

Everything is ready in Seattle to receive Fidel Castro

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The stage is ready. The invited have been advised. The secondary artists are ready to enter the scene. Only the principal actor has the invited public and the organizers of the montage that will take place in Seattle, the capital of the state of Washington, on the far northwest coast of the United States, in suspense.

"Fidel Castro is the only one who at this point knows if in reality he will travel to Seattle or not," affirmed the daily Seattle Times in an extensive article published Tuesday dedicated to an analysis of the repercussions of the announced visit of Castro, to participate in the III Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) that begins Monday in this city.

Sympathizers with the Castro regime, local politicians, state congressmen, religious leaders and representatives of the academic world have planned to occupy Castro with numerous acts of varied importance.

Castro's agenda in Seattle plans a welcoming ceremony for all the Cuban delegation to the WTO on Monday 29 of November at 3:00 pm at the University of Seattle (UW).

Thursday, December 2, Castro should be meeting with a group of members of the US Congress, headed by the Democratic representative for Seattle, Jim McDermott. That same day, at 8:00 p.m., Castro will hold a magisterial conference in the Meany Salon at the University of Washington, organized by Eugene Webb, the director of the Department of Latin American Studies of that educational center.

Castro's conference has generated such expectations in the academic world in this remote North American state that it will be broadcast by a local television channel UWTV, and the organizers hope that it can be retransmitted nationally, according to an announcement by the provost of UW, Steven Olswang.

Some 1,200 invitations have already been printed for the occasion, and will begin to be shared in the coming hours.

Friday, December 3 at 9:00 pm there will be an event titled "Night of Solidarity with Cuba," at the New Hope Baptist Church.

Also, on Saturday, December 4, at 7:30 pm there will be a reception in homage to the Cuban delegation, organized by the Mount Zion Baptist Church, and Protestant pastors who will travel from Cuba for the occasion.

Five municipal commissioners of Seattle, and five from King County, where the capital of the state of Washington is located, have sent in the last few weeks enthusiastic letters of invitation to Castro. At the head of the elected functionaries, who are getting ready to honor Castro, is found congressman McDermott, who last July sent a letter to the Cuban ruler, assuring him that he would "be received respectfully, with friendship and friendliness."

Nevertheless, other letters, less laudatory, could change Castro's mind, and cause him to cancel his trip to Seattle.

Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen is sending a fiery protest to the White House and the Department of State, demanding that they deny Castro a visa.

But without a doubt, that which most worries Castro is the request that Representative Lincoln Díaz-Balart has made to state and federal prosecutors to indict Castro on charges of murder for the shoot-down and death of four pilots of Brothers to the Rescue, at the hands of MIG fighters of the Cuban Air Force, which happened on February 24, 1996.

If some North American prosecutor decides to charge Castro for this reason and issues an arrest warrant against him while he is in US territory, it would without a doubt create a diplomatic problem of huge proportions and unforeseeable consequences.

Which is why there are reasons to ask in this case the classic question: Who will put the bell on the cat?

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