Cuba, have been benefited from Heberprot-P, a medicament developed on the island and world leader for the treatment of diabetic foot ulcers. In an exclusive interview with *ACN*, Doctor Hector Alvarez, director of the Institute of Angiology and Vascular Surgery, highlighted that this drug favors the closing of lesions and a decrease in the number of amputations in most cases. Venezuela, Argentina, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Serbia, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria are among the countries using Heberprot-P, developed at Havana's Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, he underlined. Doctor Alvarez announced that a national program will soon begin in Algeria, for which a group of Cuban experts will travel to that country. Some 3,000 of the 10,000 patients benefited from this medicine are Cubans, stressed Alvarez, who is also the vice-president of the organizing committee of the 9th Caribbean Congress on Angiology and Vascular Surgery, Angiocaribe 2010, underway at Havana's Convention Center (*ACN*, 19/5/10).

**May 19:** Thousands of people, especially youngsters and children, participated in the main ceremony to pay tribute to Cuba's National Hero Jose Marti, who died in combat 115 years ago in Dos Rios, municipality of Jiguani, in Granma province. The Dos Rios ceremony began in

front of the obelisk that marks the place where the national hero, with the rank of Major General, was gunned down on May 19, 1895, while fighting against the Spanish colonialist troops. Participating in the tribute to the brilliant politician, thinker, poet, journalist, essayist, translator and orator were mainly students from all educational levels, and also workers, farmers and combatants from various generations, according to information provided by the organizers. The Cuban committee of Martí institutions will carry out, until May 28, a cycle of conferences, exhibitions, round tables and book launchings, among other activities, to recall the author of the *Golden Age* throughout the island (ACN, 19/5/10).

**May 19:** Raul Castro met with Cardinal Jaime Ortega y Alamino, Archbishop of Havana, and Msgr. Dionisio García Ibáñez, Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba and president of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Cuba. The Cuban media reported only that “diverse topics of common interest were analyzed during the meeting, particularly the favorable development of relations between the Catholic Church and the Cuban state, as well as the present national and international situation. “Participating in the meeting was comrade Caridad Diego Bello, chief of the Office of Religious Affairs of the Central Committee of the [Communist] Party,” *Granma* said (*The Miami Herald*, 19/5/10).

**Mayo 19:** Cuba canceló su serie de béisbol de élite prevista para junio y agosto por dificultades económicas y su coincidencia con la celebración del Mundial de fútbol de Sudáfrica-2010, informó la Federación local de ese deporte. La suspensión de la Serie Nacional Selectiva fue anunciada por el director nacional de béisbol, Higinio Vélez, en una reunión con la prensa local que cubre el béisbol y en la cual participó el vicepresidente del Instituto Cubano de Deportes (INDER), Angel Iglesias. La decisión responde al “alto costo que supondría la realización del torneo para la economía nacional”, aseguró la agencia de noticias oficial *AIN*, la cual citó a Vélez. También se debe a que el torneo coincidiría con el Mundial de Sudáfrica, del 11 de junio al 11 de julio, y con “importantes campeonatos de béisbol”, como el torneo de Haarlem (Holanda), del 8 al 18 de junio, y el Mundial Universitario de Japón, del 30 de julio al 9 de agosto, añadió la *AIN*. Comentaristas deportivos de radioemisoras lamentaron que este año Cuba no tendrá un torneo que “tanto necesita” para continuar la preparación y elevar el rendimiento de sus peloteros (*AFP, El Nuevo Herald*, 20/5/10).

**Mayo 20:** Reuniones con el personal de atención a la salud pública se están realizando en las policlínicas de Ciudad de La Habana, para informarles de reajustes de puestos de trabajo, desaparición de plazas y el énfasis que deben poner de nuevo en la medicina verde. Galenos que prefirieron no dar a conocer su identidad, dijeron que en esas asambleas, dirigidas regularmente por los directores de los centros, se ha dado a conocer que la plaza de reciente creación de auxiliares de enfermería desaparecería a partir de junio, y ese personal sería reubicado, en algunos casos, como auxiliar de limpieza o custodios. Mientras, en algunas actividades técnicas, sus titulares tendrán que realizar más de una función. “Una especie de multioficio”, afirmaron. A su vez, a los médicos les fue informado que debido a la complicada situación económica y financiera por la que atraviesa el país, habrá escasez de medicamentos y que deberán prescribir medicina verde en todos los casos que sea posible (*Cubanet*, 20/5/10).

**May 20:** The representative of the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Havana, Ana Maria Navarro, congratulated Cuban researcher Humberto Rios Labrada who became the

first Cuban to receive the Goldman Environmental Prize, sometimes called the Green Nobel and the largest prize in the world given to grass-roots environmentalists. Humberto Rios Labrada is an expert on biodiversity research with the Cuban National Institute of Agricultural Sciences and he has been working with nearly 50,000 Cuban farmers. His campaign involves choosing the crops and seed varieties best for their lands and educating farmers on how to grow strong healthy crops with less dependence on farm chemicals (*ACN*, 20/5/10).

**May 20:** Commander of the Revolution Ramiro Valdes, Vice-president of the councils of State and Ministers, participated in the sessions of one of the commission meeting at the 10th Congress of the National Union of Construction Workers. The event, underway at the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) in Havana, is attended by 300 delegates from around the country, divided into three work groups. One of these groups analyzes key issues like the development of the investment process in various sectors, how to make a better use of working days, attention to construction workers, the double-shift system in works requiring them, and the guaranteeing of material resources. Ramiro Valdes is attending the debates on these issues of vital importance, along with another two members of the Cuban Communist Party's Politburo - Misael Enamorado and Salvador Valdes, general secretary of the CTC. Also attending this first session of one of the commissions are the ministers of Construction and Labor and Social Security, Fidel Figueroa and Margarita Gonzalez, respectively (*ACN*, 20/5/10).

**May 20:** Cuba's Catholic primate, Cardinal Jaime Ortega, said that the situation of political prisoners on the island "is being handled seriously" in the conversations between the church and the government of President Raul Castro, in a "process" that has not yet concluded. "I cannot provide conclusions regarding concrete dates, concrete actions with respect to the prisoners. That the issue is being treated seriously, yes, that I can say," said Ortega at a press conference in Havana to report on the meeting with the president of the communist-ruled island. The cardinal said that the "aspiration" of the church is for political prisoners to be released. That meeting, in which the head of the Catholic bishops conference, Santiago de Cuba Archbishop Dionisio Garcia Ibañez, also participated, lasted more than four hours, Ortega said, calling it a "magnificent" beginning of talks "that should continue in the near future." The meeting with General Castro was held at Ortega's request, the cardinal said, adding that he had been satisfied with that conversation, which in his opinion indicates "an open road with prospect and hope." At the press conference, the archbishop of Havana took pains to make very clear that this relationship is between the government and the church "of Cuba" and he went on to say that the talks are not linked with the upcoming visit to the island by the Vatican's foreign minister. "There has been a dialogue about Cuba, about our realities. What is new and important? We did not deal with problems of the church or needs of the church," he said. "Steps will be taken" on the issue of political prisoners, Archbishop Garcia told *Efe* earlier in the church's first substantive comment on the talks with General Castro (*EFE*, 20/5/10).

**May 20:** The mediation of the Catholic Church with the government has raised hopes for the release of ailing political prisoners, notably among members of the Ladies in White, relatives of some of the 75 dissidents imprisoned in the "Black Spring" crackdown of March 2003. Intervention by Catholic prelates earlier this month convinced authorities to allow the resumption of peaceful marches by the Ladies in White. Other sectors of the internal opposition remain skeptical about the chances for success of the church's contacts with the island's communist

government. That is the case with Marta Beatriz Roque, who told *Efe* that she is not clear about the role that the Catholic hierarchy is playing, and also with the spokesman for the Cuban Human Rights and National Reconciliation Commission, who said that he distrusted the government's intentions. The Ladies in White called the meeting between President Castro and the Catholic prelates "important." The group's spokesperson, Laura Pollan, told *Efe* that possibly the Church "can speak directly and be listened to by the government." "It's important and logical that (the Church) has met at this time with Mr. Raul Castro because we all know that soon the foreign minister of the Vatican will come and they must – the government, as well as the Church--, prepare the conditions", she said. "The world has its eyes on Cuba, and I think that the Church can make many things change, things that we and many citizens up until this time have not been able to do," Pollan added. "We have a lot of hope, but we cannot predict anything," she said. Pollan said that the Havana archdiocese invited five members of the Ladies in White to meet with Cardinal Ortega and other Catholic authorities on two occasions over the past three weeks (*EFE*, 20/5/10).

**Mayo 21:** El periodista independiente Guillermo Fariñas informó desde la ciudad de Santa Clara que su estado de salud ha decaído en las últimas horas y que tiene nuevos síntomas de malestar. El periodista independiente dijo que padece de cistitis, dolores en los riñones, dolores de cabeza y fiebre persistente. La voz de Fariñas se siente débil y manifiesta además tener calambres en las articulaciones (*Radio Martí*, 21/5/10).

**Mayo 21:** El diario oficial *Granma*, portavoz Partido Comunista de Cuba, afirmó que los problemas en el sector de la construcción, como la ineficiencia y los incumplimientos, son una "carga insostenible" para la economía de la isla. El periódico se refirió a una reunión del Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Construcción (controlado por el gobierno), celebrada en La Habana, en la que participaron el ministro del sector, Fidel Figueroa, y el vicepresidente Ramiro Valdés, quien llamó a establecer "un régimen de organización y control". "La realidad actual del proceso inversionista cubano se caracteriza por interminables retoques y reparaciones, incumplimientos de las fechas de entrega y costos excesivos, lo que se traduce en la casi totalidad de las obras", dijo *Granma*. Una vez terminadas las obras, los "gastos por operación, reparación o sustitución superan los costos iniciales", añadió. "Es esta una carga insostenible para la economía nacional que obstaculiza la agilidad y calidad de muchas inversiones", dijo el diario. Valdés, uno de los vicepresidentes del Consejo de Estado, afirmó que en el sector constructivo "la mayoría de las acciones o delitos se cometen a ojos vista, y muy pocos toman partido para enfrentarlas". En ese sentido, acusó a los dirigentes sindicales de no estar "a la altura" de las "exigencias constructivas" de la isla. El también ministro de la Informática y las Comunicaciones dijo que "fue necesario sustituir" el 47 por ciento de los dirigentes sindicales de la Construcción, principalmente porque "no fueron capaces de enfrentarse a los problemas en el momento oportuno" (*EFE*, 21/5/10).

**May 22:** Cuba has agreed to move political prisoners held in far-off jails to facilities closer to their hometowns and transfer sick prisoners to hospitals, a dissident said, following talks between Catholic Church leaders and President Raul Castro. Guillermo Farinas, on a hunger strike for 88 days demanding ill prisoners be released, told *Reuters* in a telephone interview that he received the news from a bishop who visited him in the hospital where he is being fed intravenously. A Catholic Church source, speaking on condition his name not be used, confirmed

what Farinas said. "Everything appears that is what will happen," he said. Farinas said Prelate Juan Dios Hernandez, the auxiliary bishop of Havana, brought him the message from Ortega after the cardinal was informed by the government that measures were being taken as agreed in the meeting. "These are first the transfer of all the prisoners to their respective provinces of residence, and the transfer also of all sick prisoners to hospitals," Farinas said. He said he was told a second meeting would be held next week toward "resolving the situation of the prisoners." There was no immediate word from Cuban officials (*Reuters*, 22/5/10).

**Mayo 23:** Las Damas de Blanco, familiares de los 75 opositores cubanos encarcelados en 2003, dijeron que las conversaciones iniciadas entre el gobierno y la Iglesia Católica sobre los presos políticos "van avanzando" y que están "esperanzadas" en que se produzcan liberaciones. "Estamos optimistas, tenemos esperanzas, las conversaciones van avanzando", declaró a periodistas Laura Pollán, portavoz del grupo disidente. Pollán, esposa de Héctor Maseda, condenado a 20 años, dijo que un encuentro que mantuvo el sábado con el cardenal Jaime Ortega y el secretario general de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos, Juan de Dios Hernández, le explicaron que los pasos tras la reunión de la jerarquía católica con el presidente Raúl Castro serán "de forma escalonada." "Esta es una escalera, no podemos subir de un salto todos los escalones, no sabemos (...) cuántos (presos) van a ser (liberados) ni cuánto va a demorar" señaló Pollán, quien agregó que no pueden pensar que los presos políticos "van a salir simultáneamente" todos. "Tenemos muchas esperanzas, mucha fe de que se produzcan noticias buenas pronto", subrayó Pollán, aunque indicó: "en ningún momento nos han dicho fechas exactas". Pollán dijo, tras la habitual marcha dominical de las Damas, que en varias ocasiones y, más recientemente a través de los interlocutores de la Iglesia, han pedido reunirse con el gobierno. Considera que si las conversaciones con la Iglesia se entienden como "una negociación" ellas deberían estar presentes como parte, pero admitió que "parece que no va a ser así". Unas 40 integrantes de las Damas de Blanco realizaron la marcha que celebran habitualmente a la salida de misa desde hace 7 años para protestar por el encarcelamiento de los 75 disidentes, periodistas independientes y activistas de derechos humanos que fueron condenados por los tribunales de la isla en juicios sumarísimos a penas de hasta 28 años de cárcel (*El Nuevo Herald*, 23/5/10).

**Mayo 23:** El ministro de Exteriores cubano, Bruno Rodríguez, aseguró que en Cuba se trata con "dignidad" a todos los presos y considera incluso que el sistema penitenciario de la isla es "el más humano del planeta". En cuanto a la huelga de hambre que mantiene el periodista disidente Guillermo Fariñas, confió en que quienes le están manipulando dejen de hacerlo, pero advirtió de que en ningún caso el Gobierno cubano ordenará su "alimentación forzada" porque sería una humillación. En una entrevista concedida a *Europa Press* con motivo de su asistencia a la Cumbre Unión Europea, América Latina y Caribe, el canciller cubano quiso dejar claro que los llamados presos políticos son "personas que cometieron actos ilegales previstos en nuestras leyes penales", que fueron "juzgados con todas las garantías procesales por tribunales civiles" y no militares como ocurre con los detenidos de Guantánamo. Además, subrayó, se trata de "agentes al servicio de una potencia extranjera" lo cual constituye, según Rodríguez, un acto que sería punible en España, en Estados Unidos y en cualquier lugar del mundo". Estas personas, lamentó, "actúan contra su propio pueblo, contra nuestro orden constitucional y por tanto son sancionadas". Sin embargo, "se les trata con toda la dignidad" ya que las leyes cubanas tienen hondo sentido humano". "El sistema penitenciario cubano, me atrevo a decir, es el más humano del planeta", valoró, aclarando que "existen todas las garantías" para que "se proteja la dignidad

de las personas en privación de libertad" y para que "se garantizan sus condiciones de salud". En cuanto a la posibilidad de que se pueda poner en libertad próximamente a alguno de los presos políticos cuyo estado de salud es más delicado, Rodríguez insistió en que sus leyes contemplan la posibilidad de que estas personas salgan en "libertad extrapenal o libertad supervisada" y dejó abierta la posibilidad de que esto ocurra al afirmar: "así lo hemos hecho en el pasado, así lo haremos siempre en acto soberano que responde al cumplimiento de nuestras leyes". Pero advirtió, "nunca jamás haremos algo bajo presión o chantaje" (*Europa Press*, 23/5/10).

**Mayo 24:** El próximo juicio de los masones cubanos a un antiguo Gran Maestro ha destacado la perseverancia de los 30,000 miembros de la organización pese a los severos controles gubernamentales sobre su dirección. Juan Manuel Collera Venta y otros dos masones están acusados de permitir que un masón iniciado en Miami asistiera a una reunión en una logia el año pasado, violando una regla que establece que sólo los miembros iniciados en Cuba pueden visitar las logias de la isla. Pero el caso ha estado rodeado de rumores de que Collera está excesivamente vinculado con el gobierno. También se ha dicho que el gobierno presionó a los masones para que lo eligieran Gran Maestro en el 2000 y que posteriormente les impidió que lo expulsaran por otro caso no especificado en el 2005. En una carta escrita pocos días después de la última acusación en su contra, presentada en abril, Collera calificó el proceso de "moralmente fraudulento" e insinuó que era obra de los exiliados. La dirección de los masones cubanos "acostumbraba mantener un valladar entre nosotros y los hermanos maestros de las logias en la emigración", escribió. Investigadores masónicos están entrevistado a los implicados en el caso y se espera que el juicio tenga lugar en junio, dijo Gustavo Pardo Valdés, presidente de la Academia Cubana de Altos Estudios Masónicos y periodista independiente que ha reportado sobre el caso. Varios masones de Miami entrevistados para esta historia declinaron comentar sobre Collera pero se quejaron insistentemente de que el gobierno cubano presiona con dureza a los líderes masónicos para que obedezcan la línea oficial. "Todas las logias están infiltradas y al otro día de cualquier reunión ya el gobierno sabe lo que se discutió", dijo Manuel Olmedo, presidente de la Federación de Masones Cubanos en el Exilio Cuba Primero. Sin embargo, y sorprendentemente, la masonería ha perdurado en Cuba, pese a un esfuerzo de miembros procastristas en 1959 de disolver el grupo, alegando que la revolución había eliminado la necesidad de semejantes grupos. Actualmente, los masones cubanos dicen tener 30,000 miembros en 316 logias. Eso es menos de los 34,000 miembros y 340 logias de 1958 pero superior a los 19,690 miembros en 1981 (*El Nuevo Herald*, 24/5/10).

**May 24:** Cuba has reported to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) two outbreaks of rabbit hemorrhagic disease. Rabbit hemorrhagic disease (RHD) is an extremely contagious and fatal viral disease of domesticated and wild rabbits belonging to the *Oryctolagus cuniculus* species, according to OIE. Outbreaks have been reported at farms in Baragua and Venezuela. Both municipalities are located in Cuba's Ciego de Avila province. In Baragua, Cuba's ministry of agriculture reported 2,345 rabbits as susceptible, 945 cases, 945 deaths and 1,400 rabbits as destroyed. In Venezuela, the ministry reported 140 rabbits as susceptible, 41 cases, 41 deaths and 99 destroyed. The first confirmation of the disease occurred on May 18. The outbreaks are still recorded as unresolved, according to OIE. The last outbreak of rabbit hemorrhagic disease reported in Cuba was in August 2005. According to OIE, the disease has always been confined to Cuba's western provinces, but the recent occurrence has taken place in a province in the central-eastern region of the country. A disease emergency has been declared in the region and the

neighbouring areas. A disease alert has been declared for the entire country. The use of vaccines for protecting populations at risk is not to be precluded (*Veterinary Practice News*, 24/5/10).

**Mayo 24:** Un nuevo temblor de tierra se registró en la zona oriental de la isla y fue perceptible en las provincias Granma y Santiago de Cuba. El sismo, de 3.0 grados en la escala de Richter, se produjo a las 22:09. Fue ubicado 22km al suroeste de la localidad santiaguera de La Plata, a una profundidad de 10km, según el Servicio Sismológico de Cuba, informó el diario oficial *Granma*. El terremoto fue perceptible además en los municipios granmenses de Bartolomé Masó, El Caney de Las Mercedes, Las Mercedes, Mota y Pílon. La información oficial indicó que, por el momento, no existen reportes de daños. Este es el sismo número 28 registrado en la isla en lo que va de año (*Diario de Cuba*, 24/5/10).

**Mayo 25:** La décimo quinta edición del Festival Internacional de Poesía de La Habana se desarrollará hasta el 30 de mayo en seis ciudades cubanas, con la participación de un centenar de representantes de 40 países, reportó la prensa local. El encuentro está dedicado a la poesía de países latinoamericanos que celebran el bicentenario del inicio de las guerras por la independencia, y a los centenarios del escritor cubano José Lezama Lima y el español Miguel Hernández (*IPS*, 25/5/10).

**May 25:** Members of the dissident Independent and Democratic Cuba party, or CID, complained that police and State Security agents stopped them from entering the Havana home of opposition leader Hugo Damian Prieto Blanco. The CID's Katia Sonia Martin told *Efe* by telephone from Havana that she and another four members of the party were going to the home of Prieto Blanco with plans to establish a local party headquarters. Nonetheless, as they drew near the house they found “a strong operation, a tremendous police deployment, with patrol cars, motorcycles and State Security autos.” Martin said that when she and her companions got out of the car, officials pushed and hit them to stop them from going in to see Prieto, who has been under house arrest. On May 18, Prieto and other dissidents staged a brief protest outside the Cuban Parliament with posters against the Raul Castro regime. Martin said that after the clash CID members had to leave the area, and that when she returned home she spotted a government motorcycle on the corner. The activist also said that before her arrival at the Prieto residence, other dissidents had tried to do the same, and one man identified as Sergio Garcia Arsatel was even arrested, though she was unable to give further details (*EFE*, 25/5/10).

**May 26:** Seventy-seven retail outlets for construction materials for individual builders have opened in Cuba, a government official told Cuban radio station *Radio Rebelde*. The target is 169 stores. The stores sell materials and tools to people who want to improve their homes or build new homes, said Arturo Vázquez Hernández, director of Non-Food Products of the Ministry of Domestic Trade. The prices are not subsidized and are determined by supply and demand. “Clearly, the demand will be greater than the supply,” *Radio Rebelde* says, “but this program will somehow permit a solution to the very difficult situation in the matter of habitation and solve part of the shortage of homes in the country.” Cement, plumbing materials and ceramics can be purchased in hard-currency stores, the station says. The new outlets will sell dry materials, wall panels, cables, floor tiles and lighting fixtures. No retail source for iron rods for reinforcement has been determined at this time (*The Miami Herald*, 26/5/10).

**Mayo 27:** Cuba está produciendo una versión genérica de Oseltamivir para sustituir la importación de Tamiflu, un antiviral contra la influenza H1N1 comercializado por Roche, dijo la prensa oficial. El genérico cubano está siendo producido a escala industrial en el laboratorio estatal Novatec, según *Granma*, el diario del gobernante Partido Comunista. “No es sólo este antiviral, sino una política del Estado para garantizar el amplio acceso de la población”, dijo al periódico el subdirector para Tecnologías Complejas del estatal Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de los Medicamentos, Saúl Padrón. La demanda y los precios del Oseltamivir se dispararon en el 2009 tras el brote de influenza H1N1. Cuba, que atraviesa por una severa crisis de liquidez, debió importar Tamiflu para tratar a las víctimas de la influenza, que según las últimas cifras oficiales cobró la vida a 69 personas en la isla (*Reuters*, 27/5/10).

**Mayo 27:** El cantautor cubano Silvio Rodríguez, quien regresará a Estados Unidos con una gira de conciertos en junio próximo tras 30 años de ausencia, dijo en San Juan, Puerto Rico, que Cuba es un país “con mucho debate” donde “no se detiene a nadie por opinar”. “Cuba es un país perfectamente vivo con mucho debate y gente con muchas opiniones. Es falso que la gente no pueda dar opiniones. Las pueden hacer en el tono que le dé la gana. Allí no se detiene a nadie por opinar, al menos que lo digas en un contexto distinto”, subrayó en una rueda de prensa en la capital puertorriqueña. El cantautor enfatizó que la prensa “ha fabricado una Cuba” distinta a la que viven los millones de habitantes de esa isla (*EFE*, 27/5/10).

**Mayo 28:** Al parecer la destitución del Ministro de Transporte, Jorge Luis Sierra, estuvo motivada por autorizar la importación de automóviles sin pago de impuestos a aquellos cubanos que tuvieran un vehículo viejo para entregar a cambio y dinero suficiente como para comprarse uno nuevo en el extranjero. La medida parece una forma inteligente de renovar el parque automotriz sin inversiones por parte del gobierno. Las cosas, sin embargo, se salieron del cauce previsto por las autoridades del ministerio. La mayor parte de los automóviles comprados por los cubanos fueron de lujo, Mercedes Benz, Audi y BMW, del año. Algunos artistas compraron vehículos de más de US\$50.000 pero hubo empleados estatales, con salarios de US\$30 al mes, que importaron vehículos de US\$15.000. De inmediato sonaron todas las alarmas y se suspendió la importación justo cuando los que tienen menos dinero se aprestaban a cambiar el automóvil. Los más adinerados no tienen de qué preocuparse; ya sus carros de lujo los distinguen. Lo cierto es que el problema está en los mecanismos creados por el sistema en relación con los automóviles. Normalmente para que un ciudadano pudiera comprarse un vehículo necesitaba el permiso del vicepresidente de la República. Durante años fue tarea de Carlos Lage decidir quién se merecía un carro. Teóricamente se ha dicho muchas veces que la venta de automóviles debe orientarse hacia aquellos que los necesitan para desarrollar su labor social. Afirman que el ecosistema colapsaría si todos los habitantes del planeta tuvieran un vehículo propio. Sin embargo, después las mismas autoridades premian a los ciudadanos con automóviles. Durante los años buenos se les vendían carros a trabajadores muy destacados y hace poco tiempo se los entregaron a los deportistas retirados. La relación de las autoridades cubanas con los vehículos automotores es extraña; casi traumática. Han convertido al automóvil en la mayor aspiración material del ciudadano, a la que sólo se puede acceder tras acumular grandes méritos. El presidente Raúl Castro eliminó ya algunas de las prohibiciones que pesaban sobre la ciudadanía - hoteles, celulares, internet- y el universo siguió intacto. De igual forma, una apertura en la venta de carros, sólo afectaría a la burocracia, al mercado negro y a la corrupción (*BBC Mundo*, 28/5/10).

