

*ALMANACH VIA EVRASIA, 2013, 2**Vladimir Borodaev,**Professor, Dr. Habil.**Faculty of History,**Moscow State University***THREE MAIN DIRECTIONS OF CUBAN FOREIGN POLICY
AT THE BEGINNING OF 21st CENTURY**

Nearly half a century after the victory of the Cuban revolution in 1959 the presidential administrations of the USA are trying to isolate this rebellious island. Despite of all the efforts made by the international superpower it did not succeed in to achieving its goals. The current Cuban regime has overlived ten US presidential administrations: D. Eisenhower (republican), J. F. Kennedy (democrat), L. Johnson (democrat), R. Nixon (republican), J. Ford (republican), J. Carter (democrat), R. Reagan (republican), G. H. W. Bush (republican), W. Clinton (democrat), G. W. Bush (republican). Nowadays the Cuban regime has to deal with the administration of the current American president Barak Obama.

In October 2012 the media published again information about the worsening health condition of the former Cuban leader Fidel Castro. This publication coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 – a very important turning point of the Cuban foreign policy. Once again the spiritual commander of the Cuban revolution disproved this rumors by showing in the center of Havana in the company of the newly reelected president of Venezuela Hugo Chavez. That was an obvious demonstration of the stability of the ties between these two countries as well as a prove for their importance.

No matter what will happen with Fidel Castro in the near future he will remain in the minds of the Latin-American people as the immortal fighter-comandante. There is a common joke in Latin America about his long life: Scientists from Ecuador decided to give Fidel Castro as a present a Galapagos tortoise. El

Comanadante said – “Oh it is beautiful but how long does it live?”. The scientist replied – “400 years”. Fidel looked at the tortoise sadly and said – “It is always like that with the pets, as soon as you start to love them and they die in your hands. I think that it will be better if we give it to the Oceanarium.” This excursion shows us the fertile soil for the Cuban influence and foreign relations in the Latin-American region.

At the end of 2011 Havana had diplomatic relations with 186 countries in the world¹. It developed successful ties with states from all continents. During the first decade of 21st century in Cuba crystalized several vectors of priority of the international cooperation. If we take as base for the hierarchy the trade exchange the five main economic partners will be in that sequence:

- Latin America
- Peoples Republic of China
- Canada
- European Union
- Russian Federation

But if we take in mind all the factors connecting Cuba to certain countries or groups of states – for example the potential for geopolitical, military, technological, ideological and humanitarian cooperation, in that case we have three main leaders: Latin America (with special role of Venezuela), China and Russia. If we look at this countries we may say that this are the strategic directions of the Cuban foreign policy in 21st century. That is why the article will be focused on the ties between Havana and these three states.

Since the beginning of the new millennium Latin America has taken a special place in Cuban foreign policy. With the start of the new liberation movement, called by the scientists - which emerged in the region at the dawn of the new century the prospects for cooperation for socialist Cuba has multiplied. Along

¹ <http://www.cubaminrex.cu> (21. 12. 2011).



with the renewal of the diplomatic ties, the political, humanitarian and economic connections began to strengthen.

Special kind of political and business cooperation has started with Venezuela. For the last decade this Caribbean country has become the main political ally and economic partner for the government in Havana. Soon after on the 30th of October 2000 in Caracas started the rule of the leftist-radical president Hugo Chavez, the two countries signed Complex convention for cooperation which brought the ties on a new higher level².

During the first official visit of the Venezuelan president in Havana, which took place in December 2004 the two leaders came up with Joint Declaration for Bolivarian alternative for the Americas (ALBA). Chavez made from this project a special political platform. “It is not possible to solve the problems of hunger and poverty in capitalist conditions. The only way out is socialism. I am not talking about any form of socialism but a new socialism of the 21st century – the century of Latin-American freedom”, said Chavez³.

Bolivarian alternative for the Americas, according to its creators is model for integration of the people of Latin America and the Caribbean, who are connected not only by geographic area but also by historical, cultural ties as well as common necessities and potential. ALBA is an integration project, “based on the principles of cooperation, solidarity and complementarity that form an alternative model to the economic neoliberalism, which in its place has led only to deepening of the structural asymmetries in the society and concentration of the wealth in the hands of the privileged minority”⁴.

