

Hillary Clinton and Lifting the Blockade against Cuba: “Try It”

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Global Research, April 14, 2010

14 April 2010

Region: [Latin America & Caribbean, USA](#)

On April 10 one of the most important alternative radio stations on the Canadian west coast (near Vancouver) interviewed me on the current media campaign against Cuba and in this context the latest statement by Hillary Clinton. The moderator of the Latin Waves program Stuart Richardson read to the listeners part of Secretary of State Clinton’s April 9 comment; she says that the “Castro brothers” “do not want to see an end to the embargo and do not want to see normalization with the United States because they would then lose all the excuses for what hasn’t happened in Cuba in the last 50 years.” I pointed out that this is the latest in a string of lies and disinformation about Cuba. The fact is that the Cuban leadership has always striven and strives now for the normalization of relations with the USA. Just in this current period since the arrival of Obama as president, this objective was explicitly and forcefully raised on many occasions by the President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers Raúl Castro. For his part Fidel Castro in his many Reflections on the subject of US-Cuba relations and on Obama, has been writing most eloquently and openly with the goal to attract the Obama Administration towards taking significant steps towards standardizing dealings with the island.

If there are conditions imposed by Washington for the normalization of relations such as those Clinton reiterated on April 9, that is a change in the political system of Cuba, then this cannot be considered a step towards regularization of interaction. Why should Cuba agree to normalization of relations on the basis of these imposed preconditions, I asked? The right to self-determination and sovereignty is an inalienable right of all countries in the world, big or small, rich or poor. Does Cuba dictate that the US has to change its political and economic system before the two countries sit down to talk? No. On the contrary, the Cuban leaders have publicly stated time and again that they are willing to discuss “everything, everything, everything”, but on the basis of equality between two states, that is mutual respect. If the US has so far refused to interact on this basis, the blame falls on the US and not on Cuba.

The moderator of the radio program raised the issue of the lies surrounding the latest media campaign against Cuba specifically the notion repeated continuously that the controversial prisoners in Cuba are political prisoners of conscience. This issue was discussed fully by explaining how they were arrested, tried and jailed in March 2003. Irrefutable proof was provided showing that they very willingly accepted money and materials from the US Interest Section in Havana with the express goal of destabilizing the political situation in Cuba. These activities violate Cuban laws as they would violate US laws under similar circumstances.

In the discussion of the so-called repression of the Damas de Blanco, this was also dealt with in detail. For example, it was pointed out how they were treated so gently compared to how demonstrators were really brutally repressed and arrested in Copenhagen, Pittsburgh and most recently in California. The moderator himself gave an example of media manipulation in his own city of Vancouver. There were important demonstrations against the holding of the recent winter Olympics because of the enormous costs while Vancouver has a very high rate of homelessness and unemployment. The media carefully selected for broadcast in the main scenes of a few anarchists who seemed to be interested in arbitrary destruction and vandalism devoid of any real political content, while completely ignoring the thousands of demonstrators who peacefully and lucidly put forward their demands. For what purpose the moderator asked? To discredit the demonstrators and the issues at stake, he answered.

The interview then returned to the latest Clinton statement. Aside from everything else that can be said about it such as representing once again interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation such as Cuba, what about the charge that the Cuban system profits from the blockade, that it is used as a pretext amongst the Cuban population for economic problems. I then challenged Clinton by saying "Try it!" That is lift the blockade! Test your own words. See for yourself if the Cuban constitutional order loses its credibility, seeing as that there would no longer be any "excuses" for its economic problems, according to Washington's theory. Clinton would be proven correct and in addition the Cuban Revolution would be crippled and eventually toppled.

It was pointed to the audience that the Cuban leadership has often and frankly stated that many economic problems and other short-comings emerging more recently such as social indiscipline have to be overcome and that these negative features cannot all be blamed on the blockade. While the blockade being carried out for fifty years has caused so much damage that it can be considered to be an act of genocide, the Cuban leadership has always claimed that key problems facing Cuba are those that the Cubans have to solve on their own. In fact, it has been declared by the Cuban leadership that if the Cubans do not bring about the changes that are necessary, the Revolution will destroy itself; nothing to do with the blockade.

It is quite a shame that with all the funds, think tanks, Cubanologists and other means at their disposal, Washington does not even know what is happening in Cuba nor are they knowledgeable about how the leadership, what they call the "Castro brothers", think and act. Washington: Lift the blockade against Cuba, and see for yourself. Just try it.

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