**May 29:** Topics related to the work and structure of the Cuban Young Communist League (UJC) were discussed during a plenary session of this organization at the “Nico Lopez” School of the Cuban Communist Party in Havana. The 130 members of the National Committee of the youth’s organization met only 55 days after they were elected during the Ninth UJC Congress held in the Cuban capital. The agenda of the meeting included the discussion and approval of a working strategy to implement the agreements approved during the Congress, in which participants reaffirmed their commitment to the Cuban Revolution. The main report to the plenary session was presented by the First Secretary of the communist organization, Liudmila Alamo Dueñas. Participants in the plenary session also received information on the Seventeenth World Festival of Youths and Students scheduled for December in South Africa (ACN, 29/5/10).

**Mayo 29:** Unas 20 personas resultaron heridas al impactar una locomotora con un coche-motor de pasajeros en Guantámano, informó la televisión local de la provincia, *Solvisión*, en su sitio en internet. Según el reporte, la locomotora —de fabricación china— realizaba “maniobras de patio para arrastrar un convoy de casillas” cuando invadió un enlace del ramal Boquerón, en el noreste de la capital provincial, por donde circulaba el vehículo con pasajeros con destino a la localidad rural de Maquey. Los lesionados fueron trasladados al Hospital General Docente Doctor Agostinho Neto. La mayoría fueron dados de alta. “Especialistas del Cuerpo de Bomberos, con la ayuda de obreros ferroviarios, laboraron durante varias horas para sacar al conductor del coche-motor, atrapado en la destrozada cabina a causa del impacto”, indicó *Solvisión*. Añadió que “el extremo cuidado con que se realizó el rescate permitió preservar la integridad física del herido, operado con posterioridad por una fractura de la tibia y laceraciones en la pierna derecha” (*Diario de Cuba*, 30/5/10).

**Mayo 30:** La disidencia interna de Cuba continúa a la espera de medidas sobre los presos políticos cuando se cumplen diez días desde la reunión entre el gobernante Raúl Castro y la jerarquía de la Iglesia Católica, en la que trataron este asunto. Opositores consultados señalaron que se mantienen a la expectativa, en un escenario que algunos afrontan con “paciencia” y que otros califican como la “tortura de la espera, como los presos en las cárceles”. “El gobierno de Cuba se toma todo su tiempo, se toma todo el tiempo que quiere para cualquier cosa. Es un gobierno muy independiente, en el peor sentido del término”, dijo el portavoz de la Comisión Cubana de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional, Elizardo Sánchez. “Simplemente estamos sometidos a esa tortura de la espera, igual que los presos en las cárceles”, añadió Sánchez, a propósito de las esperanzas que ha suscitado el diálogo entre la Iglesia y el gobierno. Ni la Iglesia ni la disidencia informaron de ningún “movimiento” realizado por el gobierno con los presos políticos, algunos de los cuales se esperaba fueran trasladados a hospitales por su grave estado de salud y otros a cárceles cercanas a sus lugares de residencia. “Lo lógico era que poco después del encuentro entre el cardenal y el general Raúl Castro hubiera un resultado tangible, sobre todo cuando es un asunto que está pendiente hace tantos años”, indicó Sánchez. En opinión de Guillermo Fariñas, en huelga de hambre en demanda de la liberación de los presos políticos, los medios de prensa deben concentrarse “en las liberaciones y dejen de hacer denuncias de la situación y gravedad de los presos”. “Me parece que hay que tener paciencia y, en mi caso, seguir con la huelga, y sobre todo continuar haciendo denuncias de los presos en prisión y desconcentrarse en la cuestión de cuándo van a salir”, dijo Fariñas. La opositora Marta Beatriz Roque afirmó que “existe la posibilidad” de que las excarcelaciones ocurran cuando se

acerque la visita a Cuba del canciller del Vaticano, Dominique Mamberti, quien debe llegar a mediados de junio. Para Roque, con el viaje de Mamberti el gobierno podría repetir la fórmula que utilizó tras la visita del Papa Juan Pablo II en 1998, cuando excarceló prisioneros comunes y opositores (*EFE*, 30/5/10).

**May 30:** The Cuban government has not yet improved conditions for political prisoners or released any as had been hoped after recent talks between Catholic Church leaders and President Raul Castro, Cuba's "Ladies in White" dissident group said. Speaking to reporters after the group's traditional Sunday march protesting the 2003 imprisonment of their loved ones, leader Laura Pollan said they had heard nothing from the government about its plans. "Here, nothing is known. Everything is a state secret," said Pollan, whose husband, dissident Hector Maseda, is serving a 20-year prison sentence. Catholic officials said Castro promised in a May 19 meeting with Cardinal Jaime Ortega to move prisoners soon to jails closer to home or, if they were sick, into hospitals. So far, Pollan said, the only thing certain is that no prisoners have been moved or released. "Everything is speculative; there is not thing concrete," she said. The Ladies in White have staged weekly protest marches since the March 2003 arrest of 75 dissidents, many of whom are their husbands or sons and most still behind bars. After Sunday's march by 33 white-clad women, Pollan told them it was important for them and their imprisoned family members, particularly those who are ill, to remain calm while waiting for the promised changes. "Anxiety can produce strong stress and we don't want them to get sicker," she told the women (*Reuters*, 30/5/10).

**Mayo 30:** Las Damas de Blanco, familiares de 75 disidentes encarcelados en el 2003, denunciaron que algunas de sus miembros que residen en otros puntos del país fuera de La Habana han sido maltratadas y se les ha impedido realizar marchas pacíficas como las que ellas realizan en la capital los domingos. En declaraciones a medios internacionales tras la caminata en La Habana, Laura Pollán, líder del colectivo, señaló que "en el interior (de la isla) no están respetando" a las Damas de Blanco. En su opinión, en La Habana ahora "hay respeto" a las Damas porque "está la prensa, las máximas autoridades de la Iglesia católica, la Nunciatura, las embajadas", pero denunció que "lamentablemente" están agrediendo a miembros del grupo en otras partes de la isla. Pollán se refirió concretamente al caso de Reina Luisa Tamayo, la madre del preso político Orlando Zapata Tamayo, fallecido el 23 de febrero tras 85 días en huelga de hambre. Reina Luisa Tamayo, en conversación telefónica desde Banes, la localidad donde reside en la provincia oriental de Holguín, aseguró que ella y varias acompañantes han sido "asediadas, repudiadas" por grupos progubernamentales que les impidieron salir de su casa y asistir a la iglesia (*El Nuevo Herald*, 30/5/10).

## **Economy**

**Mayo 1:** En la Cuba socialista uno puede comer en una cafetería de 10 mesas atendida por 20 empleados, hay empresas con tantos inspectores y vigilantes como obreros y la plantilla nacional de dirigentes supera las 380,000 personas, casi un 9% de los trabajadores estatales. Raúl Castro lo admitió hace tiempo: los salarios no alcanzan. Obviamente, ganar el equivalente a 15 euros al mes no estimula la productividad, pero el problema de las "plantillas infladas" no es menos grave. El 4 de abril, el presidente cubano reconoció que en el sector estatal sobran un millón de puestos de trabajo. Esto representa uno de cada cuatro cubanos que trabaja para el Estado. Si

durante medio siglo el “pleno empleo” ficticio fue un emblema de la revolución, como la educación y la salud, hoy lastra la economía y entrapa la salida de la crisis. Con 11,2 millones de habitantes y una fuerza laboral de 4,9 millones de personas -de las que más de cuatro millones trabajan en el sector estatal-, Cuba se encuentra en una encrucijada. Un millón de trabajadores *sobrantes* es un grave problema político, pero hacer esta reconversión es de necesidad imperiosa, advierten los economistas. El gobierno ha adelantado que las soluciones del pasado no son una opción. Antes, a los trabajadores cesantes se les enviaba a casa con una prolongada garantía salarial o se les ofrecía la posibilidad de estudiar, cobrando el sueldo completo. Eso se acabó. Salvador Mesa, el secretario general de la Central de Trabajadores de Cuba, el sindicato único, afirmó que la “reubicación” se hará “con orden” y que “nadie quedará abandonado”. El país, dijo, “no dispondrá de fórmulas mágicas, los puestos de trabajo tenemos que crearlos en los municipios, como en la agricultura y la construcción”. “Mucha gente no quiere reconvertirse de oficinista en campesino o albañil. ¿Qué van a hacer?”, expone un sociólogo. “Si se quiere desinflar esas plantillas en las que casi todo el aire lo ha puesto la política paternalista del Estado, habrá que permitir que los que pierdan sus improductivos puestos laborales puedan hacer cualquier actividad que no sea delictiva”, opinó recientemente el escritor Guillermo Rodríguez Rivera. “Hacerlos abandonar sus empleos para echarles encima el mar de prohibiciones que existen para realizar cualquier trabajo, mandaría directamente a esa masa a delinquir”, afirmó, en un artículo publicado en la página web de la Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (*El País*, 1/5/10).

**May 2:** The Electric Company of Las Tunas closed the Workers’ Health and Safety Day, which was held during the month of April in the different structures of this entity nationwide. According to Resolution 39 of 2007, Health and Safety is defined as the activity aimed at promoting training, culture and creating appropriate conditions for the worker to develop their work efficiently. And, also, to avoid incidents that may affect their health and integrity, the assets of the entity and the environment. Learning activities, simulated damage, rescue practices, lectures and seminars were developed during the day; which permitted the creation of more reliable working conditions and enhanced safety by identifying and assessing potential risks of accidents, in one of the sectors with greatest threat to life (*Periódico 26*, 2/5/10).

**March 3:** An import program that brought flashy new cars to Havana streets dominated by old US and Russian vehicles has been cancelled, the Cuban government said in a resolution published last week. In the online edition of the Official Gazette, the communist government said “irregularities have been observed” in the program without explaining what they were. Since April, Cubans with cars had been allowed to import vehicles to replace pre-1990 models, with the goal of cutting fuel consumption and pollution on the Caribbean island. The old models were turned over to the government, which regulates the purchase of cars and restricts who can get them. It was not known how many vehicles had come in under the program. But shiny new cars and SUVs, some luxury makes such as BMW and Mercedes, began popping up among the 1950s American cars that still rumble through Cuba and the Ladas that came during the island's 30-year alliance with the Soviet Union. Artists, athletes and doctors posted abroad are among those allowed to have cars and some of the few Cubans who can afford them (*Ottawa Citizen*, 3/5/10).

**May 3:** All tourists who travel to Cuba, from today, will require health insurance. Spanish tourists travelling to Cuba as of today must have travel insurance to enter the island, according to

new standards set by the authorities in Havana. The Foreign Ministry noted in its website, the entry of this measure, which was adopted by the Cuban government last February. The requirement of having a travel insurance policy with medical coverage also affects Cubans living abroad and foreigners with temporary residence in Cuba. The insurance must be issued by local or foreign insurance companies approved by the authorities of the island. Diplomatic personnel and members of international organizations accredited in Cuba are exempt from this rule (*Barcelona Reporter*, 3/5/10).

**May 3:** The 30th International Tourism Fair FITCUBA 2010 opened with the launching of a new campaign promoting the Cuba Destination at its traditional venue, the Morro-Cabaña Fortress in Havana. Cuban Vice-President Esteban Lazo officially opened the Fair. Tourism Vice-Minister María Elena López praised on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of this Fair the work of those committed to develop this industry both domestically and abroad. The ceremony was attended by Cuban Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero accompanied by the Regional representative for the Americas of the World Tourism Organization and the Russian Tourism Federal Agency Alexander Radkov. On the opening day, visitors made a tour of the exhibiting area where travel agencies, hotel chains, airlines, tour operators and other companies linked to the tourism industry are promoting the assets of the host country. With more than 500 exhibitors and visitors from different nations, this year's fair centers on Events and Incentives, Eastern Cuba, and Russia as the guest of honor country. According to the Cuban Tourism Ministry, the program of the event includes lectures about the development of the sector in the island, negotiation rounds and presentations by the group Marina Marlins and local travel agencies Cubatur, Cubanacan, Havanatur, Gaviota Tours, Paradiso and Ecotur (*ACN*, 3/5/10; 4/5/10).

**May 3:** The number of Russians who visited Cuba in the first quarter of 2010 has grown by over 20% on the same period last year, the Cuban statistics department said. According to the department, in January-March 2010 more than 13,200 Russians visited the island. A total of 810,100 foreigners visited Cuba in the first quarter this year — almost the same as in the first three months of 2009. Canada accounted for the bulk of foreign tourists in Cuba, with 387,000 Canadians visiting the island in January-March 2010. It is followed by Britain with 38,500, Italy with 38,100, Germany with 28,900, France (28,500) and Spain (28,300). Cuban authorities consider Russia as a promising tourist market. According to the organizers of an international tourist exhibition, Fit Cuba 2010, that opens in Havana, the number of Russian tourists visiting Cuba has been constantly rising in recent years (*Ria Novosti*, 3/5/10).

**May 3:** Canadians and other foreigners travelling to Cuba are now required to hold travel insurance approved by island authorities. Those without coverage will have to buy a Cuban policy that can cost up to \$3 a day. The new law took effect on May 1<sup>st</sup> and mandates that travellers who can't show they have authorized insurance buy a policy from state-run Cubatur before being allowed into the country. The measure was made law in February, but there had been no mention of how it would be implemented. A record 2.4 million foreigners came to Cuba last year, with Canada the largest source, followed by Britain, Spain, Italy and France. Like Cuba, all of these countries have state-funded health care and often reimburse citizens for health costs incurred during overseas travel. The Department of Foreign Affairs recommends Canadians visiting Cuba purchase supplemental health insurance. The department's travel advisory says that "your provincial plan may cover only part of the costs and will not pay the bill upfront, as

required.” A Cubatur kiosk at Havana airport sold 113 policies on the first day, Ricardo Lopez, a Cubatur office manager, said. Mr. Lopez provided a government document explaining that kiosks selling health insurance had been established in international airports across Cuba. Mr. Lopez said he had not seen a list of what kinds of insurance was approved and from which countries, but said he had been told Cuba will accept state or private insurance from any country except the United States, given Washington's 48-year trade embargo. Interviews with five passengers getting off a flight from Toronto found that none had been asked to show insurance. A passenger who arrived earlier from Buenos Aires and one who came from Mexico City on Saturday also said no one asked them to show proof of insurance (*The Globe and Mail*, 3/5/10).

**May 3:** The agriculture ministers of Japan and Cuba, Hirotaka Akamatsu and Ulises Rosales del Toro, respectively, advocated in Havana the strengthening of the bonds of friendship existing between the two nations. Rosales del Toro, who is also the vice-president of the Council of Ministers, expressed his satisfaction for the presence on the island of the Japanese minister –a special occasion for being this the first visit of a minister from that country to Cuba. Likewise, he highlighted the potentialities of the Asian nation and reiterated the island's willingness to intensify bilateral cooperation. He pointed out that Cuba's Agriculture Ministry is now on a stage of changes, and that his visit takes place at a very opportune moment to identify points of contact that make it possible to consolidate mutual friendship and cooperation (*ACN*, 3/5/10).

**Mayo 4:** Indonesia, Cuba, China e India eran, por este orden, los mayores deudores al Club de París al terminar el pasado año, según los datos detallados que publica este grupo de países ricos que reúne a los principales acreedores públicos. El monto total de las deudas al Club de París el 31 de diciembre pasado era de 326,336 millones de dólares, de los cuales 189,100 millones correspondían a créditos a cuenta de la ayuda pública al desarrollo, precisó la organización en la tabla puesta en línea. Indonesia era el principal deudor en términos absolutos con 37,305 millones de dólares, seguido por Cuba con 30,410 millones, China con 29,858 millones, India con 21,361 millones, Egipto con 14,570 millones, Filipinas con 13,265 millones, Pakistán con 12,022 millones y Vietnam con 10,712 millones (*EFE*, 4/5/10).

**May 4:** Cuban Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero said 1,053 million tourists had arrived in the island up to the end of April 2010, a record figure for this period of time. Speaking in the 30th International Tourism Fair FITCUBA 2010, Marrero said that in spite of the fall on inbound vacationers in the first two months of the year, the island saw a rebound in March and April as a result of actions taken by MINTUR. Marrero named Canada as the island's top tourist provider sending around 1 million travelers a year and he mentioned that more and more tourists are arriving from Argentina, Colombia, Chile and Peru. The minister highlighted the importance of the domestic market and the increasing flow of Cubans living abroad, especially from the United States, traveling to the island (*ACN*, 4/5/10).

**May 4:** Cuba has announced plans to allow foreigners to develop golf courses, marinas and related land projects to boost the nation's tourism industry. Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero said Havana was in advanced talks with “several potential foreign partners”. The Communist government is reportedly considering granting foreigners medium- to long-term leases of real estate, as Cuba prohibits foreign ownership. Havana hopes the measures will attract more affluent tourists to the island. Last year, some 2.4 million tourists visited Cuba, but many of them

came for short stays and spent less money. “A policy was approved that permits real estate development associated with tourism, fundamentally golf courses, marinas and other complementary tourist investments,” Mr Marrero said at Cuba's annual International Tourism Fair. He said the move aimed at “developing regions that today are virgin”. Currently there is only one 18-hole golf course in the whole of Cuba. However, there are plans for 10 new courses, several of which are in an advanced stage of planning. A number of European and Canadian investment firms have proposed building golf courses coupled with luxury sea front apartments and villas. But in a country with no real estate market, where Cubans are not allowed to buy or sell their homes, the government has long been wary of allowing foreigners to own property, our correspondent says. So under the new deal medium- to long-term leases may be allowed if linked to golf courses (*BBC*, 4/5/10).

**May 5:** Cuba and Venezuela inaugurated the SUCRE system of payments, with the sale by Venezuela to Cuba of 360 tons of rice. The SUCRE system was created in 2009 by the member countries of ALBA, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, to obviate the use of the US dollar. The Spanish acronym SUCRE stands for the Unit System for the Regional Compensation of Payments; the word also represents the unit of currency used in trading. One sucre is equivalent to 1.25 dollars. The 360 tons of rice cost 108,000 sucres, or US\$135,000. The sucre is a virtual, not a paper, currency. The currency is named after 19th-Century Venezuelan hero General Antonio José de Sucre, who was a top aide to Simón Bolívar. The transaction was conducted by the Venezuelan exporter Socialist Joint Venture Rice From ALBA and the Cuban importer Alimport, according to a press release from the Venezuelan Central Bank (*The Miami Herald*, 5/5/10).

**May 5:** The current sugar harvest is Cuba's worst since 1905, Communist Party daily *Granma* said, two days after President Raul Castro fired the minister responsible for the industry. The sugar ministry has failed to implement the changes needed to address chronic problems, the newspaper said. Sugar Minister Luis Manuel Avila Gonzalez was dismissed after roughly 16 months in the job. The official account said he asked to be relieved after acknowledging “deficiencies” in his job performance. Avila was replaced by Deputy Minister Orlando Celso Garcia Ramirez. *Granma* said the sugar ministry “suffered a lack of objectivity” in its planning and projections for the current season and that the officials’ mistakes could no longer be “masked” by blaming the weather or other external variables. Last year's harvest was more than 850,000 tons short of the official forecast, the daily said, following a downward trend that set in after the sector enjoyed an “encouraging upturn” in 2005-2008. “It is not by chance that the harvest is closely followed, that its unfavorable results are noted and painful. Putting it back where it should be is indispensable,” *Granma* said, calling sugar part of Cuba's heritage (*EFE*, 5/5/10).

**May 5:** Spanish oil giant Repsol YPF has contracted with a unit of Italian oil company Eni SpA (ENI.MI) for a drilling rig that some sources said was bound for operation in Cuba's still untapped offshore fields. A spokeswoman for Saipem, Eni's offshore drilling unit, told *Reuters* Repsol has signed a one-year contract for the rig, which is under construction in China and expected to be finished by year's end. She would not confirm that it will be operated in Cuba, but advertisements on the Internet were seeking workers for a semi-submersible rig being built in China for work in Cuban waters. A source involved in the project, who asked not to be named,

said the jobs were posted for Milan-based Saipem (SPMI.MI). Cuban state oil company Cupet declined to comment. Repsol, which also refused to comment so far, drilled the only exploration well in Cuba's part of the Gulf of Mexico in 2004 and said it found hydrocarbons. Norway's Statoil (STL.OL) (STO.N) and a unit of India's Oil and Natural Gas Corp later joined the partnership. A second well has been awaited ever since, and, if successful, likely will open the door to full-scale exploitation of Cuba's offshore (*Reuters*, 5/5/10).

**Mayo 5:** El 50 por ciento de las tierras ociosas de Cuba está aún sin entregar a nuevos productores, según dijo el presidente de la Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños (ANAP), Orlando Lugo Fonte, citado por medios oficiales. Lugo Fonte recalcó que hay que insistir con los jóvenes “para despertar el interés hacia la agricultura, hasta incorporar toda la superficie cultivable del país a la producción”, indicó la estatal *Agencia de Información Nacional (AIN)*. Destacó que unos 60,000 cubanos se incorporaron al trabajo agrícola durante el pasado año y han hecho producir un millón de hectáreas que antes estaban ociosas y que están incidiendo en el incremento de las cosechas de viandas, hortalizas y granos. El dirigente agrario reconoció que el trabajo para convertir en productivas esas tierras ha sido “fuerte” porque en las áreas repartidas hay una alta presencia de arbustos como el aroma o marabú y otros obstáculos. El dirigente agrario recordó que el gobierno cubano aprobó hace año y medio una ley para la entrega de las tierras estatales ociosas para su explotación en usufructo. Cuba ha estado importando más del 80 por ciento de los víveres que consumen sus 11,2 millones de habitantes, y para impulsar la producción de alimentos ha entregado a los campesinos, en usufructo, terrenos hábiles que el Estado mantuvo sin cultivar por décadas (*EFE*, 5/5/10).

**May 6:** Cuba has given Brazil's state-owned oil company Petrobras a six-month extension on its May deadline to decide whether it will drill a well in Cuban waters, a Petrobras spokesman said. Petrobras, which has rights to one of 59 exploration blocks in Cuba's part of the Gulf of Mexico, was supposed to notify state-owned oil company Cubapetroleo (Cupet) this month of its intentions but needed more time, said spokeswoman Paula Almada. “Given the geological complexity of the block area, it was negotiated with Cupet a six-month extension (...) to finish the work of geology and geophysics,” she said. She was responding to questions sent to Joao Figueira, head of the Brazilian oil giant's Cuba operations. Petrobras signed up for its Cuba block in October 2008 in a Havana ceremony attended by Cuba's President Raul Castro and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The company got what was considered a prime block, hugging Cuba's northern coast next to the island's most prolific onshore oil field at Varadero, east of Havana. Figueira said last July that Petrobras had completed its seismic work in the block and was studying the results. The area showed good prospects, he said, but it remained to be seen if it had sufficient accumulations of oil to make wells profitable. “The challenge and uncertainty are related to reserve distribution, size and production per well,” Figueira said (*Reuters*, 6/5/10).