In order to implement the principles written in the Joint Declaration of Cuba and Venezuela, the countries ratified a document which broadens the impact of the

² *Granma* (31. 10. 2000).

³ *Ibid.* (16. 12. 2004).

⁴ Qué es el ALBA. Instalación de la V Asamblea General de la Confederación Parlamentaria de las Americas el 25 de Noviembre de 2003. Ministro de Estado para la Integración y Comercio Exterior. Bancoex. Caracas. 2003. P. 1.



previously signed convention. It allowed to make the process of integration more concrete.

Venezuela and Cuba made a list of arrangements which should lead to the goals. This agreements were planned by taking in to consideration the asymmetry in political, social, economic and juridical character of the two countries⁵.

For decades Cuba has invented mechanisms for defense against the economic embargo and the permanent political and ideological pressing from the USA. This process led to great flexibility of its economic and trade relations with the world. Venezuela is member of many international institutions, to which Cuba does not belong. These circumstances had to be taken in to consideration in order to respect the principle of complementarity in the field of trade and financial relations between the two states. This process made the economic and trade ties of the country very flexible. Venezuela is member of many international organizations in which Cuba is not taking part. This fact had to be taken in mind in order to respect the reciprocity principle in the mutual treaties and agreements. The proposals of the two countries were included in a program for bilateral cooperation. It was made in accordance to the realization of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas.

In the area of trade the program for cooperation envisioned immediate abolishment of all custom taxes and barriers for the import and export between the two states. In fact the process led to the making of a free trade zone among Cuba and Venezuela. In accordance to the program were cut off the taxes of all government investments, and also the taxes on the joint ventures of the two countries, including even the private capital coming from Venezuela.

Cuban government removed all the barriers for investments coming from the government of the South American country in order 100% of the property to remain possession of the investor.

⁵ Ibid. (16. 12. 2004).

Within the frame of ALBA Venezuela offered Cuba technologies connected with energetics. At the same time the government of Chavez offered financial aid for production projects, infrastructure, energetics, production of electricity, asphalt works and other transportation projects, development of the sea ports, water supply and plumbing, agrobusiness and services.

In transport field was decided to give preferential status to airplanes of both countries⁶.

The growth of tourism is of great importance for Cuba and Venezuela. It was decided to start joint tourist services with no taxes or other limitations.

In the program are clearly defined other issues of economic cooperation. In this aspect the price of the Venezuelan oil exported to Cuba is calculated on the base of the world market prices but with reductions due to the special regime included in the Caracas agreement, which was signed during the 3rd summit of the Association of the Caribbean States in December 2001. Only 8 countries are favored by these preferences.

In the program was set the possibility to pay for the trade with Venezuelan currency or any other currency accepted by the two states.

Educational cooperation has taken a special place in the program. It was decided to implement special scholarships for citizens of both countries who were traveling on exchange. Since 2005 Cuba has started to assign annually 2000 scholarships for Venezuelans willing to study in the higher education system of the island. In return Venezuela gives scholarships to Cubans who are studying energetics and in other fields, which are interesting for the Havana government. Joint scientific researches have started on problems concerning the biological diversity of the world and other important and modern topics. The ties are developing in the telecommunications too, including using of satellites⁷.

⁶ Construyendo al ALBA. Diputado Rafael Correa Flores coordinador y cjmpilador. Caracas, 2005.

⁷ Ibidem.

In the field of educational cooperation Cuba has started to help in elaboration of methodology, programs and technical support for the teaching process in Venezuela.

In accordance with the program, Havana sent to the South American country 15 thousand doctors and as many other medical staff⁸.

They started working in the poor neighborhoods “mision barrio adentro”, and also in training of therapists and specialists needed for the Venezuelan health care system. For the period 2005 – 2015 the Cubans promised to help Caracas in the preparation of the whole needed medical staff. In the beginning of 2010 this program was quite accomplished⁹. It is supposed that by 2015 the number of trained by cubans, venezuelan doctors will be about 50 thousand.

