

## What is true and what is false

The news agencies are reporting that Chávez will visit Cuba tomorrow on his way to China, Russia, Belarus, France and Portugal.

Watching Venezolana de Televisión I learned that he was signing energy investment agreements in Caracas with important businessmen from Japan, Russia, Malaysia, Italy, Argentina, the United States, Qatar, and Portugal. The deals are for the extraction of gas from one of the reserves located in an area of 500,000 square kilometers of territorial waters.

The companies will be 60% Venezuela-owned and the investment will total \$19 billion in that field alone. The world is eager and craving for fossil fuels.

Such activity in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is striking at a time when the United States is deep into a dramatic financial crisis and is forced to inject hundreds of billions of dollars to the banks to avoid a debacle. Investments of that sort have been recurrent in the past year, and nobody knows when they will end. The value of the stockmarket shares goes up temporarily; Wall Street and the world's central banks have a chance to breathe, until the oxygen in the tank is used up and the operation must be repeated.

Without a doubt, Venezuela has shown the greatest solidarity with Cuba after we were hit by the two devastating hurricanes. Its President did not hesitate to offer, on behalf of his country, every possible assistance soon after hurricane Gustav ravaged Pinar del Rio and the Isle of Youth. Impressed by the record 340 km/h gusts, the images that showed the destruction, and the extraordinary fact that not a single person died, he offered to provide whatever was necessary, as a sign of solidarity with Cuba, including financial support and even land in Venezuela to produce food in areas not threatened by hurricanes.

It was the first but not the only country to show solidarity; the list is long and it includes very significant actions by Russia, Angola, Vietnam, China and other nations, big and small, with more or with less resources, which offered financial loans and soft loans in excess of one billion dollars, in addition to money, food and other donations that have been reaching us in many ways as an expression of the desire to assist our heroic and generous people.

The hypocritical offer by the U.S. government was rejected. Our reply to it was appropriate. I did not hesitate to express my point of view. The counterrevolutionaries inside and outside Cuba crowded over the measure. They desperately wanted to see us behave as shameful beggars. That battle is not over yet, however; it has just begun.

An EFE news agency report says that the U.S. government has granted a license to the Movimiento Democracia (Democracy Movement) -- a Cuban exile group in Miami-- to send direct aid to Cubans affected by hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

It adds that the "influential" Cuban-American National Foundation has been licensed by the US Treasury Department to send the remittances of Cubans directly to their relatives in the island. It further reports that the aid will be distributed among the hurricane victims, including dissidents who activists claim are not receiving much in the form of assistance and are marginalized "by the Cuban government".

No citizen is discriminated against in Cuba. All citizens are provided with free health services some of which would cost thousands, and sometimes tens of thousands of dollars in US hospitals; also provided

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are high education services for the youths -- whether they have a relative abroad or not -- which would also cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Those who receive remittances from the United States can, upon paying the relevant tax, buy the regular rations at extremely low prices and also purchase goods in the hard-currency shops which sell products that are now significantly more expensive elsewhere in the world.

Any product that enters Cuba from the United States for a counterrevolutionary purpose must be returned or confiscated.

In Venezuela, some 40,000 highly skilled Cubans are rendering a selfless service to the Bolivarian people, including the training of community specialists and sport instructors. They have not abandoned their homeland; they are working abroad for the wellbeing of the Cubans and the fruits of their work reach all, from the small children to the elderly. Additionally, they are now donating from their salary to buy Venezuelan-made goods to distribute among the people most in need in any of the provinces. That is a true example of how resources must be put to use in our society.

Chávez is a tireless preacher of the most advanced ideas of his time in Venezuela and he has been confronted with almost all the media tools controlled by the pro-yankee oligarchy that try to deceive and confuse the people. One believes he will get rest some day, until one realizes that he will only rest in the grave.

I will meet the Bolivarian President briefly tomorrow. Just the time necessary for an exchange of views; an hour approximately. It will be a great honor for me.

These are facts that mark the huge difference between what is true and what is false.

**Fidel Castro Ruz**

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