**May 7:** Facing a shortage of rice and anxious to reduce the cost of importing it, Cuba is calling on citizens not to hoard the grain — no mean feat in a country that is the seventh largest consumer of rice per capita worldwide. “We are demanding discipline and order in purchases,” state-run *Radio Rebelde* said during its newscast. “Don't allow, under any circumstances, people to hoard rice so they can later sell it at a higher price.” The communist government subsidizes rice and sells it in government farmer's markets for 3.50 pesos per pound, about \$0.17. But rice has become so scarce in recent weeks that “certain unscrupulous people are hoarding,” reported

the station, which broadcasts across Cuba and is among the most listened to nationwide. Cuban officials have repeatedly said they hope to increase rice production and cut imports because of rising prices for the crop, most of which cash-short Cuba has imported from Vietnam in recent years. The director of the government food import agency, Igor Montero, told the Communist Party-linked workers newspaper *Trabajadores* in January that this year Cuba could be facing rice prices that had nearly doubled what it paid until recently (*AP*, 8/5/10).

**May 7:** Seven watering systems in cooperative units in the province of Ciego de Avila were upgraded so they can operate on electric power as part of a joint ALBA project between Cuban and Venezuela. The initiative, named Proyecto Endogeno, started in 2009 in the south of Ciego de Avila, a province in central Cuba. It included the installation of an irrigation mechanism in another cooperative unit with which 160 acres can be watered in one day. The president of the National Association of Small Farmers in the province, Pablo Gonzalez, said the investment amounted to \$831,000, with which the cooperative facilities were also remodeled to improve the farmers' working conditions. He mentioned among construction actions the building of a repair shop, units for pig raising, while tools and repair parts for trucks and tractors were distributed. The fund was also used to repair 10 tractors and buy other five and also in social works for the production of roof and floor tiles (*ACN*, 7/5/10).

**May 10:** Cuba is considering foreign -- possibly Brazilian -- buyout of its troubled sugarcane industry after the worst harvest in more than a century cost a minister his job and led to recrimination and government threats to punish other officials suspected of poor performance. The upheaval over the sugar harvest began as statistics of the sector's poor yields reached President Raul Castro's ear. News of the sugarcane industry's woes had circulated for some time but failed to make it to the state-controlled media. Then *Granma*, the Communist Party daily newspaper, broke the news that the yield was the worst since 1905, but only after the senior official responsible, Luis Manuel Avila Gonzalez, was dismissed from his post as sugar minister. Brazil's dramatic success with its sugarcane crop and diversification into producing biofuels has drawn Cuba to the possibility of involving Brazil in some form or other, including investment and management of parts of the industry (*UPI*, 10/5/10).

**Mayo 10:** Cuba y Venezuela comenzaron la fase de movimiento de tierra para la puesta en marcha, mediante una empresa mixta, de una planta de ferroníquel en la oriental provincia de Holguín, según un reporte de la televisión local. La televisión de Holguín, a unos 730 kilómetros al este de La Habana, mostró equipos pesados en plena faena del movimiento de tierra. “Ya se trabaja en el movimiento de tierra de lo que será la planta de ferroníquel de Moa”, dijo la televisión local de esa provincia. “Esta planta es una empresa mixta con Venezuela y producirá 68,000 toneladas anuales del producto. La obra se concluirá en el año 2013”, de acuerdo con el reporte. Cuba y Venezuela crearon Ferroníquel SA en el 2007 para completar los trabajos que habían quedado inconclusos en la planta de níquel de Camarioca, obra detenida tras el colapso del comunismo en el bloque soviético de Europa del este en la década de 1990. Los dos países han formado una empresa mixta, con sede en Venezuela, para producir acero inoxidable utilizando el ferroníquel cubano. La inversión incluye hasta 700 millones de dólares del proyecto que serán invertidos en la parte cubana y otros 600 millones en la planta de acero. El proyecto Camarioca es el segundo más importante entre los dos países, considerados fuertes aliados

socialistas, después de la refinería de petróleo de Cienfuegos, en el centro-sur de la isla, que incluye un complejo petroquímico en construcción (*Reuters*, 10/5/10).

**May 11:** Cuban experts warned about the need to increase savings and to control energy spending on daily basis to counteract the electricity demand generated by the high temperatures forecasted for this summer. Juan Alberto Piedra, Demand regulation head coach of the Electricity Enterprise in Matanzas province, told *ACN* that in recent weeks there has been an increase in the expenditure of electricity due to higher use of appliances. He urged all, from executives to families to implement saving to avoid exceeding reasonable limits to prevent the occurrence of blackouts. The expert noted that is forecasted that during this summer there will be even higher temperatures and recommended actions that can help save electricity and reduce monthly bills. Piedra said that inspectors will visit houses to monitor the operation of meters fight fraudulent practices, and advised consumers to daily read the spending to keep it within the desired parameters (*ACN*, 11/5/10).

**May 11:** Sailors from Cuba and Venezuela, the countries making up the Pescalba joint venture, will crew the new ship put in operation by this entity, which will be devoted to catch tuna, horse mackerel and other species. The modern ship, capable of storing over 2,000 tons of cargo – equipped with everything necessary to fish on the high seas-, will increase to seven the number of vessels of that fishing fleet, pertaining to the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA). The Pescalba grand-national emerged to contribute to the food security of the two nations and could include other ALBA members in the future (Ecuador, Nicaragua, Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), the *Prensa Latina* news agency reports from Caracas. One of the managers of Pescalba, Pastor Vicent, also explained that the ship, built with German technology, is 120 meters long and 20 meters wide (*ACN*, 11/5/10).

**May 11:** Cuba and Argentina ratified the good state of bilateral relations during the Fourth Inter-Foreign Ministries Meeting that took place in Buenos Aires, the Argentinean capital, on May 10-11. Speaking to *Prensa Latina* news agency, Cuba's Deputy Foreign Minister Rogelio Sierra said the meeting took place in a fraternal environment. The Cuban and Argentinean sides —the latter headed by Argentinean Foreign Secretary Victorio Taccetti— discussed topics of common and regional interest and checked the implementation of 11 agreements signed during the visit to Cuba of Argentinean president Cristina Fernandez in 2009. They also analyzed the development of commercial and economic ties between Cuba and Argentina (*ACN*, 12/5/10).

**May 12:** Cuban First Vice President Jose Ramon Machado Ventura met in Havana with the Prime Minister from Guinea-Bissau, Carlos Gomes, who is on an official visit to the island. During the fraternal meeting, both leaders spoke of topics of national and international interest. They expressed their satisfaction with the excellent state of bilateral relations, which they described as deep and historic, and showed interest in further strengthening cooperation ties. Gomes thanked Cuba for its assistance in the health and education sectors and particularly praised the work of Cuban health professionals in Guinea Bissau and the training of young students from his country in Cuban higher education centers. Machado Ventura thanked the visitor for Guinea Bissau's traditional support of the Cuban people's struggle against the almost 50-year-old US economic blockade. Also present were Cuba's Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla and Deputy FM Marcos Rodriguez Costa (*ACN*, 12/5/10).

**Mayo 12:** Investigadores canadienses destacaron la cooperación entre el Instituto Finlay de Cuba y la empresa brasileña Bio-Mangunhos como un modelo de colaboración entre firmas biotecnológicas de países en desarrollo que están mejorando el acceso de medicamentos en las áreas más pobres del mundo. Investigadores de cinco países en desarrollo en colaboración con el Centro McLaughlin-Rotman de Sanidad Global de Canadá (MRC) publican en la revista médica *Nature Biotechnology* el primer estudio a gran escala de colaboración “ Sur-Sur” en el campo de la biotecnología relacionado con sanidad. Los investigadores dijeron que las empresas biotecnológicas en los países en desarrollo dependen cada vez menos de firmas de países más industrializados del mundo y que las relaciones futuras entre instituciones del Sur y del Norte serán cada vez más equilibradas. Halla Thorsteinsdóttir, la directora del estudio e integrante del Centro McLaughlin-Rotman, señaló que la relación surgida entre el Instituto Finlay y Bio-Mangunhos para responder a un brote de meningitis en Africa en el 2007 es un modelo de esas colaboraciones. “ En el 2007 se produjo un brote de meningitis en el `cinturón de meningitis', una franja de países subsaharianos de Africa que cubre de Senegal a Etiopía. La Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMC) empezó a buscar una compañía que pudiese producir una vacuna adecuada para la epidemia”, declaró Thorsteinsdóttir (*EFE*, 12/5/10).

**May 12:** The Cuban government plans to repair 6,000 kilometers (3,728 miles) of the island’s railway network and acquire new equipment for the sector, Communist Party daily *Granma* said. The paper quoted Vice President Antonio Enrique Lusson as saying that “the country’s decision exists” to recover the railroad system, although doing so will require “an enormous effort.” One sign of the “determination to rescue” the railroad infrastructure is the decision to reduce from five to three years the time within which to rehabilitate the island’s central railroad line, said Lusson. Another of the objectives of the government of General Raul Castro in this area is to re-establish four technological centers to train young railway workers, facilities that will begin functioning sometime next year. Lusson made his remarks at the re-inauguration of a railroad bridge in the southeastern province of Guantanamo, a ceremony also attended by Transportation Minister Cesar Ignacio Arocha. Lusson and Arocha – both senior military officers – were named in early May in the latest shakeup of General Castro’s Cabinet, a reshuffling that affected the Transportation and Sugar Ministries, two economic sectors that are in critical shape (*EFE*, 12/5/10).

**May 14:** Cuban scientists are keeping a close eye on the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico after the collapse of the oil rig Deepwater Horizon on April 20, the Cuban Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA) said. “The expansion of the oil spill poses no immediate threat to Cuba, but its movement proves unstoppable so far, therefore we should keep an eye on it,” Orlando Rey Santos, an expert from the CITMA said in Havana. Santos said that the movement of the oil spill depends on many complex and unpredictable factors, especially ocean currents, winds and climate events, which could push the oil to Cuban shores. He stressed that the Gulf of Mexico is one of the areas with rich marine biodiversity. The wetlands and countless birds moving along the coasts of the United States and Mexico are endangered by the damages caused by the disaster. The Cuban expert estimated that 13 million gallons (49.21 liters) of oil have been spilled since April 20 (*Global Times*, 14/5/10).

**May 14:** As the Farmers Congress got under way, Cuba's National Office of Statistics issued its report on farm and livestock production for the first quarter of 2010. The news was not good. Farm products (not including sugar cane) dropped by 13 percent; livestock for slaughter by 3.1 percent. Some highlights of the report: Tubers and roots are down 9 percent overall, with decreases in potato (34.3 percent) and malanga (28.6). There are increases in sweet potato (2.4), yucca (53.2) and other tubers (16.5). Plantains are up (75.1). Garden vegetables are down 25.1 percent, with tomatoes and cabbage accounting for most of the drop. Only onions are up (1.5). Beans are down 30.5 percent. Corn is up (4.9) and so is rice (45.5). Citrus fruits are down 21.7 percent, except for grapefruit, which is up a whopping 340 percent. Non-citrus fruits, including mango and papaya, are up 16.1 percent, though guava, pineapple and coconut are down. Drops were recorded in the production of beef (3.2 percent), pork (3.3), goat meat (6.3) and horse meat (3.5). Milk and eggs were down 6 and 1.1 percent, respectively (*The Miami Herald*, 14/5/10).

**Mayo 16:** Una legión de 4,000 auditores y policías económicos investigan en estos momentos las tripas de 750 empresas cubanas, aproximadamente el 20% de las que funcionan en la isla. Se trata de una descomunal ofensiva anticorrupción que no tiene precedentes en el país, pero sí justificación: en los últimos años, en la Cuba de Fidel y Raúl Castro se han multiplicado los delitos económicos y los casos de corruptelas, tráfico de influencias y malversación, y cada vez los protagonistas pican más alto. Entre las firmas investigadas hoy está International Network Group (ING), conglomerado de empresas creado y dirigido por Max Marambio, un hombre de negocios chileno que perteneció a los servicios de inteligencia cubanos y fue jefe de la escolta personal del presidente Salvador Allende. En una época Marambio fue una persona muy vinculada a Fidel Castro. Hasta el año pasado, sus empresas movían anualmente decenas de millones de dólares en negocios relacionados con Cuba, aunque hoy es el último protagonista de una larga y opaca lista de escándalos económicos que llega a altas esferas. Hace pocas semanas, un prestigioso académico cubano vinculado a un centro de estudios oficial daba la voz de alarma: “Hay gentes en posiciones de gobierno que se están apalancando financieramente para cuando la revolución se caiga, y otros que pueden tener casi todo preparado para producir el traspaso de los bienes a manos privadas, como tuvo lugar en la antigua URSS”. El investigador, Esteban Morales, director honorario del Centro de Estudios sobre Estados Unidos de la Universidad de La Habana, una institución que habitualmente hace análisis de inteligencia para las autoridades, se refirió abiertamente al caso de la reciente destitución del director del Instituto de Aeronáutica Civil de Cuba (IACC), el general de división Rogelio Acevedo, un *histórico* que durante la lucha de Sierra Maestra combatió a las órdenes del Che Guevara. “Somos conscientes de que el asunto es ante todo político y que la revolución se puede ir por ese agujero negro”, afirma un funcionario de nivel intermedio. Pone como ejemplo de esta “preocupación” la macroauditoría ordenada por la recién creada Contraloría de la República. Para apoyar la cruzada anticorrupción, el pasado 16 de abril el presidente cubano asistió a la toma de posesión del nuevo fiscal general, Darío Delgado, un militar de alto rango. Raúl Castro insistió en la necesidad de fortalecer “la legalidad” y la “institucionalidad” como “tareas de vital importancia”, y días después se anunció que, durante un mes, un cuerpo de 3,895 auditores, técnicos y estudiantes de economía fiscalizarían las cuentas de una de cada cinco empresas cubanas. Es todo un récord. Estamos hablando de 750 empresas a la vez, incluido el *holding* de Marambio, fábricas estatales de tamaño mediano y pequeños centros laborales en los que probablemente los trabajadores harán negocio con los clavos o con la merienda para subsistir (*El País*, 16/5/10).

**Mayo 16:** Los campesinos cubanos pidieron al gobierno de Raúl Castro más recursos y menos trabas burocráticas para elevar la producción de alimentos, declarada por el presidente “ asunto de seguridad nacional”. Durante la clausura del X Congreso de la Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños (ANAP), que encabeza Raúl Castro, el presidente de esa agrupación, Orlando Lugo, dijo que los campesinos se quejan de mecanismos burocráticos que impiden un buen funcionamiento del sector, según un informe de la televisión local. Lugo también destacó problemas como la “ poca diversificación de las producciones”, dificultades con “ la explotación de la tierra y los recursos” disponibles, la falta de incorporación de los jóvenes a la agricultura, y la “ atención a las cooperativas agrícolas” por el Estado. En intervenciones transmitidas por la televisión cubana, los campesinos señalaron la falta de transporte, insumos y otros asuntos burocráticos en la venta de sus producciones al Estado, que impiden más rendimientos. Un informe del diario *Juventud Rebelde*, que afirmó que el socialismo cubano está pidiendo una “ nueva mirada” a la agricultura, precisó “incongruencias” en los pagos que reciben los campesinos del Estado, “ el poco margen de autonomía de las cooperativas”, la desatención de empresas que suministran insumos básicos y “ dificultades con los créditos bancarios”. Cuba importa alimentos por valor de entre \$1,500 y \$2,000 millones, un 80 por ciento de lo que consume el país (*AFP*, 16/5/10).

**May 16:** Cuba's private farmers will purchase supplies directly in future instead of having them allocated by the state, the government said, in the latest concession to their demands for more autonomy. Economy Minister Marino Murillo made the announcement at the close of a congress of Cuba's 350,000 family farmers and members of private cooperatives, the largest private sector in the communist country where the state controls most economic activity. The farmers, who account for 70 percent of the food produced in Cuba using just 41 percent of the land, had pushed for more freedom to sell their produce and obtain supplies during meetings across the country before the congress. At issue are regulations guaranteeing the state's near monopoly of the agricultural system through a long-standing practice of contracting for 75 percent of farmers' production in return for fuel, pesticides, fertilizer and other supplies. The government had approved plans to modernize the economy and “create in the majority of municipalities supply markets where farmers can acquire directly the necessary resources to produce, substituting the current system of assigning resources centrally,” Murillo said. He said there were no plans to eliminate the state's monopoly on food sales. But, various farmers and cooperatives spoke during the congress about how they were selling more of their products directly to consumers and institutions such as schools and hospitals with positive results. Government statistics indicate that sugar, coffee and citrus production are at all-time lows, and non-sugar agriculture was down 13 percent through March ([Palabras de Murillo](#); *Reuters*, 16/5/10).

**Mayo 16:** El gobierno considera aplicar impuestos a los campesinos, anunció el ministro de Economía, Marino Murillo, durante el cierre del Congreso de la Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños (ANAP), al que asistió Raúl Castro. Según el ministro, esto “contribuirá a una redistribución de los ingresos, que aseguren los presupuestos de los servicios básicos que se prestan de forma gratuita por el Estado”. El funcionario dijo que en 1994, cuando se aprobó en la isla la Ley Tributaria, a los campesinos se les excluyó del pago de impuestos. Pero ahora “las circunstancias han cambiado”, añadió. La medida está “en estudio, en el marco de la actualización del modelo económico cubano”, que deberá aprobar el próximo VI congreso del

Partido Comunista (PCC, único), pospuesto indefinidamente ([Palabras de Murillo](#); *Diario de Cuba*, 17/5/10).

**May 17:** The Cuban government has begun renting its smaller city buses in Havana to the bus drivers in another minor move under President Raul Castro to ease the state's hand in Cuba's socialist economy. The program, launched several months ago and still not announced by the government, appears to be part of Castro's drive to improve the communist island's troubled economy by giving more incentive for Cubans to work harder. "They rented us the guaguas (buses). The (state) guarantees gasoline, we pay daily taxes and what is left is for us," said a driver this week while passengers filled the 16 seats of his Chinese-made Yutong bus in a Havana plaza. The smaller buses are used in Havana to connect the city center with the suburbs. The government has fixed ticket prices at five Cuban pesos, equal to 22 cents US And it provides fuel and the bus in exchange for a daily payment from the drivers of 824 pesos, or the equivalent of \$37 US. The drivers keep anything they make above that amount, and so far they say they are earning more than the average Cuban salary of about \$20 a month. "You have to work hard to make money, but it gives results," said another driver. The new system appears to be benefiting passengers, who say buses are coming much more frequently and on a timely basis than in the past (*Reuters*, 17/5/10).

**May 17:** Cuba and China corroborated in Beijing the advances of bilateral cooperation in biotechnology, during a tour of Shao Mingli, Commissioner of the State Administration for Food and Medicaments representing the Biotech Pharmaceutical joint venture. Shao, along with Cuban ambassador to Beijing, Carlos Miguel Pereira, and other top officials from his entity, were given a comprehensive report on the most successful project of cooperation between the two countries. During their tour of production, quality control and research areas, the visitors learned more about the work Cuban and Chinese specialists are carrying out in that entity created in August, 2000, the *Prensa Latina* news agency reported. The Chinese official pointed out that this visit marked the beginning of his next visit to the Caribbean island, when the two nations will explore ways to increase bonds in this sector (*ACN*, 17/5/10).

**May 17:** The Cuba and Madrid Chambers of Commerce are meeting in Havana to boost economic and commercial relations among the two countries. The Head of Cuban Chamber of Commerce Pedro Alvarez Borrego praised the progress made in the commercial exchange between Cuba and Spain, especially with Madrid. Spain is the third largest business partner (preceded by China and Venezuela in that order) while Cuba is important for the Spanish economy, said Alvarez in the meeting held at the Hotel Nacional. Alvarez said that Spain is the second destination for Cuban cigars, shrimps, coffee, and honey among other products. President of Madrid's Official Chamber of Commerce and Industry Salvador Santos Campano reported that his city's trade with Cuba stood for 20 percent of all Spanish exports to Cuba (some 450 million euros). It is a figure larger than everything Spain exported to any other country or all the Central America and the Caribbean region, said Santos Campano (*ACN*, 17/5/10).

**Mayo 17:** Sólo tres de las 13 provincias productoras de azúcar en Cuba han cumplido sus planes. La zafra azucarera de Cuba entró en sus últimos días con una producción que aún está por debajo de 1,100,000 toneladas, según estimados basados en medios y fuentes locales. Con un total de 15 a 20 ingenios aún moliendo, el país podría producir de 20,000 a 30,000 toneladas de azúcar sin

refinar necesarios para elevar la producción arriba de 1,1 millones de toneladas, en una zafra considerada como la peor en la isla desde 1905, según dijo *Granma*, el diario del gobernante Partido Comunista. “A escala nacional la actual zafra ha mostrado severas deficiencias y arrastra atrasos de más de 230.000 toneladas con respecto al plan”, dijo la estatal *Agencia de Información Nacional*. El Ministerio del Azúcar dijo al iniciarse la zafra de 2010 que la cosecha sería similar a la de 2009 o alrededor de 1,3 millones de toneladas. El ministro del Azúcar, Luis Manuel Ávila, renunció a su cargo este mes y fue reemplazado por Celso García Ramírez, según una nota del Gobierno. García Ramírez podría ser el último ministro en el cargo en la historia del país debido a que fuentes de negocios sostienen que el Ministerio del ramo cerrará en breve y será creada una compañía estatal especializada. Sólo tres de las 13 provincias productoras de azúcar en Cuba han cumplido sus planes y menos del 50 por ciento de los 46 molinos que abrieron la temporada este año han cumplido su plan (*Cubaencuentro*, 17/5/10).

**May 18:** Five tornados hit in the space of two hours Santa Teresa Town, nine kilometers west of Camaguey city, and preliminary reports mention two injured people and damages to 78 houses. The 214-inhabitant town, mostly ranchers and farmers, was severely battered by the gusts of wind that knocked down trees, electricity and phone poles, among other damages, according to statements made to *ACN* by the head of the San Blas Municipality Civil Defense Roberto Cruz Carmenate (*ACN*, 18/5/10).

**Mayo 18:** La Cámara de Comercio de Madrid ha pedido en Cuba “seguridad jurídica” para las empresas madrileña que operan en la isla, dijo el presidente de la entidad, Salvador Santos. El titular de la Cámara de Comercio madrileña encabeza una delegación empresarial que se encuentra de visita en la isla para consolidar las relaciones comerciales con Cuba y para “ayudar a los empresarios que están aquí y a otros que tenían intenciones de establecerse”, según explicó. En las reuniones que entre el 17 y el 18 de mayo han mantenido con responsables de varios ministerios cubanos y con la Cámara de Comercio de este país, los responsables de la institución cameral han pedido “seguridad jurídica” y el cumplimiento de los contratos con las firmas madrileñas en la isla. En sus reuniones con las autoridades de la isla, el presidente de la Cámara madrileña también ha conversado sobre el retraso de pagos y las retenciones de fondos de cuentas bancarias de empresas extranjeras a partir del 2009 debido a la crisis económica de la isla y la falta de liquidez que padece. Según la impresión de Santos, “parece que se va arreglando y solucionando” esa situación (*EFE*, 18/5/10).

**May 21:** A severe drought that has struck Cuba for the past eighteen months is affecting the water supplies of more than half a million people. Many in Havana spend much time carrying water in buckets from government trucks because their taps have dried up. The Cuban authorities have called on people to save every drop they can. Reservoir levels are low and farming has been badly hit. Cuba was once the world's biggest sugar ex-porter but the sector's long been in decline since the collapse of the main market, the Soviet Union. The drought is making things worse. Sugar cane quality control officer Guillermo Rodriguez said it had hardly rained all year. “There is some humidity in the soil because of two showers that we had recently that will keep the cane going a little. But if it doesn't rain, the sprouting of the cane will be at risk.” Climate experts have warned that droughts in Cuba have become more frequent and intense in recent decades. A major state project is aimed at using mountain rainfall to supply water to farms and the population (*EuroNews*, 21/5/10).

**May 21:** Cuban Construction Minister Fidel Figueroa affirmed in Havana that the sector is moving towards goals related to the building of large industrial works, starting from the 2011-2015 four-year period. In the presence of the over 300 delegates attending the 10th Construction Congress, he announced that, during this period, the expansion of hotel capacities at the main tourist areas of the island will continue, while at the same time the construction of houses will also increase, to reach the figure of 60,000 by 2014. He explained that this challenge entails an increase in the demand of skilled labor force, given the technological characteristics of these works, so it's necessary to work on the training of the staff. The minister called to increase efficiency, productivity and saving, and to make a better use of technological capacities. Figueroa highlighted the advances obtained in the investment process of the hydraulic network on the eastern side of the island, particularly in Santiago de Cuba province (*ACN*, 21/5/10).