In the middle of the first decade of 21st century Cuban medical staff started a program of complex health care in Venezuela organized on preferential economic conditions. It includes 15 million citizens, which is almost half of the country’s population. It concerns mainly medical service in rural areas, the poor neighborhoods and regions with difficult access, places where before no such thing was at all.

Cuba has well developed sport infrastructure and has promised Venezuela to achieve the same. It started supply of antidoping control equipment for the Venezuelan athletes.

Coming into life of the cooperation program highly increased the economic ties. In 2006 the merchandise traffic between the two countries raised to 4 billion dollars. As comparison could be mentioned that in 1994 when Cuba diversified its foreign relations after the disintegration of COMECON, it had trade exchange with all Latin American countries equal to 239.8 million dollars. At that time there were no economic ties with Venezuela at all¹⁰. With the start of

⁸ In the years of peoples government in Cuba it has turned into the biggest “medical state” in Latin America, now having 100 thousand graduated doctors for 11 million habitants.

⁹ *Granma* (20. 04. 2010).

¹⁰ Cuba: Handbook of Trade Statistics, 1995. Washington: Directorate of Intelligence: Central Intelligence Agency (1995), pp. 2–5.

the integration program both states were thinking of broadening the cooperation. With this model they are showing the other Latina American countries the way of the close integration, which might lead to the formation of confederative state. On the 18th of January 2008 in Caracas was signed the Treaty of complex cooperation between Cuba and Venezuela.

The quick implementation of the decisions taken is characteristic of the relations of these two countries. In recent years joint projects were made in practically all social-economic fields, on first place health care, education, sports, energetics and farming. In 2005 – 2007 were found 26 big joint ventures. As example could be taken the Oil refining plant in the Cuban port Cienfeugos. It was built with the technical support of the USSR during the 80's but was not working almost 15 years. In 2008-2012 were made 10 new joint ventures. In the process of concretization of the Treaty for complex cooperation were elaborated 76 new projects concerning the sugar industry. For the realization of these decisions is going to be made investment of more than 1 billion 355 million dollars. On the projects are working 18 venezuelan, 21 cuban ministries and more than 60 big contracting organizations form both sides¹¹.

At the end of 2009 in Venezuela as part of the realization of the cooperation in energetics, industry, agriculture, education and healthcare were participating 42 thousand Cuban specialists. As consequence of the collaboration in 2009 the merchandise exchange has grown to 7 billion dollars¹².

On 12 of December 2009 in Havana the president of Venezuela Hugo Chavez and the Chairman of the Council of State of Cuba Raul Castro signed new package of agreements. In its realization in 2010 were made 285 joint economy projects on total value to 3 billion dollars. In July 2011 Cuba and Venezuela connected by marine underwater trunk cable¹³. This led to improvement of the existing connections among the partners and decreased the prices on internet in Cuba.

¹¹ <http://www.cubaminrex.cu/actualidad/2008/enero/18-01-08>.

¹² *Juventud Rebelde* (12. 12. 2009).

¹³ РИА Новости (09. 02. 2011).

In the moment Venezuela is supplying Havana with lubricating oil materials, fuel, herbicides, insecticides, and spare parts from the machine industry. In return Cuba is giving medicines, medical equipment and instruments, electric and chemical products, steel reinforcement for concrete works, as well as professional services on many fields.

On 13-14 December in Havana was held the 8th Summit of the states participants in the Bolivarian Alliance – thus has changed the name of the ALBA bloc since 2009¹⁴. This was anniversary meeting on 14 of December the agreement turned 5 years. In these years besides Cuba and Venezuela it include also Bolivia, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda. During the Havana meeting the participants discussed the implementation of the main agreements concerning fields of health care, agriculture, energetics, industry, housing construction and telecommunications. They accepted new documents on interstate cooperation. Special attention was paid to provision supply security in the light of world economic crisis and to the problems of global climate change.

In the financial sphere the main topic was the bringing into use of the regional monetary unit for payments in the community – the SUCRE. The participants think that the implementation of the new currency will let them avoid the exchange made in dollars and will help reduce the impact of the financial crisis.

As intended SUCRE was used for first time in 2010. It was a symbolic payment for five ton of soya oil from Bolivia bought by Venezuela. The electronic payment was made by the central banks of the two countries. The pocess was observed by the presidents of the two countries. The value of the virtual currency is 1.25 USD – almost equal to 1 euro¹⁵.

