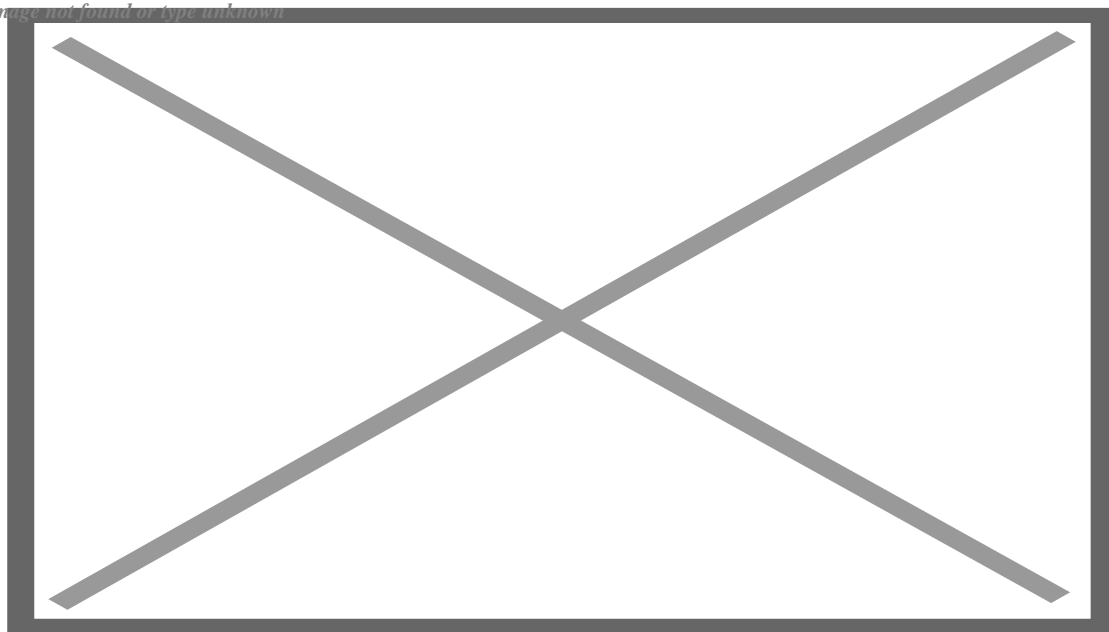


Cuban president grants interview to Spanish newspaper Público

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The Spanish daily Público shared on its website on Friday an interview by journalist Pascual Serrano with the President of the Republic and First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, Miguel Díaz-Canel. Photo > ACN.

Havana, August 4 (RHC) --The Spanish daily Público shared on its website on Friday an interview by journalist Pascual Serrano with the President of the Republic and First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, Miguel Díaz-Canel.

Díaz-Canel responded in writing to Serrano's questions related to the economic situation of the country after the COVID-19 pandemic, the inclusion of Cuba in the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, and his recent meetings with Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, among other topics.

The president referred to the accusation by Donald Trump's government of alleged sonic attacks against the personnel of the U.S. embassy in Cuba, which he described as a slanderous operation designed with the clear political objective of dismantling the ties that had been established during Barack Obama's presidency.

They wanted to discredit the state of relations and our country, in order to reconstruct the narrative of Cuba as a hostile state, an approach that was later enriched with new slanders to justify the return to an aggressive political approach and the imposition of additional coercive measures, he said.

Although the U.S. intelligence agencies later denied the slanders about the sonic attacks, the hostile policy approach has remained in place, the Cuban head of state added.

When questioned about the transcendence of Cuba's inclusion in the list of countries sponsoring terrorism (from which it had left in 2015), Díaz-Canel pointed out that Trump did it at the end of his term, so it has been Joe Biden's administration that has ended up implementing the consequences of that measure.