**May 21:** Commander of the Revolution Ramiro Valdes, Vice President of the councils of State and Ministers, urged Cuban construction workers to immediately solve all the problems that damage the production of goods and services in this sector. Valdes was speaking to the 300 delegates participating in the Tenth Congress of the National Union of Construction Workers that is underway at the Lazaro Peña Theater of the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) in Havana. The leader highlighted the importance of creating spaces to discuss topics such as productivity, discipline and the implementation of double shifts wherever possible, among others. He added that efforts to fight crime and corruption in the sector are insufficient and noted that the administrative staff and trade unions have to fight together against this kind of behavior. Valdes stated that it is vital to rigorously comply with all legal requirements related to the investment process and pointed out that workers have to understand that no work can begin before the necessary funding for its execution is approved (*ACN*, 21/5/10).

**May 21:** Cuba plans to open underwater excursions to view six sunken vessels wrecked in 1898 off the island's shores during the Spanish-American War, the state-run Cubatur tourism firm said. From October 1, visitors will be able to dive around the wrecks of five Spanish warships that were trapped in Santiago bay in southeastern Cuba and sunk by US warships in a running naval battle on July 3, 1898. The five Spanish ships were the cruisers "Cristobal Colon," "Almirante Oquendo," and the "Vizcaya," and the destroyers "Furor," and "Pluton." The sixth sunken vessel was the US steamer "Merrimac," which the Americans scuttled at the mouth of the bay to block the escape of the Spanish fleet. Tourism is Cuba's main earner, ahead of medical services in other countries. The island receives 2.4 million tourists annually, who bring in some two billion dollars in revenue (*AFP*, 21/5/10).

**May 23:** Oil-rich Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez derided the US over last month's drilling rig accident in the US Gulf of Mexico, and said he sent oil experts to help its ally Cuba as the spill moves toward the island's northern coast. "This is very, very bad," Chavez said, regarding the oil spill and its environmental implications. "It's now threatening the coast of Cuba, so yesterday I sent a team to Cuba." Speaking during his weekly "Hello, President" television show, Chavez said Eulogio Del Pino, the head of production and exploration at state-run Petroleos de Venezuela, is leading a team of Venezuelan oil experts that will advise Cuba on how to handle the oil spill. The Venezuelan crew is already on the ground with the Cubans "doing some drills,

because the Cubans don't have experience in this,” Chavez said (*The Wall Street Journal*, 23/5/10).

**Mayo 24:** Bielorrusia negocia con La Habana la creación de un parque de tecnologías punteras y un centro para el desarrollo de programas informáticos, proyecto que requerirá de una inversión de entre 100 y 200 millones de dólares en los próximos cinco o seis años, dijo a la prensa Valeri Tsepkalo, director del Parque bielorruso de alta tecnología. “Se trata de ofrecer a nuestras empresas un centro (...) que aproveche los conocimientos, hábitos y tradiciones de la educación técnica cubana”, afirmó Tsepkalo. Opinó que esta educación, formada en el período de la cooperación entre Cuba y la Unión Soviética, “es la mejor de la región”. Añadió que el futuro parque tecnológico podría generar soluciones para los más diversos ramos, desde la refinación del crudo al sector bancario, así como desarrollar programas informáticos para turismo, telecomunicaciones, enseñanza y salud pública. Señaló que Minsk ve en Cuba “una puerta de acceso a los proyectos que se promueven en Latinoamérica”, en particular, Venezuela, donde ya se desarrollan importantes obras de cooperación con Bielorrusia. “Tenemos muy pocos técnicos que hablan español. Podremos implicar a los cubanos a través de empresas conjuntas”, dijo (*RIA Novosti*, 24/5/10).

**May 24:** Representing the island, Oscar Perez, Cuba’s Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade and Investment, participated in the 11th edition of the Trade and Investment Fair, underway in Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad and Tobago. The Fair, organized by the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association and the Ministry of Trade and Industry, is attended by entities from over 40 nations, the Cuban Foreign Ministry’s Web site reported. Perez was received by Mariano Browne, Minister of Trade and Industry, who expressed his country’s willingness to strengthen commercial relations with Cuba. The Cuban diplomat met with Patrick Manning, Prime Minister from Trinidad and Tobago, who, during his opening speech, acknowledged Cuba’s participation in the Fair. During his stay, Perez met with the president of the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association, executives from the South Trinidad Chamber, the Association of Caribbean Chambers of Commerce, and the Export-Import Bank, among others (*ACN*, 24/5/10).

**May 24:** About 20,000 workers will be relocated in eastern Cuban province of Holguin, said a provincial official. The transfer of the workers will depend on their professional skills and the real needs of the development of the province's industry and agriculture, said Miguel Cisneros, Director of Labor of the province. Cuba is planning to relocate 1 million workers as part of a strategy promoted by Cuban leader Raul Castro to make better use of the country's resources, including human resources. One million workers stand for almost 10 percent of Cuban population. According to officials, the relocation program has been initiated urgently in many economic sectors of the country, as labor forces are excessive in some sectors but insufficient in the others (*Xinhua*, 24/5/10).

**Mayo 25:** La aguda sequía que afecta a Cuba desde hace más de un año obligó a aplicar una redistribución del suministro de agua potable en algunas zonas de La Habana, según informó la televisión estatal. La medida consiste en la reorganización del horario de distribución del agua en las zonas que reciben un buen servicio para compartirlo con territorios en extrema sequía. Su aplicación comenzó en barrios de los municipios Habana Vieja, Centro Habana, Plaza de la Revolución, 10 de octubre y otros territorios de la capital cubana que sufren la escasez del agua

debido a que las principales fuentes que integran el sistema de abastecimiento continúan secas o deprimidas por la falta de lluvias. Un especialista indicó que se han ido tomando medidas por etapas como reducir los horarios de bombeo en fuentes de abasto, trasvases de agua, y los sistemas hidráulicos y sus pozos son regulados para que no se depriman pues los niveles de agua descienden por la ausencia de lluvias. La sequía, que comenzó a finales de 2008, está repercutiendo también en la agricultura de varias zonas de Cuba y en el abastecimiento de agua a las provincias orientales de Guantánamo, Santiago de Cuba y Holguín, en la central Sancti Spíritus y en la ciudad de La Habana, de acuerdo a informes oficiales. Autoridades del sector hidráulico y de la Defensa Civil han llamado a los cubanos a ahorrar agua debido a la prolongada temporada seca que marcó al año 2009 entre los cuatro de menos lluvias en los últimos 109 años (*EFE*, 25/5/10).

**Mayo 25:** La estatal Petróleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA) informó que inició el proceso para la creación de una empresa mixta con las petroleras Cupet S.A., de Cuba, y Sanangol, de Angola, para explotar unos 20 mil barriles diarios de crudo en el oriente venezolano. Las tres empresas firmaron “un Memorando de Entendimiento que da inicio al proceso de constitución de una empresa mixta”, en la que PDVSA contará con el 60% accionarial y Cupet y Sanangol con el 20% cada una. La empresa mixta desarrollará “actividades primarias en los campos Migas y Melones Oeste, ubicados en el estado Anzoátegui”, en el oriente venezolano, indicó el comunicado de la estatal petrolera (*EFE*, 25/5/10).

**Mayo 26:** The fishing fleet from the central Cuban province of Cienfuegos closed this shrimp campaign with capture levels over the million pounds (480 tons), while achieving high efficiency in the process. Fishermen from this fleet witnessed one of the highest concentrations of the crustacean in the past years in the waters around the Jardines de la Reina archipelago. The year’s plan of 691 000 pounds was fulfilled by the end of February, and since the weather stood appropriate for the activity, the fleet readied for a large campaign. Union leader Cecilio Padilla said than from January 13, when the close season ended to the end of campaign, they worked 128 uninterrupted days, even when the weather changed and the supplies ships couldn’t reach them (*ACN*, 26/5/10).

**May 26:** The works for the laying of the submarine cable between Venezuela and Cuba are underway, with the arrival in the harbor of this city of the explorer ship RV Ridley Thomas. This specialized vessel is responsible for the sounding to determine the exact course the cable will have, said Anthony Pyne, director of the company of geological projects designated for this task. The marine sounding began on May 5 in the vicinity of Maiquetía airport in Caracas, Venezuela, and continues for the over 5 340 kilometers to Siboney beach, Santiago de Cuba, reported the *CMKC* station's digital site. The second stage, which runs from Jamaica to Aguadores, will have another 200 kilometers of length. The submarine cable is one of the ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America) projects, and will benefit Cuba and Venezuela, and will also provide communication options to other nations in the Caribbean (*ACN*, 26/5/10).

**May 28:** Cuba and Belarus signed a cooperation agreement to produce drugs against low-molecular-weight tumors after a research study carried out by the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and the Cuban Center for Molecular Immunology Research in Havana. The document was signed during a recent visit of a delegation from the European country to Cuba,

according to the website of the Cuban Foreign Ministry. Both sides agreed to join efforts to expand markets to sell cytostatic agents produced by the Cuban Center for Molecular Immunology Research in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and in Latin America. The vice president of Belarus, Victor Burya, said last May 23, in Minsk, that his government is willing to continue developing bilateral commercial, scientific and technical cooperation with Cuba (ACN, 28/5/10).

**May 28:** The Spanish hotel chain Barceló Hotels Resorts will expand its offer in Cuba next July with the opening of Arenas Blancas, a four-star hotel with 358 rooms, at the Varadero resort in central Matanzas province. Arenas Blancas and the Solymar hotel will combine to form the Barceló Solymar-Arenas Blancas all-inclusive complex with 883 rooms. With this new facility, Barceló has six hotels and over 3,000 rooms in Cuba, which makes the island the third most important destination of this Spanish group in Latin America only behind Mexico and the Dominican Republic. This Spanish company from Majorca also manages two five-star facilities in Varadero: the Barceló Marina Palace and Cayo Libertad, with 548 and 85 rooms, respectively (ACN, 28/5/10).

**May 28:** Cuban Vice President of the councils of State and Ministers Commander of the Revolution Ramiro Valdes urged workers in central Cienfuegos province to stabilize the production of cement. During a visit to the Karl Marx cement plant, which belongs to the Cienfuegos S.A. Cement Company, Valdes highlighted the need to comply with a strategy and schedule to guarantee the stability of the national housing program. The Cuban leader asked for details about the modernization of the production process and the high level of automation in the plant, which has significantly contributed to higher efficiency and energy saving, *Granma* newspaper reported. Ramiro Valdes was also interested in the prospects to manufacture PVC houses after the completion of a process of technological improvement that will allow the plant to produce around 2,300 of these houses per year (ACN, 28/5/10).

**May 28:** Red flags went up on beaches in western Cuba, closing them briefly to swimmers amid rumours that the BP oil spill in the US part of the Gulf of Mexico was forcing sharks into Cuban waters. The government, through state-run press, quickly denounced the rumours as false and the beaches were reopened, but the incident reflected fears that the massive spill will reach Cuba and wreak havoc on an island still relatively untouched by modernity's environmental ills. "Cuba, like all the countries in this area, is worried about the situation in the Gulf," said Osmani Borrego Fernandez, a director at the Guanahacabibes National Park at Cuba's western tip. So far, he said, there has been no evidence of the oil, but "we are alert." A trip along Cuba's coastline is like a trip back in time where vast stretches of palm-fringed beaches sit undeveloped and sea life abounds in the crystalline waters. While rampant development and overfishing have damaged coastlines and depleted seas around the world, communist-led Cuba has been largely preserved by its slow economic pace. Cuba's northwest coast is considered most in danger from the oil. It is there that coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangroves provide major breeding grounds for many fish and sea creatures, including endangered migratory species like sea turtles, sharks and manatees. All that is at stake if the BP oil finds its way to Cuba. It could also damage Cuba's tourism industry, which is centered on beaches and to a lesser degree eco-tourism. Tourism brought in more than \$2 billion to Cuba last year, or about 20 percent of Cuban's foreign exchange income. The good news for Cuba is that the spill is still centered about 300 miles (483

km) northwest of the island and BP may finally be gaining control over the massive leak (*Reuters*, 28/5/10).

**Mayo 28:** El gobierno invirtió 600 millones de dólares en los últimos cinco años para rehabilitar el deteriorado sistema de ferrocarril de la isla, sin lograr los resultados esperados, informó el diario oficial *Granma*. “El país asume hoy un problema contradictorio: no se ha trabajado adecuadamente en la solución de las dificultades que presentan las líneas férreas” pese a que “en los últimos cinco años cerca de 600 millones de dólares han sido destinados” a “la compra de tecnologías y equipos modernos”, indicó el reporte. El plan de inversiones, realizado a partir de créditos otorgados por países como Irán y China, busca “revertir el grave deterioro del ferrocarril, muy golpeado por las limitaciones económicas y la falta de mantenimiento”, señaló el diario. Mencionó entre los problemas que frenan el programa la falta de capacitación laboral, “fiscalización del trabajo” y los bajos salarios. El director de Negocios de la Unión de Ferrocarriles de Cuba, Pedro Peñón, dijo que las inversiones se realizan en dos líneas fundamentales: la compra de locomotoras y vagones, y de maquinarias y herramientas para mejorar vías (*Diario de Cuba*, 30/5/10).

**Mayo 29:** El científico cubano Humberto Ríos, ganador del Premio Goldman 2010 para el medioambiente, recomendó al gobierno de Raúl Castro un modelo agrícola “menos centralizado” y con “el mínimo de burocracia” para elevar la producción de alimentos. “Urge echar a andar un modelo menos centralizado, en el cual las decisiones que se tomen, tengan en cuenta el escenario local y éste sea más participativo” y “con el mínimo de burocracia”, declaró Ríos, investigador del Instituto de Ciencias Agrícolas de La Habana, en una entrevista divulgada por el diario oficial *Juventud Rebelde*. Ríos destacó que la producción de alimentos, declarada por Raúl Castro asunto de “seguridad nacional”, depende de la capacidad de “virar (cambiar) el modelo que ahora tenemos” de “agricultura industrial”, que es “insostenible”. El experto consideró necesario fomentar “la agricultura orgánica” como “un modelo sustentable para el desarrollo”. Así “producimos más con menos”, apuntó. El Premio Ambiental Goldman, considerado el “Nobel Verde”, fue creado en 1990 por los líderes cívicos y filántropos Richard N. Golman y su esposa, Rhoda H. Goldman (*AFP*, 30/5/10).

## Exile Community

**May 2:** A strong Matanzas breeze stirred flags of two countries and the white outfits of about 30 mostly Cuban-born Floridians as they marched along St. Augustine’s bayfront. The march, led by 91-year-old Fidela Carballeira, recognized Cuba’s Ladies in White, the group of women who march each week in Cuba to protest the country’s 2003 imprisonment of 75 government protesters and journalists. “Peace and quiet! Quiet to the Plaza de la Constitucion,” St. Augustine resident Nancy Mudry told the marchers before her mother led the nearly silent precession from the Visitors Information Center on Castillo Drive to a small ceremony in Plaza de la Constitucion. “We never give up our hope,” Mudry said of prospects for the prisoners’ release. “Something has to happen to give us the freedom after 50 years of communist dictatorship.” The number of Cubans imprisoned by the Fidel Castro government in the “Black Spring” of 2003 has dropped from 75 to just more than 50. Some were released due to ill health. Others have died. A prayer in the Plaza honored Orlando Zapata Tamayo, a prisoner who died in February after an 80-day hunger strike. The group sang the Cuban National Anthem. “ Then Mudry led the

marchers — and a few people who stopped to listen and sing — in a Spanish rendition of the Lord’s Prayer. Carrying American and Cuban flags, marchers paused in front of the Cathedral Basilica and a statue of the late Cuban priest and civil rights champion Father Felix Varela (*The St. Augustine Record*, 3/5/10).

**Mayo 4:** El ex comandante cubano Huber Matos aseguró que apoya al disidente Guillermo Fariñas en su decisión de mantener la huelga de hambre que inició hace más de dos meses a pesar de que grupos de la oposición le han pedido que deponga la protesta y utilice otros medios. Matos, ex comandante de la revolución cubana y preso político durante 20 años en la isla, dijo que a Fariñas, quien exige la liberación de 26 presos de conciencia enfermos en Cuba, “hay que apoyarlo incondicionalmente sea cual sea el desenlace” de su caso. “La huelga de hambre es el recurso desesperado de un individuo que se ve ignorado. La posición de Fariñas pone presión y plantea una cuestión de honor ante un régimen despótico que no entiende razones”, manifestó. Matos se distanció así de la posición de un grupo de 88 opositores y activistas de derechos humanos en Cuba que a finales de abril pidió a Fariñas que abandone su huelga de hambre para liderar una recogida de 10,000 firmas en la isla para exigir al gobierno la excarcelación de los presos políticos (*EFE*, 4/5/10).

**May 7:** Francisco Aguabella, an Afro-Cuban percussionist considered a master sacred drummer who also had a wide-ranging career in jazz and salsa, has died. He was 84. Aguabella died of cancer at his Los Angeles home, said his daughter Menina Givens. His career “bears testimony to the existence and continuity of a sacred tradition in dancing and music that has been present throughout the development of popular music in the Afro-Cuban style,” University of California Irvine professor Raul Fernandez said in his 2006 book *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz*. Aguabella was a sacred drummer of the Santeria religion who left Cuba in the 1950s to work with dancer and choreographer Katherine Dunham on the movie *Mambo*. He went on to perform with Dizzy Gillespie, Tito Puente, Peggy Lee, Frank Sinatra, Eddie Palmieri, Carlos Santana, the Doors and many others (*Los Angeles Times*, 9/5/10).

**Mayo 18:** La escritora cubana Zoe Valdés lideró un acto de apoyo a las Damas de Blanco cubanas amparado por el Ayuntamiento de París y apadrinado por la organización Reporteros Sin Fronteras (RSF) y por la Federación Internacional de Derechos Humanos (FIDH). “Estamos aquí por solidaridad con las Damas de Blanco, que son esas mujeres que desde hace siete años caminan solas por las calles de La Habana pidiendo la libertad de periodistas, de poetas, de escritores, de educadores y de bibliotecarios independientes que desde hace siete años han sido condenados”, explicó Valdés. La autora de títulos como *La ficción Fidel*, *La nada cotidiana* o *Te di la vida entera*, residente en París, agradeció a la capital francesa el apoyo y recordó que sobre la fachada del Ayuntamiento cuelga un cartel que compromete a la ciudad con la libertad de “todos los rehenes del mundo”. Ante unas cincuenta personas, los presentes recordaron al disidente cubano Orlando Zapata, fallecido tras 85 días de huelga de hambre y llamaron al derrocamiento del régimen de Raúl Castro (*EFE*, 18/5/10).

**May 20:** The body of a Cuban exile slain on the island two weeks ago has been returned to Miami, and a Naples funeral home will handle funeral services, family members said. Meanwhile, the woman's injured husband has been ordered to remain in Cuba pending the end of an official investigation in the case, the family said. The couple, Layda Licet Recio and Rolando

Suárez, were attacked and beaten while visiting relatives in Cuba in early May. Recio died from a blow to the head. Suárez had been hospitalized but was released earlier this week. "He is better now, but the government in Cuba won't let him come home until the investigation concludes," Aurelia Rodríguez, mother of the slain woman, said. Her daughter's body arrived at Miami International Airport and was transported to Muller-Thompson Funeral Chapel in Naples. Recio's family in Florida lives in Lehigh Acres, near Naples (*The Miami Herald*, 20/5/10).

**Mayo 20:** El preso cubanoamericano Yamil Domínguez Ramos fue internado en el hospital de la cárcel Combinado del Este, de La Habana, tras sufrir varios desvanecimientos como consecuencia de la huelga de hambre que realiza desde hace 37 días, informaron sus familiares a *Diario de Cuba*. Domínguez Ramos, ciudadano norteamericano, cumple una condena de 10 años por "tráfico de personas". A pesar de que su estado es cada vez más delicado, persiste en la decisión de llevar hasta las últimas consecuencias su ayuno, como protesta contra lo que considera fue un proceso judicial manipulado y violatorio de sus derechos y los de sus familiares en Cuba. El ingreso en el hospital fue comunicado a la familia por el doctor Alexis Rodríguez. El 17 de mayo los médicos de la prisión suministraron al reo el primer suero, después de que este sufriera desvanecimientos. Domínguez dijo haber tenido al menos otros dos episodios de debilidad, pero afirmó que en esas ocasiones no recibió atención médica. El doctor Rodríguez mostró a la hermana y a la pareja del preso su hoja clínica. Domínguez ha perdido 23kg de peso y su presión arterial ha descendido hasta 100 con 60. La familia dijo que se encuentra ahora a la espera de nuevas informaciones, que dependen de la solidaridad de compañeros de prisión de Domínguez, ya que el régimen carcelario sólo permite una visita semanal en casos de ingreso (*Diario de Cuba*, 21/5/10).

**Mayo 22:** Un numeroso grupo de exiliados salió a las calles de Miami para reclamar por el respeto de los derechos humanos en Cuba y defender el trabajo de la oposición en la isla, informó *El Nuevo Herald*. La marcha se inició poco después del mediodía partiendo del monumento a los mártires de Bahía de Cochinos, en la Calle Ocho y la avenida 13 del suroeste, y continuó hasta la Antorcha de la libertad, en el *downtown* de Miami. "En estos momentos, más que nunca, hay que salir a las calles porque se está acercando la hora de una Cuba libre", dijo Joel Riverón, de 36 años, miembro de la organización de la protesta. El llamado a alzar la voz por una Cuba que respete la integridad de las personas se hizo a través de redes sociales y plataformas en internet. De hecho, Miami fue una de 18 ciudades en 12 países que entre el 20 y el 22 de mayo pidieron justicia por la muerte del disidente Orlando Zapata Tamayo. Una procesión de la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre lideró la caminata, al tiempo que los manifestantes, vestidos de blanco en honor a las Damas de Blanco y a la oposición interna en general, pedían justicia. Además de Miami se unieron a la cadena ciudades como Bogotá, Buenos Aires, Madrid, Florencia y París, entre otras (*Diario de Cuba*, 23/5/10).

**May 25:** A female artist has accused a Cuban diplomat of biting her during a protest outside the Cuban embassy in Norway's capital, leaving her needing to take antibiotics, media reported. Alexandra Joner, a 19-year-old Norwegian-Cuban woman, alleged that the diplomat—the wife of the Cuban ambassador—had attacked her on the sidelines of the pro-democracy demonstration on May 22. "She stepped in front of me. I didn't say anything. But then she started insulting me in Spanish. She took pictures of me, and I asked her to stop," Joner, who was filming the event, told the *TV2 News Channel*. "I put my hand in front of the camera and then she bit me," Joner

added. The incident appeared to be partially corroborated by the film Joner was shooting at the time, while local media have published pictures showing bite-marks on her left hand. The Cuban embassy in Oslo did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Members of Norway's centre-right opposition have demanded that the diplomat be expelled from the country. Norwegian Foreign ministry spokesman Bjoern Jahnsen however said "we have heard nothing about this from the police and we are only familiar with this affair through what has been published in the media." "If the alleged incident leads to a police report, then the foreign ministry will be drawn into the case," he added (*Times Live, Diario de Cuba, 25/5/10*).

**Mayo 24:** Un grupo del exilio cubano alertó sobre la grave situación de dos presos políticos en Cuba y pidió a la comunidad internacional y a organizaciones de derechos humanos interceder a favor de los disidentes. Janisset Rivero, secretaria nacional adjunta del Directorio Democrático Cubano (DDC), dijo en una conferencia de prensa que Egberto Escobedo Morales y Juan Ramón Rivero de Espagne sufren de un serio deterioro de salud por la huelga de hambre que llevan a cabo ambos. Escobedo Morales, recluido en la prisión Cerámica Roja en Camagüey, está "vomitando sangre y también perdiendo sangre por vía intestinal". El disidente cumple 39 días en huelga de hambre en protesta por las condiciones "inhumanas en las cárceles castristas" y le es negada atención médica que requiere su estado de salud, según la activista. Noris Morales, madre del reo político, pidió a la comunidad internacional que la ayude, que no permita que "le pase a mi hijo lo que le sucedió a Orlando Zapata Tamayo", quien falleció recientemente en Cuba después de un prolongado ayuno. El DDC también abogó a favor de Rivero de Espagne, quien comenzó su huelga de hambre el 4 de mayo y fue "brutalmente agredido por agentes de la policía política y sus carceleros el día 14 de mayo". "Desde esa misma prisión, el prisionero de conciencia cubano Luis Enrique Ferrer García envió una denuncia y responsabilizó al régimen de los hermanos Castro por la vida de Juan Ramón Rivero de Espagne", dijo el DDC (*Cubanet, 25/5/10*).