¹⁴ *Granma* (16. 12. 2009).

¹⁵ www.banki.ua.

On the 19th April 2010 in Caracas was held the 9th Summit of ALBA which was attended by the Chairman of the Cuban State Council Raul Castro. On it the leaders of Cuba and Venezuela confirmed their will for future cooperation¹⁶.

The “Left Wave” in Latin America helped Cuba in attaining closer economic and political ties with other countries from the region. Along with Venezuela, partners of Havana became Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Guyana, Nicaragua, Uruguay, Chile, Ecuador and Jamaica. The fast development of the cooperation with Latin American states assisted Cuba in 2006 to go beyond the levels of foreign trade that it had in 1986 when the active collaboration with the USSR and the COMCONE was at its peak. In 2006 it totaled on 19.5 billion dollars, in 2007 it raised to 22.4 billion dollars, in 2009 it exceeded 26 billion dollars and in 2011 it grew to 28 billion¹⁷.

Very important geopolitical event for Cuba and the whole of Latin America was the meeting of the Rio Group (Latin American political forum, founded in 1986 and in 2008 consisting of 22 states) on the 16th of December 2011. On that event the country was unanimously accepted as member. The former president of Mexico – Felipe Calderon, who was presiding the event, greeted the Cuban people in the person of Raul Castro. The representatives on the forum condemned the US trade embargo against Cuba.

Another very important event for Havana was the beginning of the work on new political organization of all Latin American countries including the island of freedom but with no participation from USA and Canada. The idea was presented by the Mexican president Calderon on the summit of the Rio Group which was held on 23 February 2010 in Mexico. According to his statement – there was new form of regional cooperation elaborated¹⁸.

On the 9th December 2011 in Caracas was the official founding of the Society of the states of Latin America and the Caribbean by 33 countries from the region.

¹⁶ <http://www.cubasocialista.cu/19-04-10>.

¹⁷ Accounts made by the author on: Balance preliminar de la economias de America Latina y el Caribe. 2008. P.136: http://cubasolidaridad.org/images/documentos/cuba_cepai_2008.pdf.

¹⁸ <http://www.novostiNK.ru> (12. 02. 2009).

The Declaration of Caracas in which the main directions of the policies of the bloc – peace and development, was elaborated. President of Venezuela Hugo Chavez described it as the new regional force of the 21st century.

The integration of Cuba in the world economy in the frame of states similar to it in civilization development and characteristics open to it new perspectives. Havana does not want to be in the periphery of the contemporary processes of globalization. Therefore it has active role in the founding of the new organizations among the Latin American countries.

The recognition of Cuba as one of the leaders of the world's freedom movement came with the 14th conference of the Movement of the Nonaffiliated States which was in Havana 11th to 16th September 2006. Last decade the Latin American countries are having increasing role in it. In the conference worked representatives of 119 states. 56 of them were the heads of their governments.

The participants criticized USA and expressed their solidarity with Cuba, Bolivia and Venezuela against the “aggressive policies of Washington”. Havana conference was important stage in the revival of the Movement of the Nonaffiliated States, which had decreased its activity during the 90's. About the new place of this organization, which is representing almost 54% of the global population, in the world politics is speaking the fact that the general secretary of UN took part in the summit. He had a meeting with Fidel Castro. Cuba was elected as head of the movement for the following 3 years. During this period was done a lot of work for the establishment of strong positions of the movement in Latin America and other regions. On the 15th conference of the Nonaffiliation movement which was held on 15-16th of July 2009 in the town Sharm-El-Sheih, Raul Castro transferred his duties to the president of Egypt. On 29th- 30th August 2012 was the 16th Conference in the capital of Iran – Teheran. Representatives of 120 countries participated in it. The forum was attended by the General Secretary of the UN Ban Ki Mung. The Cuban delegation was led by the second man in the government hierarchy - the first vice-president of the State Council Jose Ramon Machado Ventura¹⁹. That was proof for the great

¹⁹ *Granma* (31. 08. 2012).

interest of the country in the cooperation in this format. The organization is secure base for the foreign policy of Cuba.