It is a markedly aggressive step that has caused the loss of relations with important banking and financial institutions in the world and makes it difficult to establish links with others for the performance of the economy, by hindering commercial activity, hindering the work of payments and collections, making imports more expensive, limiting credit possibilities.

This results in shortages, non-compliance with payment commitments, difficulties in acquiring inputs for industry, services and consumption of the population; at the same time, it discourages foreign investment and limits international cooperation.

The designation of Cuba on the list is an instrument of economic coercion, Díaz-Canel stressed, adding that the Biden administration chose to be faithful to the aggressive approach promoted by Trump and disloyal to the course opened by the Obama administration, of which Biden himself was part when he was vice president.

It is also clear that there has been a bet on the collapse of the Cuban economy since the current government came to power, which explains the tightening of the blockade during the pandemic and the misleading statements about a supposed review of Trump's policy, while the most harmful and representative elements of that policy were applied with full rigor, he denounced.

Díaz-Canel described his recent meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping as profound and warm, and stressed the priority he gives to relations with Cuba and his recognition of the role played by Cuba's historic leadership, as forgers of the close friendship between Cuba and China.

With President Vladimir Putin I have also had extensive exchanges, he said, marked by camaraderie and the common will to strengthen in all areas the relations that distinguish two sister nations such as Cuba and Russia.

A friendly relationship, but also a strategic one, is the one we are developing with Russia, based on historical ties forged since the time of the Soviet Union, with a potential for the development of economic-commercial, financial, scientific-technical and other ties.

Referring to Cuba's relations with the European Union (EU), Díaz-Canel mentioned that they have been governed since 2017 by the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (ADPC) that has allowed progress in both political and cooperation ties, which have an important impact on the country's economic development.

The Cuban President acknowledged the support of the EU as a bloc for the resolution that Cuba presents annually at the United Nations General Assembly against the U.S. blockade, as well as for its clear position in favor of Cuba's removal from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism.

He addressed the economic situation of the country after the impact of covid-19, and said that tourism, a strategic sector for the economy, had an average growth rate of 5.8 percent (%), the second most dynamic rate after construction.

Due to its financial contributions to other sectors of the economy, which participate in 60% of tourism purchases, which also favors the substitution of imports, it is considered a dynamizing factor for the rest of the country's economic sectors, including the activities of non-state forms of management, he explained.

Until 2019, the results of this economic activity in the country confirmed that it was correctly decided to prioritize its development. Then came the covid-19 pandemic and tourism, globally suffered in 2020 its biggest crisis.

Cuba, which had started 2020 with more than 981,900 travelers in the first quarter, was forced to close the border on March 24; since then, statistics show a 23-year setback, he said.

The border closure was maintained until November 2021, and the country turned to the search for vaccines and treatments.

Cuba's performance in tourism cannot be compared with that of other nations, because the challenge that touches all States, as a consequence of the spread of the pandemic, in our case is multiplied by another pandemic that still has no vaccine: six decades of blockade, plus 243 measures, mostly aimed at undermining the economy as a whole and tourism in particular, many of which were tightened during the health emergency caused by the pandemic, with a devastating impact on our people, he explained.

Undoubtedly, there is a before and after COVID-19 and the opportunistic tightening of the blockade in that context, which has negatively affected a performance that was growing steadily, he said.

Those measures, maintained by the Biden administration, together with the arbitrary inclusion of Cuba in the list of countries sponsoring terrorism, feed the permanent media campaign against our country and impact all sectors of the Cuban economy and society, but, particularly, it is aimed at damaging tourism, the president denounced.

When I speak of perversity, I am talking about policies like this one. Nothing tells us that this cruel policy will end in the short term. Our decision is to jump over the blockade and move forward, he concluded.

Pacual Serrano was founding director of the alternative website Rebelión and regularly publishes his columns in the Spanish newspaper Público. He has written several books on journalism, communication and politics.

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/nacionales/330499-cuban-president-grants-interview-to-spanish-newspaper-publico>



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