**Mayo 25:** Más de 25,000 cubanos se instalaron en España en el período 2006-2009, según el Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas de ese país (INE). Actualmente residen en España 103,874 personas que nacieron en la isla, de acuerdo con cifras preliminares del padrón municipal hasta el 1 de enero de 2010. Estos datos se refieren a cubanos registrados en los ayuntamientos, requisito indispensable para recibir atención médica y educación gratuitas, incluyendo a los indocumentados. En el año 2006 vivían en España algo más de 79,000 cubanos. Por comunidades autónomas (regiones), las Islas Canarias acogen actualmente a la mayor cantidad, con 24,308. Le siguen Madrid (19,559) y Cataluña (15,563). Del total sólo tienen nacionalidad española unos 47,000 (*Diario de Cuba, 25/5/10*).

**Mayo 27:** La organización Cuba Democracia ¡Ya! acusó al gobierno cubano de intentar distraer la atención de la comunidad internacional, tras el anuncio del traslado de los presos políticos a las cárceles más cercanas a sus lugares de origen con el objetivo de socavar el trabajo de la oposición. "El régimen castrista utiliza un canal efectivo con repercusión internacional para entretener a la opinión pública y debilitar los avances de la oposición cubana", reza el comunicado facilitado por la organización. El texto advirtió de que esta estrategia del régimen liderado por Raúl Castro pone en riesgo un futuro proceso de "transición a la libertad, la democracia, la estabilidad nacional y el porvenir del pueblo cubano". "Los demócratas cubanos no deberíamos cambiar lingotes de oro por espejitos y lentejuelas. Pedimos que nadie dé un paso

atrás por la posible liberación de algunos presos políticos o el traslado de algunos otros a hospitales. Que nadie olvide que la dictadura castrista es una fábrica de encarcelar inocentes”, recoge el documento. En este sentido, la organización instó a los opositores de dentro y fuera de la isla a no abandonar la lucha pacífica “por la libertad y la democracia en Cuba” y a “mantenerse firme”, a pesar del gesto del régimen hacia los presos políticos (*Europa Press*, 27/5/10).

## Foreign Affairs

**May 1:** Cuban President Raul Castro met José Luis Centella, general secretary of the Spanish Communist Party in Havana, *Granma* newspaper reported. The meeting was held after the May Day parade, and Raul was accompanied by First Vice-President Jose Ramon Machado Ventura. Raul and Centella spoke of international events and of the relations between the two communist Parties (*ACN*, 3/5/10).

**May 3:** The President of the Cuban Parliament, Ricardo Alarcon, met with the vice president of the Permanent Committee of that governmental body in China, Uyunqing, at the National Hotel in Havana. Alarcon thanked the Chinese government for its permanent support of Cuba against the US aggressive policy towards Cuba and expressed his condolences for the earthquake that swept the southern province of Qinghai on April 13 leaving more than 2,000 deaths. Alarcon said the Cuban government wishes for the two countries to strengthen mutual trade relations and for China to continue investing in Cuba. Uyunqing thanked the Cuban host for the warm welcome offered to his delegation and praised the political and social achievements of the Cuban Revolution under the leadership of Fidel and Raul Castro (*ACN*, 3/5/10).

**May 3:** Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, member of the Politburo of the Central Committee (CC) of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) and First Vice-president of the councils of State and Ministers, met with Uyunqing, Vice-president of the Standing Committee of the 11th National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China, on an official visit to the island at the invitation of the National Assembly of the People’s Power (Parliament) of the Republic of Cuba. Also participating in the meeting were, for China, Liu Yunquin, ambassador of that country to Cuba, and other members of the official delegation; and, for Cuba, Ricardo Alarcon, president of the National Assembly of the People’s Power; its vice-president, Jaime Crombet; and deputy Caridad Diego, head of the Office for Religious Affairs of the CC of the PCC and president of the Cuba-China Friendship Parliamentary Group (*ACN*, 3/5/10).

**May 3:** The leader of Spain’s centrist UPyD party confirmed that she is in Cuba to meet with dissident groups. “Being Europeans obligates us to defend democracy and human rights, and not only trade and business,” Spanish lawmaker Rosa Diez told *Efe* in Havana. She criticized the fact that, in Cuba’s case, the Socialist government of Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero “wants to reduce the demands on the (Castro) regime” during Spain’s turn in the European Union rotating presidency. Diez arrived in Havana on May 2 and she has already met with dissident Oswaldo Paya, the promoter of Project Varela. The UPyD leader praised Project Varela for “extraordinary work under complicated conditions.” Meanwhile, Paya told the press that Diez visited him at his home, a meeting that was “full of confidence and transparency, among personal friends” and not “a mystery, nor clandestine, nor was her entry into Cuba.” “She is very concerned about the

situation of the political prisoners and the Cuban reality and believes it's a very positive approach for we Cubans to resolve our problems among Cubans," Paya said. Paya insisted that Diez's visit was "as a friend and as a Spaniard," adding that "we have much in common due to her universal vocation for the defense of human rights" and also due to "the lack of understanding and the criticisms that she has suffered for defending them." He recalled that he met Diez when he traveled to Europe to accept the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for activism on behalf of human rights (*EFE*, 4/5/10).

**May 3:** Cuba is the developing country that provides the best conditions for motherhood, according to Save the Children's State of the World's Mothers 2010 report. The report made public examines 160 countries – 43 developed and 117 developing ones – and analyzes the best and worst places to be a mother based on 10 factors such as the educational status, health, economic circumstances and politics of the mothers, as well as the basic well-being of children. Within Latin America, Cuba is in first place on the list of the best developing countries in which to be a mother, while Argentina is in third place, Uruguay in seventh, Costa Rica in 12th, followed by Chile, Colombia and Brazil. Save the Children is issuing an urgent call to increase the number of health care workers in the world's poorest nations, given that 343,000 women lose their lives because of complications during pregnancy or birth and almost 9 million children die before their fifth birthdays in those countries (*LAHT*, 3/5/10).

**May 4:** Friends of a Calgary man are in shock after learning of his mysterious death while on vacation in Cuba. Rick Shaughnessy, a former home delivery supervisor for *The Sun*, had been enjoying the island hotspot with his girlfriend when he died suddenly on May 1<sup>st</sup>, prompting Cuban authorities to call for an autopsy. Stew MacMillan, who has known the 56-year-old Shaughnessy for several years, said details surrounding his death remain vague, with explanations ranging from stepping on a poisonous fish to succumbing to an infection. Gord Sawyer, president of the Edmonton Rush lacrosse team, recently lived with Shaughnessy for two years and was stunned to hear of the strange passing of his friend. "It's very mysterious — we're trying to piece it all together but we have to wait until they do the autopsy in Cuba," he said. Having talked to Shaughnessy just before he left on the trip, Sawyer said he's still waiting for the whole story behind his friend's death. Family friend Reg Skippen has been in contact with both family and Shaughnessy's girlfriend who was flying home on May 3 after Cuban authorities refused to disclose any details of his death because she isn't kin. "Nobody really knows what happened and we won't until they do the autopsy," he said, adding there is some concern they will have to pay the Cuban government to have his body returned to Canada (*Toronto Sun*, 4/5/10).

**Mayo 4:** El Defensor del Pueblo, Enrique Múgica Herzog, ha abierto una investigación sobre la presunta organización sistemática por parte de la Embajada y los consulados de Cuba en España de "actos de repudio" contra actividades en contra del régimen castrista en territorio español. Así lo manifiesta Múgica en la carta remitida a los cinco peregrinos que realizaron el "Camino por la Libertad de Cuba" y que recorrieron el Camino de Santiago en abril en solidaridad con la disidencia cubana y que habían denunciado ser objeto de estos actos y que fue difundida por la plataforma Cuba Democracia Ya, y la campaña "Yo acuso" creada a raíz de la muerte del preso político Orlando Zapata. "Le informo que se ha iniciado el estudio del asunto que ha sido sometido a nuestra consideración y se le mantendrá puntualmente informado de toda la

tramitación relativa al mismo”, reza la carta del Defensor del Pueblo, fechada el pasado 21 de abril. El asunto al que se refiere Múgica es la denuncia que hicieron los cinco peregrinos --cuatro cubanos y un español-- que, tras su llegada a Santiago de Compostela el pasado día 9 de abril, fueron abucheados e increpados por partidarios del régimen castrista frente al consulado cubano en dicha ciudad, mientras eran fotografiados y filmados por funcionarios cubanos desde las ventanas de la legación diplomática, explica el comunicado de las citadas organizaciones. Lo ocurrido en Santiago, añaden las organizaciones, se sumó a “los diferentes actos de repudio y contramanifestaciones que las personas que protestan pacíficamente ante delegaciones diplomáticas cubanas se encuentran de forma sistemática y habitual en territorio español” (*Europa Press*, 4/5/10).

**May 4:** Cuba will send a medical brigade to Sierra Leone as a part of recently signed cooperation program funded by the government of South Africa. South African International Relations and Cooperation minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, and Sierra Leone’s Foreign Affairs minister Zainab Bangura, signed a memorandum of Understanding through which South Africa committed to provide three million US dollars over a three year period for the deployment of a Cuban medical brigade in Sierra Leone. According to the Cuban embassy to South Africa, Sierra Leone’s foreign minister said the signing of the document is a long-awaited culmination of a process that started three years ago. She said the South-South project comes as much needed support because of the dramatic shortage of skilled medical personnel in her country (*ACN*, 4/5/10).

**May 4:** An exhibition portraying Cuba’s and Canada’s nature was opened in the eastern province of Holguin as part of a cultural exchange project between the island and the region of Quebec. “Vision of the Flora and Fauna of Cuba and Quebec” is the title of the exhibit inaugurated at the Alba Academy of Plastic Arts. The display is made up of 25 works by students of the Holguin’s academy and Montreal’s College de Bois-de-Boulogne. This cultural exchange emerged in 2008 after an informal meeting between Professor Marie Louise Pepin, with the Quebecois College, and his Cuban colleague Ernesto Blanco, with the Alba Academy. The exhibit is dedicated to Canadian scientist Andre Bouchard, who was very close with Cuba and who recently passed away leaving a botanical research he started on the central-eastern region of the island (*ACN*, 4/5/10).

**May 4:** Cuban President Raul Castro met with Japanese Agriculture, Forest and Fishing Minister Hirotaka Akamatsu in Havana. Raul and Akamatsu held talks where they tackled bilateral relations and their intention to strengthen them, as well as other international topics, according to *Granma* newspaper. The Cuban delegation in this meeting was made up of Agriculture Minister Ulises Rosales del Toro and Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla. On the Japanese side was the Ambassador to Cuba Masuo Nishibayashi (*ACN*, 5/5/10).

**May 5:** Participants in the 6th “Presence of Paulo Freire” International Meeting, underway until May 9 in Cienfuegos, advocated in this city for a better community work. Attending the meeting are delegates from Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Canada and the United States, who will debate issues related to the necessary systematization of social, educational and artistic practices. Mariano Isla, coordinator of the National Center for Culture Training (CNSC), explained that

the event will make it possible for participants to have direct contact with the population, thus breaking barriers created by foreign mass media to distort Cuban reality. He added that the event's program includes an interactive conference in charge of Oscar Jara Holliday, coordinator of the ALFORJA Regional Popular Education Network and the International Systematization Network (ACN, 5/5/10).

**May 5:** The Vatican's foreign minister is traveling to Cuba next month to lead discussions on the island's economic challenges and the effects of emigration and the families torn apart by it. Roman Catholic Archbishop Dominique Mamberti will mark Catholic Social Week June 12-20 by leading discussions among church leaders from around the island, as well as elders from other religions, said Orlando Marquez, spokesman for Havana's Conference of Bishops. Topics debated will include "the necessity for dialogue and reconciliation among Cubans," specifically the divide between islanders and those who left for the United States and now form part of the outspoken Cuban-American exile community. Also on the agenda are "the challenges the nation's economy faces" and "the complexities of today's Cuban society," according to a statement from the Havana Archbishop's Office. Mamberti is the first top Vatican official to come since Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, secretary of state to Pope Benedict XVI, visited Cuba in February 2008. Word of Mamberti's visit comes as the church has played an increasingly visible role in helping soothe tensions over Cuba's human rights record — while also raising concerns about economic woes (AFP, AP, 6/5/10).

**Mayo 5:** Manuel Aguilera de la Paz, embajador de Cuba en México, arremetió en contra de la "ultraderecha mexicana" que, afirmó, trató de poner al Senado de la República en contra de su país. Dijo que se trató de "una infame campaña mediática" contra Cuba generada por Estados Unidos. Al encabezar un acto de apoyo a los cinco cubanos presos en Estados Unidos acusados de espionaje y terrorismo, Aguilera señaló: "Se trató de una maniobra de la ultraderecha que pretendió sumar al Senado mexicano, que siempre ha sido solidario con Cuba a esta infame campaña de descrédito contra nuestro país desatada por el imperio, como parte de la guerra sucia, la guerra que libra Cuba y que fracasó". Aguilera de la Paz se refirió al reciente debate generado en el Senado por alertar sobre la muerte del activista Orlando Zapata, cuyo deceso se dio luego de una prolongada huelga de hambre. El diplomático acusó a medios de comunicación impresos en México de haberse sumado a la campaña de descrédito patrocinada por el "imperio" (Apro, 5/5/10).

**Mayo 5:** Diecisiete cubanos indocumentados fueron secuestrados y torturados en una casa de seguridad del balneario sureño de Cancún, costas del Caribe, por traficantes de personas, también cubanos, apoyados por miembros de la banda "Los Zetas". Durante tres días, en octubre, los cubanos permanecieron confinados en la vivienda, golpeados y sometidos a descargas eléctricas, hasta que fuerzas del Ejército irrumpieron en el lugar y los liberaron, escribió el matutino *Milenio*. Una banda de cubanos radicados en Florida exigía el pago de 10,000 dólares por cada persona indocumentada a cambio de dejarla libre, para lo cual contó con la protección en México de "Los Zetas". Al parecer los cubanos de Miami pagan "derecho de piso" a la organización criminal mexicana (ANSA, 5/5/10).

**Mayo 6:** La ministra mauritana de Asuntos Exteriores y Cooperación, Naha Mint Muknas, y su homólogo cubano, Bruno Rodríguez, firmaron en La Habana un acuerdo entre cancillerías para iniciar “contactos” y “cooperación” bilateral. Muknas, quien llegó a La Habana para una visita oficial que durará varios días, fue recibida por Rodríguez en la sede de la Cancillería en la capital cubana, donde sostuvieron conversaciones oficiales. La jefa de la diplomacia mauritana afirmó que fue enviada por el presidente Mohamed Uld Abdelaziz para “estrechar vínculos” con Cuba y fortalecer las relaciones existentes. Rodríguez resaltó que Muknas es la primera canciller de Mauritania que visita la isla, y agradeció la “tradicional posición” de apoyo a Cuba de ese país africano ante los organismos internacionales y en el Movimiento de Países No Alineados (*EFE*, 6/5/10).

**May 7:** Cuba has already given medical assistance in Haiti -during the emergency situation and as part of the Health Reconstruction Program in that nation- to 345,689 patients in the over 110 days elapsed since the earthquake. According to reports by the Cuban Medical Coordinating Group in the territory, more than 1,100 people, between Cubans and graduates and students from Havana’s Latin American Medical School (ELAM), are offering these services throughout that fraternal country. Over 8,000 surgeries have been made during this period, as well as 1,629 deliveries. Meanwhile, 73,510 Haitians have been vaccinated against tetanus and other diseases, and 74,657 patients have received rehabilitation services. In coordination with Haitian authorities, the Cuban staff has also contributed to the program for the mitigation of the psychological and social damage caused by the earthquake, with 547 mental health actions that have included recreational activities, games and sports, among others, in which over 121,000 children and youngsters have participated. These efforts are part of the fulfilment of the accords reached by the countries that are members of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA), to implement a project to rebuild the Haitian health system and provide it with equipment (*ACN*, 8/5/10).

**May 7:** Cuban health experts have registered and provided medical assistance to nearly one million disabled people in countries of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA). The Cuban doctors have led the study in Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and San Vicente and the Grenadines, and their home country, *Juventud Rebelde* reported. Cuban Deputy Health Minister Marcia Cobas said such a figure had never been reached in the whole history of Latin America and the Caribbean. She said the Cuban doctors not only visited those patients in their very humble houses for a census but also to provide medical assistance and — based on their most pressing needs— give them wheel chairs, mattresses, medicines and other items. Cobas said the study has not been finished in Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and Ecuador, where some 500 doctors continue working (*ACN*, 8/5/10).

**May 8:** Cuban Vice President Esteban Lazo was received by Costa Rican President Laura Chinchilla Miranda in San Jose. During the meeting, which took place in a cordial and open environment, Lazo passed on greetings from Cuban President Raul Castro, and both sides expressed their interest in strengthening and expanding bilateral relations. A Cuban delegation headed by the Cuban vice president participated in the swearing-in ceremony of the new Costa Rican head of state (*Juventud Rebelde*, 9/5/10; *ACN*, 10/5/10).

**Mayo 8:** Cuba y Rusia celebraron los 50 años del restablecimiento de sus relaciones diplomáticas con un acto en La Habana, donde representantes de ambos gobiernos resaltaron la intensidad y perspectivas de los vínculos bilaterales, informaron medios oficiales. En el acto, celebrado el 7 de mayo, estuvieron presentes el vicepresidente de la Cámara de Diputados rusa, Iván Mélnikov; uno de los vicepresidentes del Consejo de Ministros de Cuba, Ricardo Cabrisas; el canciller Bruno Rodríguez y el presidente de la Asamblea Nacional, Ricardo Alarcón. El diario *Granma*, portavoz del gobernante Partido Comunista de Cuba, indicó que el ministro ruso de Relaciones Exteriores, Serguei Lavrov, envió un mensaje para la ocasión en el que resalta la “intensidad y amplitud” de los vínculos bilaterales, y aboga por continuar consolidando “una verdadera asociación estratégica”. Lavrov, quien visitó La Habana en febrero pasado, afirma en ese sentido que la “multifacética interacción ruso-cubana también se convierte en un factor importante del afianzamiento de la seguridad regional y global” ([Mensaje de Lavrov al canciller cubano](#); *EFE*, 8/5/10).

**May 10:** Raúl Castro met with Ivan Ivanovich Melnikov, vice chairman of the Russian Duma, or Parliament, and first deputy chairman of the Communist Party of Russia, *Granma* reported. The newspaper gave no details of the visit, other than to say that the men “discussed current international events” and “the excellent relations that exist between the Russian and Cuban parliament.” At a reception on May 8 for Melnikov, marking the 50th anniversary of relations between Russia and Cuba, the Russian official said those relations “hinge on a true and lasting friendship and have passed the test of endurance and continuity,” the Russian news agency *RIA-Novosti* reported. Next day, Melnikov laid a wreath at the monument to Russian “soldiers-internationalists” who have died in Cuba. Melnikov has visited the island several times, most recently in November 2009 for talks on offshore oil exploration by the Russian company Zarubeshneft (*The Miami Herald*, 11/5/10).

**Mayo 11:** El Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación español prestará “adecuado seguimiento” a los actos de acoso por parte del régimen cubano a disidentes y activistas en pro de la democracia en la isla ocurridos recientemente en España y que han sido denunciados por la organización Cuba Democracia Ya y por la campaña “Orlando Zapata Tamayo: Yo acuso al Gobierno cubano”. Así se lo hizo saber mediante una carta Agustín Santos, el jefe de Gabinete del ministro Miguel Ángel Moratinos, en respuesta a la remitida por los cinco miembros de estas organizaciones que realizaron una peregrinación por la democracia en Cuba y recorrieron el Camino de Santiago en abril. Estos cinco peregrinos --tres cubanos y dos españoles-- “fueron agredidos verbalmente por partidarios de la dictadura castrista mientras funcionarios cubanos los fotografiaban y filmaban desde las ventanas” del Consulado cubano en Santiago de Compostela, según las organizaciones. En su misiva, Santos, que dice responder en nombre de Moratinos, lamenta “los incidentes relatados” y precisa que “serán objeto de un adecuado seguimiento por parte de este Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación” (*Europa Press*, 11/5/10).

**May 11:** Mike Mukula, President of the Pan-African Movement in Uganda and national leader of the MRN Party, acknowledged the help given by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro to the African peoples. During a meeting of that organization, Mukula highlighted the solidarity of the Cuban Revolution with the African peoples, and emphasized that Africa has a debt of gratitude with Commander in Chief leader Fidel Castro, the Cuban Foreign Ministry’s Web site reports. The representative underlined the contribution made by Cuban troops to the freedom and

sovereignty of Angola, the independence of Namibia, and the elimination of Apartheid. While addressing participants in the meeting, Mariano M. Lores, Cuba's ambassador to Uganda, expressed his appreciation for the acknowledgement, and recalled that Fidel defined the Cuban people as Latin-African, expressing the internationalist position of the government of the Caribbean island (ACN, 11/5/10).

**Mayo 12:** La hija del presidente cubano Raúl Castro, la sexóloga Mariela Castro, afirmó que países de América Latina están interesados en el programa de operaciones de cambio de sexo que se realizan en Cuba dentro del sistema de salud estatal. “Eso es costoso para los Estados y no creo que todos estén dispuestos inmediatamente a asumirlo cuando no han resuelto otros aspectos de la salud pública, pero al menos está sobre la mesa para que se valore la posibilidad de integrar al sistema nacional de salud la atención a los transexuales”, declaró Mariela Castro. La directora del Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual (Cenesex) destacó el interés mostrado por funcionarios y expertos que hace unos días participaron en un seminario en Caracas sobre diversidad sexual y derechos de lesbianas, gays, bisexuales y transexuales. “Se mostraron interesados en conocer la experiencia de Cuba que es única porque es el único país donde se estableció en el sistema de salud pública la atención integral a personas transexuales, en otros países es parcial el compromiso del Estado”, dijo a la prensa, tras inaugurar el martes una jornada contra la homofobia (AFP, 12/5/10).

**Mayo 12:** Un grupo de prestigiosos escritores, intelectuales y artistas presentó en Madrid una plataforma “por la democratización de Cuba”. A la presentación de la iniciativa, que tiene como objetivo movilizar a las sociedades española y latinoamericana en favor de la democratización de la isla, asistieron, los escritores Mario Vargas Llosa y Rosa Montero, los artistas Alaska, Aitana Sánchez Gijón, Antonio Resines y el cineasta Fernando Trueba, entre otros. Vargas Llosa pidió al gobierno español “solidaridad para quienes en Cuba piden lo que tienen España y Europa, y no una política de complicidad”. La plataforma, a la que pueden adherirse los ciudadanos que lo deseen a través de la web [www.plataformaporcuba.com](http://www.plataformaporcuba.com), dijo en un manifiesto que el caso de Cuba es una cuestión de “derechos humanos básicos y esenciales” y que la elección “está, sencillamente, entre democracia o totalitarismo”. “Este gesto puede parecer pequeño, pero para quienes en condiciones difíciles, heroicas diría yo, resisten a la dictadura es algo muy importante”, dijo Vargas Llosa en el Club Internacional de Prensa de Madrid. “Tres generaciones de cubanos han vivido la experiencia de la falta de libertad”, añadió. El autor de *Conversación en la catedral* consideró que la importancia del manifiesto radica en la “gran variedad política” de sus firmantes. El documento ha sido suscrito también por el cineasta Pedro Almodóvar; los actores Victoria Abril, Imanol Arias, Gabino Diego y Juan Echanove; los cantantes Ana Belén y Víctor Manuel; los escritores Juan José Millás, Antonio Muñoz Molina, Álvaro Pombo y Jorge Semprún, entre otros (EFE, *Diario de Cuba*, 12/5/10).

**May 12:** Berta Soler, a member of the Ladies in White in Cuba, said that the group will ask the Vatican's Secretary for Relations with States, Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, to provide mediation for the release of the country's prisoners of conscience when he travels to Cuba in mid-June. Speaking to reporters, Soler said, “the Vatican representative could influence the release of many people, not only political prisoners, but also common ones as well, as occurred during the visit by Pope John Paul II” in 1998. On June 15, Archbishop Mamberti will open the 10th Catholic Social Week at the University of Havana, during which there will be a debate on

the reality of Cuba between various Catholic and non-Catholic intellectuals. Soler emphasized the “important role” that the Catholic Church is playing, referring to the mediation by Cardinal Jaime Ortega, who was able to lift the official prohibition against the Women in White from marching without an official permit (*CNA*, 12/5/10).