In the last years Cuba has constantly increasing interest in the good relations with China. If we take into consideration the common ways of development and the ideological proximity of Havana and Beijing we could say that there is strategic projection of the cooperation between the two countries. Since the middle of the 1990's the ties between them were showing stability and steady raise of the economic vector.

In the beginning of the new millennium Cuba and China had a new impulse for development. Beijing started economic expansion in Latin America. During the first decade of the 21st century it invested there more than 100 billion USD. On the 5th of November 2008 the government of China made public a document about its policy towards the Latin American states and the Caribbean. "This is the first document of such type written by the Chinese government about the ties with this region" said the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China Cjin Ghan²⁰.

In the paper were shown the tasks and goals of the Chinese policy towards Latin America as well as a complex plan for the future cooperation in different fields. In the document was written that the government is looking at the ties with the region from strategic perspective and is trying to establish relations of cooperation and partnership based on equilibrium and mutual benefit²¹.

The connections of Latin America and China in past decades have developed in many directions. "The broadening of the ties with Latin America and the Caribbean are important base for the Chinese diplomacy. The goal of this publication is the increasing of the mutual understanding, trust, the activation of the pragmatic cooperation and support for a strong, stable development of the bilateral connections", stated Cjin Ghan²².

²⁰ Сайт "Перспективы" (05. 11. 2008).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

Cuba is important to Beijing as one of the main bridge heads for commercial plans in the Caribbean region. Therefore the PRC is increasing its economic ties with the island rapidly. Also there are some important raw materials which are needed by the developing Chinese industry.

The creation of ALBA and the start of Cuban-Venezuelan joint projects was an impulse for the boom in the economic connections with the Asian country. Beijing increased significantly the amount of the credits for Cuba, since it saw in the regional group opportunity for the implementation of the Latin American strategy. In 2006 the merchandise exchange between Cuba and China grew twice compared to 2005 and reached 1 billion 792 million USD. As result of the fast growth of the trade and economic ties the Asian giant became second economic partner of Havana, after Venezuela. Cuban government recommended to all state enterprises to give priority in investment and trade to these two countries. 36% of the whole Cuban foreign trade exchange in 2006 was due to the work with Venezuela and China. In 2007 the volume of foreign trade operations of Havana and Beijing exceeded 2 billion USD. In spite of the world financial crisis it remained constant through 2008-2012.

As part of the “energy revolution”, which started in Cuba in the first years of the new century and is aimed at the change of the old not efficient electric machinery and equipment, China provided to the island big quantities of new generation electric devices. The trade operations among the two countries are coordinated by intergovernmental commissions and are done by the state enterprises. PRC is aiding Havana in acquisition and usage of the most contemporary information technologies. In March 2008 joint enterprise in the field of telecommunications “Gran Cayman Teleco Ltd.” received quality certificate. It united the Chinese “Big Dragon information technologies“ and the Cuban “Electro-energetic Union” (Union Electrica)²³.

Regularly since the beginning of the 2000 there are government delegation visits, including meetings of the heads of the states. In 2001 Cuba accepted the

²³ <http://www.cubaminrex.cu/13-03-2008>.

chairman of PRC Dzian Dziamin, and in 2004 Hu Dzintao. In return Fidel Castro visited Beijing in 2003²⁴. In April 2005 on a visit in China was Raul Castro, who at that time was substitute of the head of the state²⁵. This was proof of the stable rise of the political ties on a high level. That was confirmed during the travel to Cuba of the All Chinese Parliament in May 2010²⁶.

On 28 of September 2010 was the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Cuba and PRC. Revolutionary Cuba was the first Latin American country to recognize the People's Republic of China and to start with it official inter-state relations.

In Cuba and China this anniversary was celebrated officially.

In July 2012 was the four day visit in China of the Cuban president Raul Castro. It caused great interest in the Asian country. "Cuba is the most important state in Latin America said the representative of the Chinese ministry of foreign affairs Liu Veimin. "Until Cuba is facing problems in attracting investments from the West, the closer ties with China will aid in reformatting and the development of the country" – stated the China social science academy expert Jan Tzianming. Nowadays China is actively subsidizing Cuban agriculture, the mining of nickel and the oil search program.

