

Obama's Dilemma

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After the G-20 Summit that captured the world's attention, news continued arriving via the agencies on the feverish activity of the man who was the star in London, Barack Obama, the new president of the United States, who is approaching the 100th day of his administration under the scrutinizing regard of those who closely follow international politics.

With the punctuality of a digital clock, he is moving from one point to another holding meeting with political leaders, receiving honors, visiting cities, giving press conferences, announcing plans, launching messages and making speeches.

The supersonic G-20 Summit barely concluded, he left for Strasbourg, France, on the border with Germany. There, he met on the 3rd with Sarkozy, happy at not having had to walk out of the G-20 session in London. They covered many problems in relation to Iran, Afghanistan, Russia, the Near East and promised to work "hand-in-hand" to construct a new world. "I do believe that the United States and Russia, the Europeans and the United States, all have an interest in preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon... In some case we have common interests with Russia, but we also have some core disagreements," he stated.

It was announced that both of them, Obama and Sarkozy, would participate in the NATO summit of 26 countries, scheduled to begin that afternoon in the German town of Baden-Baden and to end the following day in Strasbourg.

Before leaving he stated that "the more capability we see here in Europe, the happier the United States will be, the more effective we will be in coordinating our activities." "We're not looking to be the patron of Europe. We're looking to be partners with Europe."

He left Strasbourg for Baden-Baden to meet with Chancellor Angela Merkel prior to a dinner for the 26 heads of state and government of NATO, plus those of Croatia and Albania, which have applied for entry. The summit would serve as an opening to the 60th anniversary of that military organization. There they proposed to discuss relations with Russia, which "reached their lowest point last August after the Russian-Georgian war."

Another objective was to discuss a renovation of the Alliance's strategic action concept, which dates back to 1999, in order to adapt it to new threats.

Afterward, they would discuss the situation of Afghanistan and Kosovo.

In Strasbourg that same day, the 3rd, Obama met with more than 3,000 French and German youth and made a brief speech which will be much talked of in the future on account of its bold content.

"So I've come to Europe this week to renew our partnership... America is changing, but it cannot be America alone that changes." He then announced the content of the speech that he would give in Prague on nuclear proliferation and affirmed that his goal was : "a world without nuclear weapons."

At another point he added : "Even with the Cold War now over, the spread of nuclear weapons or the theft of nuclear material could lead to the extermination of any city on the planet."

The world's growing concern at the vast destructive and exterminating power of those weapons is unquestionable and is linked to the concern of other states, and in particular of US society itself, over the risk of nuclear sabotage. That is what Obama was literally expressing with his phrase: "the theft of nuclear material could lead to the extermination of any city on the planet."

On April 4, speaking at the NATO Summit, he welcomed Croatia and Albania into the fold of that military body, which brings its total membership to 28. The president of the United States noted that 140 Albanian and 296 Croat soldiers have already

provided their services in Afghanistan. "I believe they will both be strong contributors to the alliance."

The contradictory ways in which the ideas of the US president are expressed are evident.

"The door to membership will remain open for other countries that meet NATO standards and can make a meaningful contribution to allied security."

The EFE agency explains that "Russia is highly critical of NATO's expansion toward the east and, in particular, toward the ex-Soviet Republics which it considers its natural area of influence."

"The alliance promised last year during its April Summit in Bucharest a possible way forward for the entry of Ukraine and Georgia, supported by Obama's predecessor George W Bush," the cable reports.

Does anybody by any chance doubt the fact that NATO is a bellicose and aggressive organization, which is not only threatening Russia but also other countries in any part of the world? Could the torture centers of Guantanamo have been created and sustained without the cooperation of many of the NATO countries?

Once again the boldness and the contradictions were expressed in the first European Summit of the president of the United States with the European Union in Prague. He promised "to lead efforts for a world without nuclear weapons."

"We cannot succeed in this endeavor alone, but we can lead it."

He concretely stated that he would attempt to achieve a rapid end of nuclear testing and confirmed his pretension to seek Senate approval for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

"He likewise advocated a global summit on nuclear security to take place next year," the news agencies report.

It was also announced that "Obama was woken up to be informed of the launch of a North Korean rocket that apparently overflowed Japan. He asked the UN Security Council to make a firm response to the provocation in an emergency meeting convened for that same Sunday."

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea announced on March 12 that it was to launch a communications satellite between April 4 and 8 as part of a special program with peaceful ends. That was known when Obama spoke in Strasbourg to French and German youth.

On being informed in Prague, he drew up a statement in which he said: "Rules must be binding," he said. "Violations must be punished. Words must mean something." Launching a rocket to place a means of communication in orbit, test a technology or take a tourist for a ride is not a crime, except when that is done by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which does not belong to the club of the strongest and those with the resources to apply that sophisticated technology. Japan took advantage of the situation to adjust its anti-satellite missiles and improve its defense without anybody questioning that right.

Before leaving Prague he said to a meeting of 30,000 people: "For if we believe that the spread of nuclear weapons is inevitable, then we are admitting to ourselves that the use of nuclear weapons is inevitable... Human destiny will be what we make of it." This affirmation has in itself great force. However, he added afterward that the missile shield that the United States is planning in European territory is a program in response to Iranian nuclear threats. Such an affirmation, on the other hand, is not congruent with the truth and it is difficult to understand his reiteration.

Russia rejects that missile shield plan and considers that it is expansionist, and thus is demanding its cancellation.

He arrived in Turkey in the evening of Sunday the 5th.

After meeting with Turkish leaders on Monday in Ankara, the capital of that Eurasian nation and giving a speech in Parliament, he announced that he was to travel to Istanbul to attend the 2nd Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations.

In Prague he had promised to support Turkey's entry into the European Union, which is opposed by France, Germany and others.

He called once again in Ankara for Turkey's entry into the European Union. He noted, however, that Turkey needed to make efforts to reinforce the state of law.

On arriving in that country, the first thing that he did was to pay tribute to the founder of the Turkish nation, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

"We will be respectful, even when we do not agree," he declared before Parliament. Another phrase in itself of profound content.

"The United States is not and will never be at war with Islam," he stated. Thousands of Turks had taken to the streets to protest against the politics of the United States. The president of the United States concluded his visit on the 7th at 02:20 hours in Istanbul, Turkey's principal city, after an exhausting tour of eight days.

His last meeting was with students. He called on the young people to extend bridges between Islam and the West. According to EFE, he urged Muslims to ignore "caricatures" depicting US citizens as ignorant or insensitive and assured them that, "that is not the country that he loves."

The facts narrated reflect the complexity of the tasks that Obama is carrying on his shoulders.

He had declared in all frankness: "Within four or eight years people will be able to say whether I have followed the same policies or whether things have changed."

Although the bearer of the contradictions noted, with a full bill of health, like a work machine with an agile mind, the Black president undertook his first visit abroad with unquestionable political results.

Without any doubt, he does not resemble his predecessor in any way.

8.4.2009 [Source : Granma International]