**May 12:** Esteban Lazo, Vice-president of the Council of State, expressed in Havana the sorrow of the Cuban people and government over the death of Umaru Musa Yar Adua, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. On the occasion of such irreparable loss, we join the grief of the fraternal Nigerian people, wrote the member of the Politburo of the Cuban Communist Party on the book of condolences opened at the African nation’s diplomatic mission in Havana (*ACN*, 12/5/10).

**May 12:** Cuba will continue working to locate the mortal remains of internationalist Jesus Suarez Gayol (El Rubio), the only Cuban member of the guerrilla of Commander Ernesto “Che” Guevara in Bolivia that has not yet been found. Doctor Jorge Gonzalez, who headed the search of Che Guevara’s mortal remains as well as of those of most of his companions who died in the 1966-67 heroic deed, stated that arrangements are being made with the current Bolivian government to find the place where he was buried. It’s not a closed process; there are possibilities to find him, and we’re confident of being able to do so, he told *ACN*. He explained that historic research works carried out place the spot in the confluence of the Ñacahuasu and Tacuarali rivers, an area where excavations have already been made to find the mortal remains of members of the guerrilla detachment (*ACN*, 12/5/10).

**May 12:** Celsius Waterberg, Public Health Minister of Suriname, thanked Cuba for cooperating with his country in this sector, by way of the Medical Brigade and Operation Miracle. The Surinamese minister met with Elis Alberto Gonzalez, director of the Central Unit of Cuba’s Medical Cooperation, who is now on a working visit to Suriname. Gonzalez conveyed to the Minister the warm greetings sent by his Cuban counterpart, Jose Ramon Balaguer (*ACN*, 12/5/10).

**Mayo 13:** Poetas cubanos y la hija del escritor español Rafael Alberti, Aitana, firmaron un documento en defensa de Cuba y una democracia que calificaron como “legítima” y lamentaron que artistas de otros países estén mal informados. “No podemos quedarnos en silencio ante el manifiesto de la llamada 'Plataforma de españoles por la democratización de Cuba’”, expresó una nota entregada a medios de prensa internacionales. El documento fue firmado por Aitana Alberti, Miguel Barnet, Víctor Casaus, Pablo Armando Fernández y el historiador Eusebio Leal, entre otros. “Cuba ha construido una democracia propia y legítima, respaldada por la inmensa mayoría de su pueblo”, señaló el texto, que respondió a otro emitido la víspera en Madrid avalado por el cineasta Pedro Almodóvar y el escritor peruano Mario Vargas Llosa. El documento respaldado por 60 intelectuales españoles, exhortó al gobierno del presidente Raúl Castro a poner fin a la “feroz y dolorosa dictadura que mantiene al país en la miseria” y a respetar los derechos humanos. “Pretenden mantener a Cuba en el banquillo de los acusados. Las palabras democracia, libertad y derechos humanos han sido secuestradas (...) Cuba no es sólo un nombre bajo el dedo acusador”, expresa el documento firmado en La Habana (*Declaración; AP*, 14/5/10).

**Mayo 13:** Cuba enviará a su ministro de Exteriores, Bruno Rodríguez, como jefe de la delegación que representará a la isla en la VI Cumbre entre la UE, América Latina y el Caribe que se celebrará en Madrid entre los próximos 17 y 18 de mayo, han confirmado fuentes diplomáticas. En la cita anterior entre los dos bloques, celebrada en mayo de 2008 en Lima, el gobierno cubano estuvo representado por su vicepresidente primero, José Ramón Ventura Machado. Las relaciones entre la UE y Cuba no pasan por su mejor momento. Las críticas europeas al régimen castrista tras la muerte del preso de conciencia Orlando Zapata han tensado el ambiente. De hecho, la reunión del diálogo político que debía haberse celebrado el pasado 6 de abril en Madrid fue aplazada a una fecha todavía por determinar (*EFE*, 13/5/10).

**May 13:** The Cuban representative before the Latin American Parliament (PARLATINO), Osvaldo Martínez, said in Venezuela that the solution to the current world economic crisis walks the paths of integration and socialism. In this respect, the Cuban representative said that the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of the Americas (ALBA) is right the mechanism to attain integration in Latin America and the Caribbean and to put an end to the region's dependence on the United States. Martínez noted that the current world crisis is not only economic and added that it also affects the energy, ecological, food and social sectors. He pointed out that the only way to end the crisis is to eliminate its main causes and, as the first and most important step, he recommended the end of the capitalist system (*ACN*, 14/5/10).

**May 14:** Cuban prima ballerina assoluta Alicia Alonso received the “Lazos hispánicos” (Hispanic Bonds) distinction, during a solemn ceremony carried out at the Bosque de Mostoles Theater in Spain, on the occasion of the 19th edition of the awarding of the Living Culture National Prizes. These awards are given by the Living Culture Foundation, made up by academicians from different institutions in that European country, like the Higher Council for Scientific Research and the academies of History and Language, as well as by other renowned writers, artists and scientists (*ACN*, 14/5/10).

**May 14:** A Festival of Spanish Cinema will take place in Havana starting May 21, with the participation of Hispanic filmmakers Lourdes de Orduña, Gabe Ibañez and Antonio Gimenez. “Celda 211”, directed by Daniel Monzon, (2009) will be the film that will open the Festival, according to the Cuban Film Institute's Information Center. A retrospective exhibition of films by Juan de Orduña has been scheduled for the Chaplin Hall, which will open with the movie “Alba de America”. Also screened during the Festival will be “Hierro” (2009), which will be presented by Ibañez, its director (*ACN*, 14/5/10).

**Mayo 14:** El ministro de Asuntos Exteriores y Cooperación, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, afirmó que si la Posición Común de la Unión Europea sobre Cuba fuera “eficaz”, él sería el “primer interesado” en defenderla, pero mantener una política que “no da resultados” es “de sadomasoquistas”. La Posición Común que mantiene la Unión Europea (UE) respecto a Cuba desde 1996 “debe mantenerse si funciona”, declaró el ministro durante la conferencia de clausura del primer seminario Unión Europea-Rusia, organizada en Madrid por la Asociación de Periodistas Europeos. “Si la Posición Común hubiese sido eficaz, yo sería el primer interesado en que se mantenga, pero mantener una posición que no da resultados es un poco sadomasoquista, es mantener una posición que no sirve para nada”, prosiguió. “El año en que se estableció parecía tener una cierta razón de ser, pero han pasado trece años y parece que la gente no está satisfecha

con la situación en Cuba y con la relación con la Unión Europea”, añadió (*Europa Press*, 14/5/10).

**May 14:** Cuban President Raul Castro met in Havana with Manuel Zelaya, Honduran president ousted by a coup d'état on June 28, 2008. Zelaya is visiting Cuba accompanied by his daughter Xiomara Hortensia Zelaya Castro. Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla also attended the meeting (*ACN*, 15/5/10).

**May 15:** Ollanta Humala, leader of the leftist Nationalist Party of Peru and the party's presidential candidate, made an unannounced trip to Havana, where he met with First Vice President José Ramón Machado Ventura. According to the *Cuban News Agency*, the men “exchanged topics of mutual interest about the international reality, with special emphasis on Latin America.” The agency did not say how long Humala will be in Cuba. Humala is campaigning for the presidential election of 2011. A poll conducted by the Peruvian Public Opinion Company (CPI) puts him in fourth place, with 11.5 percent of the responses. Ahead of him are the Mayor of Lima, Luis Castañeda Lossio (24.2 percent); the leader of Fuerza 2011 and daughter of former President Alberto Fujimori, Keiko Sofía Fujimori (19.8), and former President Alejandro Toledo (13.3). Toledo governed Peru from 2001 to 2006. Trailing Humala are TV personality Jaime Bayly (5 percent) and former Minister of the Economy Pedro Pablo Kuczynski (1.7). The Aprista Party has not yet nominated a candidate but received 1.5 percent of the tentative vote (*The Miami Herald*, 15/5/10).

**Mayo 15:** El destacado entrenador de béisbol de Cuba Jorge Hernández Puentes abandonó hace tres días su misión en México y posiblemente ya se encuentre en Estados Unidos, según informó a *El Nuevo Herald* una fuente muy cercana a la situación. El entrenador de la mayor de las Antillas formaba parte del pequeño grupo de entrenadores que encabeza Víctor Mesa e integran Agustín Marquetti, Pedro José Rodríguez y Víctor Figueroa, y que están en Veracruz con un equipo profesional representante de ese estado mexicano (*El Nuevo Herald*, 15/5/10).

**May 15:** Reporters Without Borders called on the Cuban government to “put an end to this latest crackdown on independent journalists” on the island. The Paris-based press rights group issued a statement in response to the release of opposition journalist Dania Garcia, whose 20-month prison sentence was reduced on appeal to a fine of 300 pesos (\$12). The Cuban government’s crackdown “began a few weeks ago and has brought the number of detained journalists to 24,” the organization, known by the French initials RSF, said. The 41-year-old Garcia’s prison sentence was reduced to a fine by a court in Havana. Several human rights groups and RSF had said the case against Garcia was politically motivated (*LAHT*, 17/5/10).

**Mayo 15:** Un nuevo grupo de artistas e intelectuales cubanos, entre ellos el presidente del Festival de Cine Latinoamericano de La Habana, Alfredo Guevara, se sumó al rechazo desde la isla a la plataforma para la democratización de Cuba que fue presentada en Madrid. En un comunicado distribuido a medios extranjeros en la isla, Guevara afirma que la “campaña mediática” contra Cuba ha sido revivida días antes de que se celebre en Madrid la VI Cumbre UE-América Latina y Caribe, y llama a “restablecer verdades”. El intelectual cubano subraya que esa “campaña” forma parte de una “guerra psicológica que pretende aislar y llevar a rendición a quienes han conquistado independencia y ejercen soberanía”. “Esa profunda

contradicción que impone el uso monopólico de la comunicación como desinformación calculada y oportunamente intensa, nos obliga a enfrentarla informando”, señala Guevara. Además, resalta que “es fundamental restablecer verdades, criterios y matices siempre ocultados por esa ringlera de calumnias, mentiras, falsificaciones, y calificaciones fascistoides, neocoloniales”. La “Plataforma de españoles por la democratización de Cuba” considera que el caso de la isla es una cuestión de “derechos humanos básicos y esenciales” y que la elección “está sencillamente, entre democracia o totalitarismo” (*EFE*, 15/5/10).

**Mayo 17:** El ministro de Exteriores cubano, Bruno Rodríguez, dijo que su gobierno no reconocía a la Unión Europea (UE) “ninguna autoridad moral” para hablar de derechos humanos en Cuba y que la posición común de la UE impida una normalización de las relaciones. “Mientras esa posición común exista, no será posible la completa normalización de las relaciones entre Cuba y la UE”, declaró Rodríguez a *Telecinco*. La “posición común” condiciona desde 1996 el diálogo político de la UE con La Habana respecto a los derechos y las libertades en la isla, pero España, que ocupa la presidencia rotatoria de la UE durante este semestre, quiere reemplazar esta posición mediante un acuerdo de cooperación. “Cuba reconoce en la presidencia española de la Unión Europea un interlocutor válido”, declaró el ministro, para añadir que “Cuba es un país soberano, igual que España, que no reconoce a la Unión Europea autoridad moral ninguna para tratar cuestiones de derechos humanos en Cuba”. El ministro de Asuntos Exteriores español, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, declaró el 14 de mayo que mantener la posición común era masoquismo. “Si con el mecanismo que tenemos no se ha logrado (avances en Cuba), se tendrá que buscar otros instrumentos para mejorar la relación, para intensificar las relaciones”, añadió Moratinos, en el inicio de la cumbre eurolatinoamericana en Madrid (*AFP*, 17/5/10).

**May 17:** “Europe needs to develop a new relationship with Our America, the Old World must understand that we are no longer the backyard of the United States, but independent nations” said Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla in Madrid. Rodriguez Parrilla heads the Cuban delegation to the Sixth European Union-Latin America and Caribbean Summit, underway in the capital city of Spain, Madrid. “They must get used to treating us as equal partners, as group of nations of over 500 million people living in a region with enormous resources and potential” said the Cuban FM. Parrilla Rodríguez explained that what mainly separates Europe from Latin America and the Caribbean is not the Atlantic Ocean, but our different nature. He felt that no one could blame the Spanish government or its Foreign Ministry that this Summit will not leave many results. “Across the table -he said- are the former colonial powers, and on this side, those who suffered the consequences of colonization and, as a result of which Europe is the creditor and the countries on this side of the Atlantic are the debtors” ([Intervención del ministro de Relaciones Exteriores](#); *ACN*, 17/5/10).

**May 17:** The Ernesto Che Guevara Solidarity Brigade from Canada met in Havana with the families of the five Cuban prisoners incarcerated in the US. The Canadian brigadistas exchanged with Magaly Llorca, mother of Fernando Gonzalez, Olga Salanueva, wife of Rene Gonzalez and Mirta Rodriguez, mother of Antonio Guerrero at the Casa de la Amistad on ways to increase the international campaign in favor of the release of the Cuban Five, as they are known internationally. Vice President of the Cuban Friendship Institute (ICAP) Basilio Gutierrez highlighted the important role of the Ernesto Che Guevara Brigade in Canada in the fight for the release of the Cuban Five. The regular demonstrations held in front of the US embassy in

Vancouver and other Canadian cities are important to continue pressure on the Obama administration on the case. During the exchange, Canadian brigadista Dave Dobbs, member of the National Solidarity Network asked about the current legal status of the case of the five anti-terrorism fighters. On behalf of the over 30 brigadistas, Co-President of the Canadian National Solidarity with Cuba Network Tamara Hansen said that they will continue to work in favor of the release of the Cuban Five to break the silence on the case and will increase pressure on the Obama administration until the Cuban Five are back home with their families. The Ernesto Che Guevara Solidarity with Cuba Brigade arrived in Cuba on April 28th and has carried out voluntary work in the agricultural sector and have visited places of interests (ACN, 17/5/10).

**Mayo 17:** El trovador cubano Silvio Rodríguez consideró un “insulto” el llamamiento de intelectuales y actores españoles a democratizar Cuba, y les señaló que serán los cubanos quienes decidan los cambios en su país. “La flamante plataforma propone aislar aún más a Cuba (...) esta acción no es más que un nuevo artilugio para obligarnos a hacer lo que otros consideran que debemos hacer”, escribió el músico, en el artículo difundido en el sitio digital oficialista *Cubadebate.cu*. “Los cubanos también queremos cambios, pero consensuados por nosotros. Esas transformaciones ocurrirán más temprano o más tarde y la única política capaz de acelerarlas es el fin del bloqueo (embargo estadounidense)”, dijo, al señalar que su eliminación crearía “condiciones” para que Cuba avance más rápido “en el concepto democrático”. “No creemos en un gobierno centralizado para siempre. Más bien solemos verlo como un concepto de emergencia, un mal necesario que el camino de la emancipación nacional nos ha impuesto para sobrevivir”, manifestó. Rodríguez estimó una “ofensa” que los españoles pretendan que los cubanos adopten sistemas democráticos como el de ellos, “con las reservas que despiertan esas democracias de banqueros ladrones y ejércitos ocupantes”. “Esta página efectivamente es una cortina, no de humo pero sí de albahaca, contra la fetidez de su pretendida salvación”, dijo el trovador, al subrayar que esas “presiones” son un “insulto” a la “autodeterminación” y “una injerencia inadmisibles” ([Artículo de Silvio Rodríguez](#); AFP, 18/5/10).

**Mayo 18:** La Unión Cristianodemócrata (CDU) que preside la canciller federal alemana, Angela Merkel, hizo un llamamiento a los participantes en la cumbre de la Unión Europea y Latinoamérica para que se solidaricen con los disidentes cubanos que “se encuentran en peligro de muerte”. “Los defensores cubanos de los derechos humanos necesitan de toda nuestra solidaridad. Deben ser tenidos en cuenta como voz de Cuba”, escribe en un mensaje destinado a los participantes en la cumbre de Madrid el vicepresidente del grupo parlamentario de la Unión, Arnold Vaatz. Añade que “Europa debe hablar de una vez por todas con una sola voz. Debe haber esperanzas para los cubanos de cambios en la situación de su país y no desalentarles con una política de apaciguamiento sin contraofertas reales”. Vaatz subraya que “hay motivos de gran preocupación por la vida” de los disidentes cubanos Guillermo Fariñas, Ariel Sigler Amaya y Normando Hernández González. Destaca que los tres son “perseguidos por el régimen de Castro sólo por sus opiniones críticas” y se encuentran “bajo condiciones inhumanas” (EFE, 18/5/10).

**May 19:** Christian Jimenez, president of the Cuban Institute for Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (INDER), and Paraguayan Sports Minister Paulo Reichardt, signed a cooperation accord in Havana. After signing the document, Jimenez expressed the island’s commitment and willingness to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the South American nation in

this field. “Not only because we support other countries, but because we also learn from them”, emphasized the Cuban leader, who offered details about the Cuban system in this sphere, mainly in aspects related to sports activities designed with the health of the people in mind. He also referred to the importance given to physical education and sports at schools, as well as to the education of young generations in patriotic values, one of the five objectives of the strategy devised for the entity’s future work for the 2016 and 2020 Olympic cycles (*ACN*, 19/5/10).

**May 20:** The Bolivian Minister of Institutional Transparency and Fight against Corruption, Dr. Nardi Suxo Iturry—who is in Havana on an official visit at the invitation of the General Comptroller’s Office of the Republic of Cuba— met with Attorney General Dario Delgado Cura. The visitor also met with Deputy Attorney General Rafael Pino Becquer and with other officials with whom she spoke about the structure of the Cuban Attorney General’s Office, the fight against corruption and the organization of an international event on this topic next year, among other subjects. Also, Suxo Iturry was received by Deputy Minister of Justice Urbano Pedraza Linares and by the secretary of the National Anti-Drug Commission, Israel Ibarra. The visitor held a working meeting with the president of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce, Rodolfo Davalos Fernandez, and with other officials of this institution, who gave her details of the Chamber’s work in the control of firms accredited in Cuba and its experience regarding arbitration. Suxo Iturry was accompanied by a representative of her ministry in the Bolivian Department of Beni, and by Maria del Carmen Castelo and representatives from the Cuban General Comptroller’s Office (*ACN*, 21/5/10).

**Mayo 21:** El secretario general de la OEA, José Miguel Insulza, expresó su satisfacción por el proceso de diálogo que han abierto el gobierno de La Habana y la Iglesia católica cubana sobre los presos políticos y lo calificó de “señal positiva”. El titular de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) afirmó en un comunicado que la conversación mantenida entre el presidente de Cuba, Raúl Castro, y la jerarquía católica de la isla sobre la situación interna cubana y la suerte de los presos enfermos y en huelga de hambre “es una señal positiva en un cuadro extremadamente delicado que tiene en su centro la vida de un ser humano”. Insulza indicó que “hay razones humanitarias que suponemos han determinado la decisión de conversar” y que “ojalá haya razones fundadas para tener esperanzas de una solución al caso de Guillermo Fariñas”, en huelga de hambre desde hace 87 días para pedir la libertad de presos de conciencia enfermos. El máximo responsable de la OEA resaltó el “enorme valor” del diálogo entre el Ejecutivo de Raúl Castro y la Iglesia católica de Cuba, y se mostró dispuesto a “colaborar con toda iniciativa que signifique acercar las posiciones del gobierno y algunos sectores de la sociedad cubana”, con el fin de “abrir un proceso en el que puedan confluir las distintas visiones” (*EFE*, 21/5/10).

**May 21:** Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) congratulated PEN Canada on the launch of its “Freedom to Write in the Americas” campaign. The campaign, aimed at promoting free speech and respect for the rights of journalists and citizens to express themselves without fear of violence or intimidation, is a sign of growing recognition of the need for basic freedoms in the Americas and, in particular, Cuba. “Freedom of expression, like freedom of association, is a core right of all human beings,” said Brian Dijkema, CLAC’s international representative. “Without the ability to speak freely, society becomes dry and withered. Without the ability to associate it dies. PEN Canada’s campaign has our full support.” CLAC has been working for the

release of all political prisoners in Cuba, including nine trade unionists who have been imprisoned since 2003 (*CLAC Press Release*, 21/5/10).

**May 22:** A Russian ship is downloading at the Cuban city port of Cienfuegos a wheat cargo that completes the 75,000 tons which is part of a 100,000 donation made to Cuba. *Granma* newspaper points out that this free shipments show the solidarity of the Russian Federation to the Cuban people. Previously, a 22,500 tons of Russian wheat donation had been made at the beginning of 2009, and afterwards the two governments signed a cooperation agreement in the wake of Hurricanes Gustav, Ike and Paloma in 2008 where the Russians committed to supply these 100,000. A fourth ship is already on its way to Cuba to complete the agreement, a example of the friendship relations between Cuba and the Russian Federation (*ACN*, 22/5/10).

**Mayo 23:** La ministra de Transparencia Institucional y Lucha contra la Corrupción de Bolivia, Nardi Suño Iturry, concluyó una visita a Cuba “muy satisfecha” con los resultados, informaron medios oficiales. La ministra del gabinete gubernamental del presidente boliviano, Evo Morales, viajó a la isla acompañada por la representante de esa cartera en el departamento de Beni, María del Carmen Castelo (*EFE*, 23/5/10).

**Mayo 24:** Los médicos cubanos que trabajan en Venezuela viven en 30 metros cuadrados. Es lo que mide la segunda planta de los módulos de Barrio Adentro, donde duermen, cocinan y van al baño hasta cuatro cubanos a la vez (un médico, un fisioterapeuta, un optometrista y a veces un entrenador deportivo). Barrio Adentro es el programa de salud primaria ideado en 2003 por el ex presidente cubano Fidel Castro e implementado de inmediato por el gobierno venezolano, como estrategia para levantar la popularidad de Hugo Chávez cuando la oposición planeaba convocar un referéndum revocatorio en su contra. Se trataba, en principio, de una ayuda temporal. Pero ha dado tan buenos resultados que la presencia de los cubanos ya es permanente. Unos se vigilan a otros, y uno los vigila a todos. Cada cubano debe volver a “casa”, si acaso salió de ella, antes de las seis de la tarde. Si un “compatriota” venezolano invita a alguno a dar una vuelta por el barrio, debe pedir permiso con semanas de antelación, a través de un acto motivado en el que, quien convida, debe explicar el propósito y la duración de la actividad. Hay una larga lista de venezolanos a los que los 30,000 cubanos que trabajan en Venezuela no deben frecuentar: la encabezan los *escuálidos* (el apodo con el que Hugo Chávez se refiere a los opositores) y los periodistas, que para el gobierno vienen siendo lo mismo. Pero a pesar de los controles, cada tanto uno de ellos “desaparece”. La Sociedad Venezolana de Medicina Bolivariana, a la que están adscritos los pocos médicos venezolanos que trabajan en Barrio Adentro, lleva una cifra extraoficial de 1,500 médicos cubanos que han desertado de los 15,000 que prestan servicio en el país (*El País*, 24/5/10).

**Mayo 24:** Las parejas de extranjeros que viajan a Cuba para formalizar sus matrimonios en la isla se triplicaron en 2009. La directora del Registro Civil del Ministerio de Justicia, Olga Lidia Pérez, informó que las bodas pasaron de un centenar en 2008 a unas 300 en 2009. Indicó que en 2009 ofició una boda entre una argentina y un francés que vinieron sólo a formalizar su unión en la isla y querían tener como fondo del momento la imagen del comandante Ernesto “Che” Guevara, que se encuentra en la Plaza de la Revolución por lo que hasta allí se trasladaron. “No es nuevo, pero antes se veía poco”, dijo. La funcionaria advirtió que el notario o el registrador que formalice el casamiento tiene que exigir los documentos que señala la ley, como los

certificados de nacimiento de las personas. Ciudadanos canadienses, rusos y holandeses se cuentan entre los casados en la isla. Algunos touroperadores incluso están ofreciendo el servicio y tienen convenios con el Ministerio de Justicia para estas ceremonias. El servicio que prestan las autoridades jurídicas cubanas cuesta unos 300 ó 400 dólares y la certificación obtenida tiene validez oficial pero deben legalizarse ante “la embajada o consulado (del país de los contrayentes) para que surta efecto afuera” de Cuba, informó Pérez. El Registro Civil cubano también lleva un monitoreo de los matrimonios entre cubanos y extranjeros aunque en este rubro el promedio no se incrementó y se mantiene en unos 1.500 anuales, según datos suministrados por la directora (*AP*, 25/5/10).