During the visit to Cuba of the vice-chairman of PRC Si Tziping in 2011 Beijing decided to invest 6 billion USD in the oil refining plant in Cien fuegos, to build a new one for pressurized gas and to reconstruct the sea ports²⁷.

In the time of his visit in PRC in July 2012 Raul Castro met the Chinese president Hu Tzingtao. They signed many important documents concerning trade, energetics, building infrastructure, agriculture and biotechnology. Agreements have been made on lending Cuba new Chinese credit lines²⁸. Cuban

²⁴ <http://www.cubaminrex.cu/06-12-2007>.

²⁵ *Granma* (21. 04. 2005).

²⁶ <http://www.cubaminrex.cu/04-05-2010>.

²⁷ *Правда Приднестровья* (5. 07. 2012).

²⁸ *Novosti UA.net* (06. 07. 2012).

leader met also the vice-chairman of PRC Si Tziping and the vice-premier Li Cuziang who are expected to succeed the ruling positions in China²⁹. All these gave new impulse of the bilateral ties of the two socialist countries.

Important factor in strengthening of the positions of Havana on the international arena and the improvement of the dynamics of Cuban economic development is the boost of the Russian vector in its international policy. In this aspect can be seen the settlement of cooperation on the base of mutual benefit in several fields.

On the 2nd of May 2012 was celebrated 110 years since the start of the diplomatic relations between Russia and Cuba³⁰. For all these years they passed through several different stages. The three decades after the reestablishment of the diplomatic ties on 8th of May 1960 were of great benefit. That was a period of cooperation in all fields. At that time USSR became the most important strategic partner for Cuba. The trade exchange was totaling to 75% of the whole Cuban export and imports. The Cuban economy was running mainly on soviet supplies and machinery.

With the collapse of the “Soviet bloc” and the USSR itself, started the stage of “deideologization” in the relations of Moscow and Cuba. At the beginning of the 1990’s the exchange between the two countries decreased more than 20 times. In Cuba were left unfinished hundreds of buildings, plants and enterprises which has been made with soviet help. The level of military cooperation dropped drastically.

In the middle of the 90’s several times were made attempts for the revival of the ties on new base. But the “interim period” became longer than expected, economic and military cooperation fell to very low levels. In order to survive Cuba had to search for new foreign partners.

In the beginning of the 21st century the merchandise exchange between Russia and Cuba was about 1 % of the islands exports and imports. In 2010 it was equal to 260 million USD. The only aspect of the cooperation which remained untouched was the diplomacy. The strategic interests of Cuba and Russia on the

²⁹ *Granma Internacional* (07. 07. 2012).

³⁰ Россия-Куба. 1902-2002: Документы и материалы. М., 2004, 13-18.

international arena coincided. The visits of foreign ministers of both countries continued to be regular. Not that bad were developing the humanitarian relations, including the cultural cooperation and the activity of the Russian Orthodox Church among the several thousand Russian and former USSR republics citizens who live on the island.

Positive changes and broadening of the ties among Russia and Cuba could be seen in 2008-2012. In August 2008 Cuban government unhesitatingly supported Russia in the intervention in Georgia – Ossetia conflict.

In the same year was noticeable the animated the work of the Russo-Cuban intergovernmental committee in cooperation, after its leadership in Russian side was given to the vice-premier I. Setchin. He knows Cuba well, because of their shared work in Angola. In 1980's he was serving there as military translator. In November 2008 was held work meeting in Havana. In it Setchin had conversations with the vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers of Cuba R. Cabrias. In it they expressed the ambition of the two states to broaden the cooperation in the social-economic sphere. "I will keep trying on every of my trips to Cuba and the region to male revision of the joint projects and to broaden the cooperation. This approach will lead to an increase of the prosperity of our people", said I. Setchin³¹.

The conference of the Committee in Havana was held soon after the tropical hurricanes had hit the island. The Russian government did not stay indifferent to the difficulties of the Cubans. Help for the restoring of the normal life was offered for the stricken areas. I. Setchin noted that one of the reasons of his visit was to control the activities of the Russian workgroups who were "cooperating with the Cuban friends in the liquidation of the consequences of the hurricane. The Russian people are sincerely going through the tragedies connected with the hits of the hurricane on Cuba"³². The first problem to be coordinated was the supply to the island of galvanized iron sheets for roofing and window glass. The country needed these materials to rebuild the devastations caused by the hurricanes to more than 40% of the dwellings.