**May 25:** Vice President of the Council of State Esteban Lazo Hernandez heads the Cuban delegation that will participate in the celebrations to mark the bicentennial of Argentina’s Independence in Buenos Aires. The island’s delegation also includes First Deputy Foreign Minister Marcelino Medina Gonzalez and other government officials (*ACN*, 25/5/10).

**May 25:** Montenegro’s foreign minister Milan Croce, described as a historic step the signing of a memorandum of cooperation with his Cuban counterpart, Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, which will allow systematizing bilateral contacts between his country and Cuba. Croce told reporters after signing the document, at the headquarters of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs; he was very pleased to be the first head of the Montenegrin diplomacy to visit Cuba and thanked Rodriguez Parrilla for the invitation to Cuba. “The friendship between the two nations -he said- goes beyond the creation of our independent state” and added that the new and old Montenegrin generations know many things about Cuba. In addition, Croce recalled that Cuba was among the first nations to recognize the independence of Montenegro. “Currently, he said, we are looking to deepen relations” and said his stay in Havana will help to give a boost to cooperation in areas such as tourism, transport, environment, culture and health (*ACN*, 25/5/10).

**May 26:** Army General Raul Castro, President of the Councils of State and Ministers, chaired in Havana the official meeting to mark Africa Day. For Cubans, that continent is part of what we are and hope to become in the world, said Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, First Vice-president of the Councils of State and Ministers, while addressing participants in the meeting, held at the Universal Hall of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. He praised “the admirable efforts and advances made by the African nations, in spite of the fact that they’re still suffering from the wounds and consequences of colonialism and that they’re facing not few obstacles and challenges.” He recalled that the African continent has received, is receiving and will always be able to receive Cuba’s solidarity, the same way the Caribbean island has the support of African countries. After recalling that over 2,000 Cubans died for the independence of nations from that continent, he highlighted that, at present, thousands of Cubans are offering their services there, and that 32,000 African youngsters have studied at and graduated from Cuban educational centers, 14,000 of them from universities. Pascal Onguemby, ambassador of the Republic of the Congo to Havana, underlined “Cuba’s historic and traditional generosity and sincerity towards the African peoples” (*ACN*, 26/5/10).

**May 26:** Writers and intellectuals joined their voices during the meeting of the World Network of Poets in Defense of Humanity, which took place at the theater of Havana’s Museum of Fine Arts. Cuban poet Alex Pausides, general coordinator of the 15th edition of Havana’s

International Poetry Festival, underway since May 24, welcomed participants and thanked the members of the World Committee of Poets for their presence. Tarek William, governor of the Venezuelan state of Anzoátegui and president of the Committee, said that, in this Festival, word and committed action in the 21st century unite with the example and the ethics of previous and new events that manage to gather young enthusiasts. Also addressing participants during the meeting was Spanish poet Luis García, who represents Europe in the World Committee of Poets. The presidency of the meeting, which will run until May 30, was also made up by Marcelino Dos Santos, from Mozambique; Igor Nekhames, from Russia, and Cuban Waldo Leyva, all of them members of the Committee, as well as poets Fernando Rendon and Gaspar Aguilera, from Colombia and Mexico, respectively (*ACN*, 26/5/10).

**Mayo 26:** Cincuenta y cinco “presos de conciencia” seguían reclusos en Cuba a fines de 2009, denunció Amnistía Internacional en su Informe sobre los Derechos Humanos correspondiente al año pasado. La organización afirma, en cuanto a la situación general, que las autoridades de Cuba “siguieron restringiendo severamente los derechos civiles y políticos”, y se continuó encarcelando “a detractores del gobierno”, de los que muchos “denunciaron que los habían golpeado al ser detenidos”. Asimismo, AI denuncia que las restricciones a la libertad de expresión “eran un fenómeno generalizado”. Con respecto a los “presos de conciencia”, AI cita a Nelson Aguiar Ramírez, excarcelado en 2009 por razones de salud y a Reinaldo Miguel Labrada Peña, que cumplió la condena impuesta. Asimismo, relata el caso de los “defensores de los derechos humanos” Darsi Ferrer y su esposa, Yusnaimy Jorge, desde su detención en julio de 2009, por unas horas, el día en que tenían previsto encabezar una marcha en La Habana. En Cuba “continuaron utilizándose cargos penales como el de peligrosidad para limitar el ejercicio de la libertad de expresión, asociación y reunión de los disidentes”, dice AI, que las restricciones a la libre circulación impidieron a periodistas y activistas políticos y de DDHH “realizar actividades legítimas y pacíficas”. Cita en ese sentido la denegación de permiso de viaje a Yoani Sánchez, la autora del blog *Generación Y*, y que en noviembre, ella y Orlando Luis Pardo, también bloguero, fueron obligados a “subir a un vehículo” por agentes de seguridad que “los golpearon y amenazaron antes de dejarlos en libertad”. El informe de Amnistía agrega que las relaciones entre Estados Unidos y Cuba “mejoraron” y ambos gobiernos iniciaron conversaciones sobre asuntos de migración y sobre el restablecimiento de un servicio postal directo. No obstante, persiste el embargo estadounidense contra Cuba, que sigue afectando derechos económicos y sociales de los cubanos, dice AI (*Informe 2010; EFE*, 26/5/10).

**Mayo 26:** El gobierno de Cuba entregó a ocho mexicanos sentenciados en la isla por tráfico de personas, como parte de un acuerdo bilateral para que cumplan su condena en el país y cerca de su entorno familiar. La Procuraduría General de la República (PGR) informó en un comunicado que los mexicanos fueron detenidos entre 2004 y 2008 en las inmediaciones de Cuba, donde posteriormente cortes locales los condenaron. No precisó los años a los han sido sentenciados. Los ocho se encontraban reclusos en la prisión de La Condesa, provincia Habana, y fueron entregados al gobierno de México que los internó en penales mexicanos no identificados. Autoridades de ambos países han dicho que existe un creciente tráfico de cubanos hacia Estados Unidos vía México, el cual alcanza hasta los 10,000 isleños al año, quienes pagan a redes de traficantes entre 5,000 y 10,000 dólares (*EFE*, 26/5/10).

**May 27:** The Ecuadorean Parliament bestowed its highest award —the General Eloy Alfaro Delgado Decoration— on Fidel Castro. The distinction was received on behalf of Fidel by Cuban First Vice President Jose Ramon Machado from the hands of the president of the Ecuadorean legislative body, Fernando Cordero Cueva, during a ceremony held at Havana's Revolution Palace. "The people's revolution in Ecuador and all the ongoing process of changes and integration that we are experiencing in Latin America could hardly be conceived without Fidel and Cuba," said Cordero Cueva (*ACN*, 27/5/10).

**May 27:** Spanish Deputy Prime Minister Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega said that she was not throwing in the towel in trying to change European Union policy toward Cuba, adding that Spain is the "most demanding" country at present urging Havana to free political prisoners. De la Vega said that Spain, which occupies the EU rotating presidency through June 30, will try to modify the common position that the bloc has maintained vis-a-vis Cuba since 1996, a stance that bases dialogue with the communist government on steps it takes favoring democracy and respect for human rights. She expressed that sentiment during her speech before the Ibero-American Affairs Committee of the Spanish Senate, explaining to lawmakers the results of the recent EU-Latin America-Caribbean Summit in Madrid. De la Vega expressed her confidence that the EU common position can be changed now that it had been proven that "it's not useful and doesn't serve the needs of the present and the future." The deputy premier emphasized that that objective is compatible with maintaining a firm stance in favor of the "necessary and unavoidable democratization" of Cuba. "The necessity of dialogue, the release of all prisoners of conscience and respect for human rights. We're going to keep working along that line," she told senators. In her judgment, with dialogue "things can be achieved," whereas that is not possible with "confrontation, isolation and the elevation of tensions" (*EFE*, 27/5/10).

**Mayo 27:** Ecuador solicitó a Cuba investigar casos de matrimonios falsos entre ciudadanos de ambos países, un recurso que han usado algunos cubanos para emigrar luego de que la nación sudamericana eliminó el visado de turismo hace dos años, dijo un legislador. El presidente de la Asamblea Nacional de Ecuador, Fernando Cordero, dijo a periodistas en La Habana que fueron separados de la cancillería funcionarios de alto rango y algunos notarios están detenidos temporalmente bajo investigaciones por los casos de "matrimonios falsos". El funcionario no ofreció otros detalles. "Le hemos dicho con toda la nobleza y la franqueza a las autoridades cubanas que tenemos juntos que investigar qué pasó", dijo Cordero, quien viajó a La Habana para entregar al enfermo líder Fidel Castro la condecoración General Eloy Alfaro. Cientos de miles de cubanos han emigrado desde la revolución de 1959, unos por razones políticas y otros en busca de oportunidades económicas. Ecuador, que en junio del 2008 eliminó el visado de turismo para todos los ciudadanos extranjeros, se convirtió en un importante destino para muchos cubanos al simplificar sus trámites de viajes. El gobierno cubano, en cambio, continúa exigiendo un permiso para salir de la isla (*Reuters*, 27/5/10).

## Security

**May 2:** Venezuela President Hugo Chavez acknowledged that Cuban officials are involved in Venezuela's armed forces, but refused to provide details. "There is a mechanism of military cooperation" between Venezuela and Cuba, Chavez said, responding to a question from a reporter. "But I'm not going to get specific." "Cuba has helped us a lot in security, in terms of

analyzing, evaluating and being better prepared, because our armed forces and security organizations had been penetrated by the empire, drug trafficking and the mafias,” Chávez said “Everything Cuba does for Venezuela is to strengthen Venezuela,” he said (*The Wall Street Journal*, 2/5/10; *The Miami Herald*, 3/5/10).

**May 9:** The Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) celebrated the 65th anniversary of the Soviet Red Army’s victory over fascism in 1945. The political and military ceremony took place at the Mausoleum to the Internationalist Soviet Soldier in Havana and it was presided by FAR’s Deputy Minister and Army Corps General Leopoldo Cintra Frias, and by the Minister of Basic Industry, Yadira Garcia Vera. Cintra Frias laid floral wreaths as a tribute to the 67 soldiers of the former Soviet Union who died carrying out their duty in Cuba and who rest in the monument that was inaugurated on February 23, 1978. Speaking during the ceremony, Garcia Vera reiterated Cuba’s gratitude to the former Soviet Union which, since 1959, “contributed to the training of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces and shared our fate even during the most difficult times.” Also present was the Ukrainian ambassador to Cuba, Tatiana Saenko. The ceremony included a military parade that was also witnessed by the ambassadors from the Russian Federation and Belarus as well as the military diplomatic corps in Havana and other guests (*Granma*, *ACN*, 10/5/10).

**May 14:** A retired army colonel in Ecuador has charged that Cuba is sending paramilitary advisers to his country to organize supporters of the government headed by Rafael Correa. Patricio Haro, leader of the Justice and Liberty Movement, said that the government has invited members of the Pardo Battalion, a special-forces unit that fought in Angola and maintains a presence in Venezuela and Bolivia, the online newspaper *Vistazo* reported. According to *Vistazo* and other media, Haro alleges that at least 50 Cubans “arrived as shock troops to reinforce the Citizens' Revolution and the committees for the defense of the [Correa] regime, which have gradually spread through an important central area” of Quito. Haro said he would present evidence of this development to the Attorney General's Office and request a formal investigation. A government spokesman said the charges have “no foundation and are neither serious nor responsible.” Justice and Liberty was launched in October 2009 to oppose the so-called 21st-Century socialism espoused by the Correa government (*The Miami Herald*, 14/5/10).

**Mayo 16:** El presidente venezolano, Hugo Chávez, consideró una “ridiculez” las denuncias sobre la supuesta “injerencia” cubana en la Fuerza Armada, y dijo que la misma forma parte de un plan opositor para alentar un golpe de Estado en su contra. “¡Que ridiculez esa que nos acusan de que los cubanos tienen aquí injerencia en la Fuerza Armada, que eso es traición a la patria”, declaró Chávez en su programa dominical de radio y televisión *Aló Presidente*. El general retirado y ex aliado del gobierno Antonio Rivero denunció el pasado 3 de mayo ante la Fiscalía la presunta presencia de cubanos en la Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana (FANB). El mandatario destacó que su gobierno tiene “convenios de cooperación militar con distintos países”, entre los que mencionó “Francia, China, Rusia, Irán, Argentina, Brasil y Cuba”. “Pero ellos (la oposición) agarran el caso cubano” porque “creen que con eso van a salir los generales y los coroneles golpistas, que es lo que ellos buscan pues” (*EFE*, 16/5/10).

**May 21:** The first stage of Meteoro 2010, a national civil defense drill that aims at improving the people’s readiness and carrying out actions to face the consequences of technological or natural

disasters, began in Cuba. The civil defense drills —carried out in Cuba since 1986— will take place in two stages: on May 21, 22 and 23 and on June 25 and 26. The first stage aims at reducing vulnerabilities linked to hurricanes, droughts and epidemic-related disasters while Defense Councils at all levels will improve their preparation to face high intensity seisms and seaquakes, said Lieutenant Commander Rolando Alvarez. He added that another objective of the drill in this first stage is to train military troops to protect the population and economic resources. In June, he noted, participants in the exercise will focus on ways to face high intensity earthquakes and seaquakes (ACN, 21/5/10).

**May 21:** Chief of Staff of the Civil Defense of Cuba Major General Ramon Pardo Guerra attended demonstration manoeuvres of security techniques in several spheres at the Russian city of Noguinsk. Pardo Guerra and the delegation accompanying him saw the effectiveness of the exercises to combat toxins; detection and evacuation measures of citizenship, hostage rescue and anti-terrorism actions. The exercise involved combined forces of the Emergency Situations and the Interior Ministries, special troops and groups of the Organization of Collective Security Treaty, reported *Prensa Latina* news agency citing diplomatic sources. After the maneuvers, Sergei Shoigu, head of the Emergency Situations Ministry, held a brief meeting with Pardo Guerra, and discussed aspects of cooperation between his agency and the Civil Defense of Cuba. The parties were in favor of concrete joint actions of cooperation in Havana, to where a Russian delegation will travel to attend the VIII Congress on Natural Disasters, scheduled to be held on June 14-18 (ACN, 21/5/10).

**May 24:** The first stage of Meteoro 2010, a national civil defense drill that aims at improving the people's readiness and carrying out actions to face the consequences of technological or natural disasters, concluded in Cuba. The first stage aimed at reducing vulnerabilities linked to hurricanes, droughts and epidemic-related disasters while Defense Councils at all levels worked to improve their preparation to face high intensity seisms and seaquakes. Another objective of the drill in this first stage was to train military troops to protect the population and economic resources. Commander of the Revolution and Vice President of the councils of State and Ministers Ramiro Valdes visited a campaign hospital in Havana where Cuban health professionals that made their contribution in Pakistan and Haiti spoke of their experiences working in this kind of facilities. Present in the Central Unit of Medical Cooperation was Health Minister Jose Ramon Balaguer, who told reporters that the work in these health facilities has benefited from the experiences accumulated in several countries by the members of the Cuban Henry Reeve Medical Brigade for Emergency Situations. The second stage of the civil defense drills —carried out in Cuba since 1986— will take place on June 25 and 26 when participants in the exercise will focus on ways to face high intensity earthquakes and seaquakes (ACN, 24/5/10).

**May 28:** The Spanish National Intelligence Center (CNI) is back in business in Cuba. Exactly one year after four CNI agents – the agency's entire staff on the island – were expelled from Cuba, a new operative has quietly reopened the bureau, the Spanish daily *El País* reported. The CNI's director, General Félix Sanz, is credited with negotiating the organization's return with the Cuban government. Last year's expulsion followed the arrest of an influential Cuban businessman, Conrado Hernández, who was charged with passing confidential Cuban government information to the Spanish agents. Hernández's status is unknown. The scandal also touched Vice President Carlos Lage Dávila and Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque, friends of

Hernández's, who were fired by Raúl Castro in March 2009. According to *El País*, “the new representative of the Spanish secret service, who was not part of the previous team, has received instructions to 'keep a low profile’” (*The Miami Herald*, 28/5/10).

**May 28:** Cuban President Raul Castro presided over a meeting of the National Defense Council to analyze the results of the Bastion 2009 Strategic Exercise and other actions carried out last year to improve the country’s defense readiness. During the meeting, participants discussed topics related to the improvement of the national defensive capacity including social economic activities and civil defense. During the presentation of the official report of the Bastion 2009 exercise, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Army Corps General Alvaro Lopez Miera, said that military commanding and leading organs at tactic and strategic levels continued to improve their cohesion. Raul Castro gave the closing remarks of the meeting and handed diplomas to participants in the Bastion 2009 exercise. Present were government, state and Cuban Communist Party leaders as well as representatives from grass-roots organizations and high-ranking officials from the Cuban Armed Forces and the Interior Ministry (*ACN, Granma*, 29/5/10).

## US-Cuba Relations

**May 3:** US government television and radio broadcasts to Cuba have failed to make “any discernible inroads into Cuban society or to influence the Cuban government,” the majority staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said in a report. Although such programs may “have noble objectives,” Chairman John F. Kerry (D-Mass.) said, “we need to examine whether we're achieving them.” The report was the latest salvo in a years-long battle between congressional opponents of the broadcasting effort, who say it is a waste of money largely benefiting some members of the Cuban American community in Miami, and proponents, who insist that it is a useful adjunct to US policy that provides unbiased reporting to the island (*The Washington Post*, 4/5/10).

**Mayo 6:** Los viajes de los cubanos residentes en Estados Unidos a Cuba han aumentado un 50 por ciento desde septiembre de 2009, cuando el presidente norteamericano, Barack Obama, levantó oficialmente las restricciones de viaje hacia la isla como parte de su intento por suavizar la férrea política que mantiene Washington contra La Habana desde hace más de 50 años. Desde el pasado mes de septiembre unos 100,000 cubano-americanos más han podido trasladarse hacia la isla a visitar a sus familiares aprovechando la flexibilización de esta medida, explicó a *Europa Press* José Treviño, director comercial y de marketing de Havanatur, operador turístico encargado de gestionar todo lo referente a los viajes desde territorio estadounidense hacia la nación caribeña. Las perspectivas apuntan a que el flujo de connacionales incrementa este año “siempre que el gobierno de Obama mantenga esta flexibilización”, aclaró Treviño. También dependerá del desarrollo de la crisis económica que ha golpeado con fuerza a la población inmigrante en Estados Unidos, agregó (*Europa Press*, 6/5/10).

**May 6:** President Barack Obama's top adviser on Latin America said Cuba was a “long way” from making improvements on the human rights front that would warrant lifting a decades-old US trade and financial embargo. Dan Restrepo, Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the National Security Council, said Obama has made it clear that he has no intention of ending the sanctions against Cuba without positive steps by its communist government. “A significant

change in the US-Cuba relationship -- and a lifting of the embargo would be a significant change -- requires action by both,” Restrepo said in an interview at the *Reuters* Latin American Summit. “And we’re a long way from having seen the kind of action where that would even be in the mix,” he said. The Obama administration last year lifted restrictions on visits and cash remittances to the island by Cuban Americans in an effort to reach out to the Cuban people. It has also held “constructive talks” with Cuba on issues of mutual interest, primarily on migration, Restrepo said. But he added: “Obviously, the continued repression by Cuban authorities visited upon the Cuban people is something that nobody wants to see continue.” “We have not seen positive action on respect for the fundamental rights of the Cuban people over the course of the last 18 months,” Restrepo said. Washington remains committed to supporting the desire of the Cuban people to “freely determine their own futures,” he said. “This will not, as the president has said, be something where change will happen overnight” (*Reuters*, 6/5/10).

**May 6:** Cuban folk icon Silvio Rodriguez has been booked to play at Carnegie Hall during his first US tour in more than 30 years, but his office said that Washington has yet to approve his visa. The Cuban government Web site *Cubadebate*, where Fidel Castro posts his written essays, announced that the US tour would also take Rodriguez to Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Puerto Rico. His last American concerts came in February 1979, when he visited New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Washington during the administration of President Jimmy Carter, when US-Cuba relations experienced a slight thaw in nearly a half century of frigid ties. Rodriguez's office said his US visa had not been approved, but the New York concert has already been scheduled for June 4. The 63-year-old Rodriguez is a staunch defender of the Castro government and has for decades penned politically charged lyrics, though many fans are more moved by his poetic love songs (*AP*, 7/5/10).

**Mayo 8:** El ex presidente de Cuba, Fidel Castro, afirmó que el mandatario de Estados Unidos, Barack Obama, “ignora la realidad y no quiere ni podría superarla”, en una de sus habituales Reflexiones. “Más bien sueña cosas irreales en un mundo irreal”, sostuvo el líder histórico de la revolución cubana, quien se refirió al derrame de petróleo en el Golfo de México, el bloqueo contra la isla y las medidas contra la inmigración en el estado de Arizona ([La tiranía odiosa impuesta al mundo](#); *IPS*, 8/5/10).

**May 9:** Leaders of the National Council of Churches and Church World Service are urging the president to lift the restrictions on religious travel to Cuba, calling the current US policy toward Cuba “ineffective and counter-productive.” In a joint letter to President Obama, NCC General Secretary Michael Kinnamon and CWS Executive Director/CEO John L. McCullough said the “impractical restrictions” that resulted from the Bush administration's then-new interpretation and application of the US Code governing travel to Cuba by religious groups have reduced their ability to send religious delegations to Cuba, limited their opportunities to accompany and support their Cuban church partners and have the effect of “severely limiting” participation in Cuba missions by US churches and congregants. “Since 2005, US church denominations, mission agencies and ecumenical organizations at the national and regional levels have suffered from severe restrictions on religious travel,” the leaders noted in their May 4 letter. “We urgently ask that you now change the Cuba policy of the United States in ways that will assist the churches in their work and have wider benefits for our country and for the people of Cuba,” they added. Noting that Congressional action is not required to lift the travel restrictions imposed on

religious groups, NCC and CWS has asked the president to take direct action. The letter also asked the president to work with Congress to end the travel ban to Cuba for all Americans (*Christian Post*, 9/5/10).

**May 9:** More than two dozen Cuban migrants were repatriated to Cuba, according to the US Coast Guard. The migrants were intercepted in three separate incidents, the Coast Guard said. Most were repatriated to Cuba, while others were taken to Guantánamo. On May 2, the cutter Key Biscayne crew spotted five male Cubans aboard a vessel about five miles south of Key West, the Coast Guard said. On May 4, an Air Station Miami HU-25 Falcon jet crew spotted a 27-foot pleasure craft being towed with 26 Cubans and three suspected smugglers aboard, the Coast Guard said. The three suspected smugglers were transferred to Customs and Border Protection. On May 5, a person spotted five male Cubans aboard a craft about 15 miles south of Key West and contacted the Coast Guard. The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Key Biscayne responded, the Coast Guard said (*The Miami Herald*, 10/5/10).

**Mayo 10:** Jugadores de béisbol infantil de Cuba y Estados Unidos protagonizarán en la isla el documental *From Ghost town to Havana (Del pueblo fantasma a La Habana)*, un filme del documentalista estadounidense Eugene Corr, que narra la vida de un entrenador cubano y uno del país norteamericano, trascendió a la prensa acreditada en la nación caribeña. La cinta es un proyecto que comenzó en 2007, pero no recibió la autorización del Departamento del Tesoro en Washington durante el gobierno de George W. Bush (*IPS*, 10/5/10).

**May 10:** Cuba's most famous ballerina Alicia Alonso will receive a tribute from the American Ballet Theater in New York next month in celebration of her 90th birthday, the National Ballet of Cuba said. Alonso, the ballet's director, has been an ambassador of the 1959 Cuban revolution, which set off decades of tensions with the United States including trade sanctions which continue today. She will travel to Spain on May 14, following a European tour, and already has a visa to travel to the United States at the end of May, before the June 3 tribute in New York's Metropolitan Opera House, a company spokesman told the press. The Cuban dancer and choreographer began her professional career with the American Ballet Theater, where she danced the main role in *Giselle* in a critically-acclaimed performance in 1943. Although she is almost blind and now struggling to walk, Alonso still actively directs the communist island's national ballet. The ballerina, who was born on December 21, 1920, has already received birthday tributes across the world, including in London and Enghien-les-Bains, France, last April (*AFP*, 11/5/10).