³¹ *Juventud Rebelde* (07. 11. 2008).

³² *Ibidem*.



The work contacts in such unordinary situation showed the stability of the friendly ties lied in previous times. This cooperation helped understand the needs and the capabilities of the two countries and to ascertain the economic base for revival of bilateral relations on mutual benefit. In this aspect R. Cabrisas said: “It is very important for our governments to have political will which could be brought into life... The most significant thing is to reestablish the economic ties, which are directed not only to trade exchange but towards the economic and social development of our states”³³.

The main events in 2008-2012 were the interchange of high level visits. In late November 2008 was the official call of the president D. A. Medvedev to Cuba. He had important talks with the Chairman of the State Council Raul Castro. Very significant was his meeting with the first secretary of the Central committee of the Cuban communist party, the leader of Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro. It lasted more than hour.

Interesting note about this talk wrote Fidel Castro. “In the conversation with Medvedev I touched on our stance towards the USA. Particularly we were discussing the impossibility for us to accept the American “policy of the carrot and the stick”, and also our wish to gain back the whole occupied Cuban territory in Guantanamo. I confirmed our fidelity to peaceful international policy, but one which does not exclude the strengthening of our defense against eventual aggressors. No other country can understand us like Russia which is jeopardized by the same opponent of the peace. Thus important and serious was our exchange of opinions on most urgent problems which are facing many people and countries on their road to multipolar world, in which they will have guaranteed peaceful and stable development”³⁴.

In the end of January and the beginning of February 2009 was the official visit to our country of the head of Cuban state Raul Castro. He met with the then serving prime-minister V. Putin and the president D. Medvedev. During the talks

³³ Ibidem.

³⁴ *Кастро Ф.* Размышления команданте. М., 2009, с. 237.

in Kremlin D. Medvedev highly estimated the level of bilateral cooperation: “I am sure that we have perfect conditions so that we can bring our relations on a strategic level”³⁵.

In January both countries signed 34 documents. 24 of them were prepared during the meetings of the inter-governmental committee 22-24th of January, all others were concerted in the wide profile talks on 30th of January.

In Kremlin was signed Memorandum on the principles of strategic partnership between Russia and Cuba (bolded by the author). There also were granted credits for purchase of Russian automobile and aviation production. The parameters of the cooperation in the fields of energetics, oil production and fishing were defined³⁶.

During his stay in Moscow Raul Castro spoke with gratitude about the help given to his country by the USSR: “For many years the people of the USSR and first of all the noble Russian people, were giving us unworldly, unpretending and good reasoned support. We the Cubans will never forget this uncommon gesture of brotherhood”³⁷. The head of the Cuban state characterized these negotiations as “historical moment, very important sign in the relations between Russia and Cuba. We are longtime friends, we knew each other in good and bad times, we have great experience in our connections”³⁸.

On 12 of July 2012 during his visit to Moscow were held the consecutive meetings of Raul Castro with the newly elected president of Russia Vladimir Putin and the prim-minister Dmitri Medvedev. In the talks were discussed the bilateral relations in economic and trade spheres. There was examined the problem of investments. Also were debated the plan for diversification of the

³⁵ *Советская Россия* (05. 02. 2009).

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

merchandise exchange and its increase, new projects in the field of telecommunications, transport and energetics³⁹.

According to the above written we can make the conclusion that in consequence of the visits of the heads of the Russian and Cuban governments, their successful talks, the signing of the package of documents, we have convincing proof that now Russia remains strategic partner of Cuba. All this gives us hope that a new period of relations of mutual benefit has started.

About the importance of the Russo-Cuban ties spoke in December 2011 the foreign minister of Russia S. Lavrov. “Cuba was and is strategic partner for Russia. Among our states is maintained dialogue on highest level, we have cooperation on the international arena, based on unanimity and coinciding of the interests on fundamental world problems”⁴⁰, Lavrov stated.

The whole amount of credits and help for Cuba according to the last treaties is more than 300 million USD. There is state credit of 150 million USD, which will be used for buying of Russian agricultural and building machinery. Another credit of 20 million for 10 years is with interest under 5%. And finally, 100 million USD are granted to Cuba as leasing for Russian machinery.

Among the documents signed during the visit of Castro is an agreement for founding of a joint venture between KAMAZ and the Cuban state enterprise Radex. Another agreement was signed between INTER RAO (chairman of the board of the directors is I. Setchin) and the Cuban state enterprise Union Electrica. The cooperation will be in the field of heat and hydro energetics. The agreement is looking to modernization and increasing of the power of the fuel-burning power plant “Maximo Gomez” in Mariel, near Havana. The joint venture will manage the power plant, modernize the power units, build new ones and supply the needed materials and equipment. The energy will be transferred to the Cuban energy system on trade prices. The companies are discussing cooperation in small hydro-electric plants too.

³⁹ *Granma Internacional* (12. 07. 2012).

⁴⁰ www.inosmi.ru (18. 10. 2011).

For first time in 20 years to Cuba was renewed the supply of production of Chelyabinsk tractor plant. In accordance to the contract for 2011-2012 40 powerful bulldozers B-12 will be send to the island⁴¹.

If we don't get into the signed agreements it may look for someone as if only Cuba is interested in the cooperation. But it is not like that. The development of these relations is very profitable and perspective for Russia too. If we put aside the possibility of colossal military, strategic and geopolitical potential of this cooperation and we take just the economy. We can see that Cuba is growing market for Russian machinery and technical production. In close future there will be possibilities for cooperation in the field of oil industry as well. In that direction is seen the realization of joint Russo-Cuban-Venezuelan projects.

In autumn 2008 in Cuba was announced the founding of "National oil consortium". It offered to any interested country to take place into geological survey in the Mexican Gulf and the future building of oil platforms for in-depth drilling⁴². That is connected to the fact that few years ago in Cuban shelf were found big quantities of high quality oil. According to the reports of the geologists it is estimated to about 9 billion barrel (about 1.3 billion ton)⁴³. According to US Geological Survey, in the Cuban shelf of the Mexican gulf there might be up to 9 billion barrels of oil and 21 trillion cubic meters of natural gas. In other estimates it might be more than 20 billion barrels. If the prognoses are true Cuba will enter among the first 20 countries with biggest oil reserves.

The state cannot use these fields because of the lack of funds, production know how and experience. There are willing to help Havana in this aspect. The Chinese state oil company in accordance to bilateral agreement has already started to build several platforms in the Florida Strait. Great help in that direction is giving Venezuela. Some European companies have also started negotiations with the Cubans. In short perspective Cuba might not only have the

⁴¹ www.regnum.ru (14. 11. 2011).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ http://www.ap7.ru/na_zlobu_dnja/na_kube_nashli_bolshie_zapasy_nefti.html

needed energy resources but might also become an important player on the oil market. For Russia there are big chances to broaden the cooperation with these country because of the signed agreements.

Breakthrough in the collaboration in the field of biotechnology was the supply to the Russian market of the invented by the Cuban scientists and improved for more than 20 years medicine “Heberprot” which is for curing of diabetes. Nowadays on Russian market there are several other medicines produced in Cuba. The most popular is “Ebermin”.

Very important role in the bilateral relations has the cultural exchange. Great success was the 19th International book fair in February 2010 in Havana, where Russia was special guest.

The flow of Russian tourists to Cuba is increasing, although they are not so significant among the others who visit the pearl of the Antilles. According to the data of the Cuban ministry of tourism announced on 13th of December 2011 for the past year the island was visited by a record number of foreigners – more than 2 million 532 thousand people, 72 thousand of whom were Russian.

For the past two decades Russia was constantly losing its positions in Cuba and giving way to its strategic partners and competitors – China, Venezuela, EU and Canada. The time for rethinking of the foreign relations has come. The efforts made by the Russian leaders for development of better connections with the Caribbean island are showing that they understand the need of revival of the bilateral cooperation. Cuba is the key to Latin America. By the fact who will be closer to it will depend the future of coming to life or missing of enormous trade, economic and geopolitical opportunities.

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