**May 10:** A former Dutch bank has agreed to forfeit \$500 million for conspiring to defraud the United States and trade with US enemies, federal officials said. The former ABN AMRO Bank NV, now known as the Royal Bank of Scotland NV, agreed to the penalty as part of a criminal information filed in US District Court in Washington, the Justice Department said in a release. The former ABN AMRO was charged with one count of violating the Bank Secrecy Act, and one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States and violate the International Emergency Economic Powers Act and the Enemy Act. "ABN AMRO facilitated the movement of illegal money through the US financial system by stripping information from transactions and turning a blind eye to its compliance obligations," said Assistant Attorney General Lanny Breuer. "Over the course of a decade, ABN AMRO assisted sanctioned countries and entities in evading US

laws by facilitating hundreds of millions of US dollar transactions.” The bank was accused of conspiring to illegally facilitate US dollar transactions on behalf of financial institutions and customers from Iran, Libya, Sudan, Cuba and other countries between 1995 and 2005 (*UPI*, 10/5/10).

**May 11:** Three decades after he last played in New York, Cuban legend Silvio Rodriguez is headed to Carnegie Hall, at a moment when he and other celebrated island folk singers are raising unusually open questions about their country's communist system. Rodriguez, now 63, has been a sort of folk-song poet laureate of Fidel Castro's revolution in recent years, performing at important official events and even serving in Cuba's parliament for a time, though many admire him most for his poignant lyrics and haunting melodies. Yet the June 4 concert in New York — which still hinges on US government approval of his visa — may show Americans a more complex Cuba than many expect. Rodriguez is still firmly on the side of the socialist system Castro built, but his latest album suggests there need to be adjustments if it is going to survive. “Against disenchantment, offer hope,” he sings on the album “Segunda Cita,” or “Second Date,” which was released in March. “Overcome the 'r' in revolution,” the song goes — alluding to the uprising that swept Castro to power on New Year's Day 1959, and to almost everything in Cuba that has happened since. “If we don't change, they are going to change us,” Rodriguez wrote in response to written questions from *The Associated Press*, “and that's not what I want to happen to my country.” He added that, “I hope evolution takes us, as the angel in the song says, right up to the crossroads where we made the wrong decision and we rectify that.” It's light criticism by any measure — and Rodriguez has been coy when asked to shed light on what he meant. Rodriguez plans shows in San Francisco, Chicago, Los Angeles and Puerto Rico. He recalled last playing New York in 1978, singing at a theater on Broadway. “At 5 o'clock in the afternoon it was full,” he said. “I couldn't believe it.” Rodriguez called playing Carnegie Hall “fantastic,” but is careful not to get too hung up on playing famous venues for the first time: “I'm a bit too old for that” (*AP*, 11/5/10).

**May 11:** Cuba's permanent representative at the United Nations, Pedro Nuñez Mosquera, condemned the US government in that forum, for keeping the island on the list of countries supporting terrorism. The Cuban representative recalled that, over the last 51 years, Washington has been involved in repeated terrorist actions against the Caribbean island, killing 3,478 people and disabling another 2,099, and causing material losses worth over 54 billion dollars. He added that the unilateral production by the United States of lists accusing other countries as supposed supporters of terrorism is incompatible with International Law and the UN resolutions, the *Prensa Latina* news agency reported. Nuñez Mosquera denounced the double standards of the US government, which thinks it has the right to certify the behavior of other nations in terms of terrorism, while it doesn't trial confessed criminals who have committed horrible acts of terrorism against Cuba. In this regard, he mentioned the case of well-known international terrorist Luis Posada Carriles, whom the US authorities refuse to condemn for his crimes. He also demanded the US administration the release of the five Cubans it has maintained as political prisoners in high security jails for over 11 years now (*ACN*, 11/5/10).

**Mayo 12:** Cuando en una imagen de archivo del documental *Oscar's Cuba* se ve a una turba instigada por el gobierno gritar, frente a la casa del doctor Oscar Elías Biscet, una frase tan absurda como “Abajo los derechos humanos”, queda inmediatamente validada la labor del

médico y disidente a favor de los derechos humanos en la isla. Dar a conocer internacionalmente la figura de Biscet, quien cumple una condena de 25 años por exigir de manera pacífica el respeto a las libertades, es el objetivo de *Oscar's Cuba*. El documental, filmado clandestinamente en la isla por el realizador norteamericano Jordan Allott, se estrena en el Teatro Tower de Miami-Dade College con la presencia de directivos de esta institución educacional, el director del filme, ex presos políticos y de los hijos de Biscet, Yan Morejón y Winnie Biscet. “El mensaje de desobediencia civil y de no violencia de Biscet es muy fuerte, especialmente en el mundo de hoy”, señaló Allott, quien se propone llevar el documental a una audiencia no cubana en varias ciudades europeas y en Washington DC, donde reside (*El Nuevo Herald*, 12/5/10).

**May 12:** Cuban folk singer Silvio Rodriguez, considered the voice of the Cuban revolution, has received a US visa and is to perform a concert at New York's Carnegie Hall on June 4, his American attorney said. Lawyer Bill Martinez told the press in a telephone interview from San Francisco, California the visa was approved by US officials and is long enough to permit Rodriguez to play concerts in other US cities, including Los Angeles, San Francisco and Chicago. Rodriguez, 63, is the latest Cuban performer to be allowed into United States, which had routinely denied such visas under former President George W. Bush (*Reuters*, 12/5/10).

**Mayo 13:** Líderes republicanos de la Cámara de Representantes de Estados Unidos y miembros del Directorio Democrático Cubano divulgaron un informe que denuncia las violaciones de derechos humanos en Cuba. El reporte propone un cambio de estatus para los disidentes que han sido encarcelados en Cuba, de manera que pasen de ser “prisioneros políticos” a “secuestrados”. Según un comunicado del Directorio, el documento contiene una cronología detallada de los sucesos que ocurrieron en torno a la muerte del prisionero político Orlando Zapata Tamayo, quien falleció en febrero pasado tras una huelga de hambre de 85 días. Además, el informe critica que la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) haya dado el primer paso para el eventual regreso de Cuba al organismo regional. El informe critica que la OEA haya “incluido al régimen cubano en la organización pese a que éste no se adhiere a la Carta Democrática Interamericana”. En la presentación del informe participarán los legisladores republicanos Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, los hermanos Mario y Lincoln Díaz-Balart, y Albio Sires. La divulgación del informe se produce un día después de que varios congresistas, entre ellos Sires y los hermanos Díaz-Balart, así como ex presos políticos cubanos homenajearon en el Congreso a las “Damas de Blanco”, por su lucha por la libertad y la democracia en la isla (*EFE*, 13/5/10).

**May 14:** The defense team of Gerardo Hernandez, one of the five Cubans incarcerated in the US, will apply for habeas corpus on June 14, so justice reconsiders the situation of this prisoner. The appeal lodged in favor of Hernandez, who was given two life sentences plus 15 years in prison, will be made to Judge Joan Lenard, from the Miami Federal Court, who sentenced him along with another four Cuban antiterrorists in 2001. The defense hopes the case of Hernandez -who was given the longest sentences as a result of a long and arbitrary trial- will be reconsidered, the *Cubadebate* Web site reported (*ACN*, 14/5/10).

**May 15:** Cuba has held cultural celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the first meeting between former Cuban leader Fidel Castro and late American writer Ernest Hemingway. The four days of celebrations ended on May 15, coinciding with the date when exactly 50 years ago, Castro and the Nobel literature laureate personally met in Havana during a fishing tournament. "I

truly admired his thirst for adventure,” Castro said in 2005. Hemingway spent long periods of time in Cuba, especially in “Finca Vigia,” an old farm on the outskirts of Havana. Hemingway left the Vigia farm for New York in 1960. He committed suicide on July 2, 1961. The farm was turned into the Hemingway Museum in 1962 where more than 22,000 of Hemingway's books, photos, films, hunting trophies, guns, and other personal items are on display (*Xinhua*, 15/5/10).

**May 18:** The sprawling oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is prompting concern in Cuba, which boasts one of the Caribbean's most pristine coral reefs, thick mangroves and nesting areas for green sea turtles. Cuban government officials called US oceanographers looking for assistance. the scientists said, and the State Department confirmed that “ low, technical level” talks are underway to help Cuba respond if the sheen should move close to its shores. But environmentalists note a lack of formal ties with the country could hamper efforts to get assistance to Cuba, and renewed a call to the Obama administration to engage in talks with Cuba. “ We simply can't afford to not communicate on the environment,” said Daniel Whittle, Cuba program director for the Environmental Defense Fund. “ The economic and ecological impact, if and when, it reaches the loop current could be significant and we don't have any formal mechanism to respond or communicate.” A State Department official said the US and Cuba -- which have a cooperative agreement on hurricanes -- are “ exchanging information and looking at avenues for further information exchange.” Alberto Gonzalez Casals, a spokesman at the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, said the country would be “ ready to prevent this kind of oil spill.” “ I can tell you we are aware of the situation, we are preparing in any case of the oil spill coming to Cuba to take measures,” he said. He added that Cuba doesn't expect to be affected, but is in a “ position to cooperate with the United States” (*The Miami Herald*, 18/5/10).

**May 19:** The US and Cuba were holding talks on how to respond to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, a US State Department official said, underscoring worries about the oil reaching a strong current that could carry it to the Florida Keys and the pristine white beaches of Cuba's northern coast. The official was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke to *The Associated Press* on condition of anonymity. Oil has been spewing since the offshore drilling rig Deepwater Horizon exploded off the Louisiana coast April 20. Government scientists, meanwhile, were surveying the Gulf to determine if the oil had entered a powerful current that could take it to Florida and Cuba and eventually up the East Coast. US and Cuban officials are holding “working level” talks on how to respond to the massive Deepwater Horizon oil spill that is believed to be dumping some 5,000 barrels of crude a day into the Gulf of Mexico, two State Department officials told *The Associated Press*. “I can confirm that they are ongoing and going on at the working level,” State Department Spokesman Gordon Duguid told reporters in Washington. “It is incumbent upon us to inform all of our neighbours, not just the islands, but those countries that could be affected by disasters that happen within our territorial waters.” Another State Department official had previously discussed the talks with *The Associated Press* on condition of anonymity. Neither would say where the talks were taking place, or what specifically was being discussed. It was not clear if the US has offered assistance to Havana in the event the oil hits Cuban beaches, or if officials here would accept. There was no immediate comment from Cuban authorities on the oil spill talks (*The Toronto Star*, 20/5/10).

**May 19:** US State Department spokeswoman Virginia Staab said US diplomats in Havana delivered a note to communist-ruled Cuba's foreign ministry informing it about the Gulf oil spill

and what was known about the slick's projected movement. "We have had working-level discussions with the Cuban government to keep them informed of developments," she said. "We also communicated the US desire to maintain a clear line of communication with the Cuban government on developments," Staab added, stressing that "stopping the oil leak is our top priority." Cuba has said it is monitoring the US oil spill (*Reuters*, 19/5/10).

**May 19:** Two Cuba experts who are advisors to the Washington-based Brookings Institution think tank said in a May report that environmental cooperation was essential for both countries to be able to work together effectively against the kind of ecological disaster that the Gulf oil spill heralded. "Obviously, the establishment of working relations between the United States and Cuba to facilitate marine environmental protection is the first step in the contingency planning and cooperation that will be necessary to an effective response and early end to an oil spill," attorney Robert Muse and oil expert Jorge Pinon said in the joint paper. Although the oil that could threaten Cuba is gushing from a well in US waters, Muse and Pinon said there was the same possible risk of an accident in Cuba's plans to move forward with deepwater exploration drilling in its own territorial segment of the Gulf of Mexico. "The sobering fact that a Cuban spill could foul hundreds of miles of American coastline and do profound harm to important marine habitats demands cooperative and proactive planning by Washington and Havana to minimize or avoid such a calamity," they wrote. The United States should hold joint exercises with Cuba to coordinate emergency responses, and facilitate immediate scientific cooperation, Muse and Pinon said ([Muse and Pinon Report](#); *Reuters*, 19/5/10).

**May 20:** The Cuban Parliament is proclaiming its solidarity with those who're facing the brutal violation of their human rights in the United States, after the enactment in the state of Arizona of "a law of deep racist and xenophobic nature." A Declaration issued by the Commission for International Relations of the National Assembly of the People's Power, published by *Granma* newspaper, denounces that the law allows the police to use the racial profile to arrest any person if they have "reasonable suspicion" that he or she is an illegal immigrant. The text adds that, in fact, immigrants without documents are criminalized, thus creating an atmosphere of persecution against immigrants in general, who from now on will be constantly submitted to arbitrary detentions, searches and humiliation, including deportation to his or her country of origin. The declaration also expresses concern about the implications of this law –which could spread throughout the US territory- for millions of human beings that in this region are forced to go to the United States to look for better living conditions for themselves and their families (*ACN*, 20/5/10).

**Mayo 20:** Arturo Valenzuela, subsecretario de Asuntos Hemisféricos del Departamento de Estado, manifestó en Miami la preocupación de la actual administración por la situación de los derechos humanos en Cuba, al tiempo que valoró el papel de las Damas de Blanco. Valenzuela dijo que el clima político en la isla "ha contribuido a la muerte reciente del prisionero de conciencia Orlando Zapata", un hecho que conmovió a la opinión pública internacional en febrero y generó airadas críticas de la disidencia dentro y fuera de la isla. El subsecretario habló durante la tradicional celebración de la Fundación Nacional Cubano Americana (FNCA), con motivo de un nuevo aniversario de la independencia de Cuba. A la cita asistió un grupo de representantes de las Damas de Blanco, a las cuales Valenzuela saludó y elogió personalmente tras su presentación. "Mis saludos a las Damas de Blanco por su labor", precisó. Valenzuela

ratificó el compromiso de Estados Unidos de alentar el quehacer democrático en toda la región latinoamericana, incluyendo a Cuba (*El Nuevo Herald*, 20/5/10).

**Mayo 21:** El gobierno cubano hizo llegar a Estados Unidos “una propuesta de agenda” para un diálogo bilateral “serio” que englobara temas de interés común como la inmigración, la lucha contra el narcotráfico o los desastres naturales antes de pasar a abordar los “temas difíciles”, pero, según explicó en una entrevista a *Europa Press* el ministro de Exteriores cubano, Bruno Rodríguez, no han recibido una respuesta aún. Por otra parte, consideró que el presidente Barack Obama tiene ante sí una “oportunidad histórica” de cambiar la política de su país hacia la isla como reclama la mayoría de los estadounidenses. Según explicó el ministro, dado que “hay muchos temas en común” entre los dos países, en julio de 2009 “nosotros le presentamos a Estados Unidos una propuesta de agenda para un diálogo bilateral, para un diálogo serio, y lo hicimos discretamente como se hace cuando se hace con responsabilidad y seriedad”. “Yo soy realista y comprendo que un diálogo bilateral difícilmente podría empezar por temas difíciles de esta naturaleza” como la supresión del bloqueo, por lo que la propuesta de La Habana es “empezar por temas de cooperación y presentamos al gobierno norteamericano documentos y propuestas concretas”, aclaró el ministro, que esta semana participó en Madrid en la Cumbre Unión Europea, América Latina y Caribe. La propuesta incluiría abordar “áreas como el narcotráfico, de enorme interés para el pueblo norteamericano y una prioridad nacional de Estados Unidos”, la “cooperación en el área del tráfico de personas o el área migratoria, en terreno del control de tráfico aéreo” o en el plano medioambiental y en la “prevención y mitigación de desastres naturales”. “Sin embargo el gobierno de Estados Unidos no ha respondido a esta agenda y no ha dado ningún paso práctico”, lamentó Rodríguez, pese a lo cual, aclaró que Cuba ha decidido seguir “asistiendo a las conversaciones en el área migratoria y en el terreno postal” que los dos países han retomado desde que Obama llegó a la Casa Blanca en enero del año pasado, “porque consideramos que son útiles y se conducen de manera respetuosa” (*Europa Press*, 21/5/10).

**May 24:** The 60th edition of the Ernest Hemingway International Fishing Tournament was inaugurated in Havana, and will be devoted to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first and only meeting held between Fidel Castro and the celebrated US novelist. With Havana’s Hemingway Marina as its venue, the event’s program includes the unveiling of a plaque to commemorate the occasion in which Fidel and the Nobel Literature Prize winner coincided in the competition (*ACN*, 24/5/10).

**May 24:** Authorities found a group of Cuban migrants along the Rickenbacker Causeway, in Miami. Someone called police just before 5:30 a.m. to report 15 people on the south side of the causeway. When police arrived, they found 13 migrants, some walking along the causeway, Miami police said. All were in good condition. Police notified US Customs and Border Protection, who took the migrants to the Dania Beach station to be processed, an agency spokesperson said. The group included eight men, four women and a juvenile girl. The group told officials they made a vessel from 55-gallon drums and a single engine, but authorities have not found a vessel, according to Elee Erice, a Customs spokeswoman. They said they piloted it themselves, leaving “from an isolated area to the east of Havana on May 21,” Erice said. The migrants will likely be allowed to stay, she said. Under the so-called wet-foot/dry-foot policy,

Cubans intercepted at sea are repatriated, while those who touch land are allowed to stay (*El Nuevo Herald*, 25/5/10).

**May 26:** Cuba has yet to open a legal case against a US government contractor from Maryland nearly six months after he was arrested as a suspected spy, the head of the island's high court said. Alan P. Gross was detained on December 3 at Havana's Jose Marti International Airport and has been held without charge at the capital's high-security Villa Marista prison ever since. Formal charges cannot be filed in Cuba without a judicial accusation and the opening of a court case, so it appears unlikely charges against Gross are imminent even as he approaches a half-year in custody. It is rare for suspects to be held for extended periods in Cuba without charges or even a case being opened. But Supreme Court President Ruben Remigio said that "there still is not a case related to this matter" and he did not know whether prosecutors were working on one. "The courts receive cases when cases are presented," Remigio added, speaking on the sidelines of an international legal conference in western Havana. "When they aren't presented, we don't have a case." The general in charge of investigations for the Interior Ministry attended the same event but declined to comment (*AP*, 26/5/10).

**May 26:** The US government has licensed a Houston-based oil drilling group to travel to Cuba to start cooperation on safety and environmental practices following the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. The International Association of Drilling Contractors (IADC) said the Obama administration denied it permission to travel to Cuba in December, but reversed the decision apparently due to the attention the BP Plc (BP.L) well blowout brought to the potential for an environmental catastrophe. "The license was granted, curiously, just after the spill in the United States," said IADC Executive Vice President Brian Petty. "We are pleased the government has relented." The IADC is waiting for Cuba to set a date for a visit by a delegation of five of its staff to enhance Cuban awareness of global standards in the prevention of accidents, safety procedures and environmental protection, Petty said. The delegation would discuss the prospect of deepwater drilling offshore Cuba, the IADC. It would be the first time a US oil industry delegation visits the communist-run country which has no diplomatic ties to Washington and is under a trade embargo enforced after Fidel Castro's revolution five decades ago (*Reuters*, 26/5/10).

**Mayo 27:** La Sección de Intereses de Estados Unidos en Cuba (SINA) aplicará a partir del 1 de junio un nuevo sistema para visados, conocido como Solicitud Electrónica Para Visas de No-Inmigrantes DS-160, según un comunicado. "El nuevo sistema electrónico aplicará a todas las solicitudes sometidas en el futuro y reemplazará [a] la solicitud actual", informó la SINA. El procedimiento está diseñado para "simplificar el proceso de solicitud" y "a la vez ofrecer mayor privacidad al individuo". Desde enero de 2010, el Departamento de Estado de EE UU empezó a introducir la DS-160 en varios países (*Diario de Cuba*, 27/5/10).

**May 27:** Cuban singer and songwriter Silvio Rodriguez arrived in Puerto Rico after a nine hour flight and a "welcome" that turned into an "interrogation" that lasted three hours at the San Juan International Airport. The artist offered a press conference in which he said "I do not feel like a stranger in Puerto Rico despite the controls and the amount of hours that I had to travel despite the fact that Cuba and Puerto Rico are so close. We went through a number of controls which are special for Cubans and went through an interrogation process, but they were nice after all". After 30 years of his last US tour (with Pablo Milanes), the singer arrived in Puerto Rico (13

years from his last visit) accompanied by the Trovarroco Trio (Maikel Elizarde, Cesar Bacaro and Rachid Lopez) his flute player Niurka Gonzalez in addition to his sister Anabel Lopez and daughter Violeta. They will all be present on May 30 when Silvio and company will perform at the Puerto Rican Coliseum in the city of Hato Rey, where the audience will be able to listen to a “collection of his best songs, because it would be unjust to sing music from his recent CD (*Segunda Cita*). They will be songs that everyone knows”, said the renowned musician, now dedicated to composing music for movies and updating his blog. Now in the US, far from being in this 30’s, he has made an exception, “because I do not carry out tours anymore, but only free popular concerts (...) I have dedicated many years to touring and I now wish to dedicate myself to composing and writing” (*ACN*, 27/5/10).

**May 28:** There is a new push to make Tampa a gateway to Cuba, including direct flights to Havana, in an effort to connect Tampa's economical future with its historical past. The vision is to have at least two non-stop flights each day to Havana, totaling more than 8,000 passengers a month, and open the Port of Tampa to shipping trade with Cuba. “That will create jobs, and it will also help to break down some of those old barriers that need to be broken down in a peaceful way,” said Stephen Michelini with the World Trade Center. Backers of Cuba trade asked the Tampa City Council to visit the island nation on a cultural and trade mission. They found an ally in councilwoman Linda Saul-Sena. “It's for our economic future, as well as our cultural, social, and economic heritage,” Saul-Sena said. A hundred years ago, Florida cattle were driven across the state to steamships in Tampa, bound for Cuba. Then came the famous Tampa cigar factories staffed by Cuban immigrants. The rise of Fidel Castro, however, led to the US embargo that severed much of Tampa's historical Cuban connection (*Tampa Bay Times*, 28/5/10).

**May 28:** Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcon affirmed that if the US people knew the truth about the case of the five Cuban antiterrorists, they would force President Barack Obama to release them from prison. Injustice against Antonio Guerrero, Fernando Gonzalez, Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labañino and Rene Gonzalez will continue as long as the US population is prevented from knowing the real facts, warned Alarcon, who is also a member of the Politburo of the Cuban Communist Party. If they knew the truth, they would demand Obama to do what he has to do: withdraw the charges and set them free, added the Cuban leader during his address to participants in the final session of the 5th International meeting on Justice and Law, held at Havana’s Convention Center. However, “the so-called media outlets impose silence, since they don’t have much to do with information and are actually instruments of ideological control at the service of the empire”, pointed out Alarcon in the presence of relatives of the Cuban Five and of professionals from 14 nations attending the event. He recalled that the only thing the Cuban Five did was trying to discover and prevent criminal actions, which, against Cuba and its people, have been carried out from the United States with scandalous impunity for years, he pointed out (*ACN*, 28/5/10).

**Mayo 30:** La bailarina y coreógrafa cubana Alicia Alonso viajó a Estados Unidos para asistir al homenaje que le ofrecerá, el 3 de junio en Nueva York, el American Ballet Theatre por su 90 cumpleaños, informó la Oficina de Prensa del Ballet Nacional de Cuba (BNC). Alonso, directora del BNC desde hace 60 años, actuó con el American Ballet Theatre (ABT) entre 1941 y 1948, en los inicios de su carrera, y fue en esa compañía norteamericana donde debutó en el papel de “Giselle”, considerado la cumbre de sus interpretaciones. El director artístico del ABT, Kevin

McKenzie, ha declarado que la compañía reconocerá a Alonso con una gala que incluirá una retrospectiva fílmica de su carrera y una función especial de “Don Quijote”. El homenaje a Alonso en el Metropolitan Opera House, sede del ABT en Nueva York, coincidirá con los festejos de la compañía estadounidense por el 70 aniversario de su fundación que comenzaron el pasado 17 de este mes. Alonso dijo valorar este homenaje como “un gran honor”. Alicia Alonso está recibiendo homenajes por sus 90 años tanto en Cuba como en otros países, aunque los cumplirá el próximo 21 de diciembre (*EFE*, 30/5/10).

**Mayo 31:** Fidel Castro le pidió a Estados Unidos “que nos explique cómo va a resolver el problema de las drogas”, en una de sus habituales Reflexiones, que publica la prensa estatal de la isla. En el texto, el líder histórico de la Revolución cubana recordó episodios como la guerra del opio y destacó el esfuerzo de los gobiernos de Venezuela y Bolivia en el enfrentamiento al narcotráfico ([El imperio y la droga](#); *IPS*, 31/5/10).