

[Address by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, to the second national art instructors graduation ceremony held in Ciudad Deportiva on October 28, 2005 \[1\]](#)

Date:

28/10/2005

Dear graduates and relatives;

Students and teachers from Cuba's Schools for Art Instructors;

Members of the José Martí Brigades from Pinar del Rio, La Habana, Ciudad de La Habana and Matanzas, and those members who were unable to attend;

Members of the Young Communists League;

Artists, intellectuals and other guests;

Fellow Cubans:

We had planned to gather for this ceremony exactly one year after the first was held, on October 20, to celebrate Cuban Culture Day on the day a new crop of art instructors, educated in the schools born of the creative spirit of our Battle of Ideas, graduated, but unpredictable and powerful hurricane Wilma obliged us to postpone this much-awaited gathering until today.

Some of you, from the eastern provinces, were already in the capital when, two days before, we decided to postpone this celebration because of hurricane Wilma's dangerous proximity to Cuba. I know that, as a result of this, you have been in the capital for over a week now. Surely, you understand that we could not have sent you back home while that complex meteorological situation was still affecting us.

Today, 3,092 of the 3,879 students who began their studies in the 2001-2002 school year graduate as art instructors; the second year to graduate from these institutions, which were opened on February 18, 2001 as part of a program aimed at graduating 30,000 art instructors over the course of 10 years.

Of these graduates, 60.4 % are female and 39.5 % are male. Most of them come from working-class families.

These newly graduates, equipped with practical skills and experience, were assigned to 3,048 educational institutions, including Cuba's 26 polytechnic institutes specializing in informatics.

With this new group of graduates, Cuba has 6,318 art instructors, which means that at least one art instructor can be assigned to each of the 4,898 pre-schools, grammar schools, special education schools, junior and senior high schools.

Thus, a marvelous avenue is opening leading to the education of the youngest generations in the appreciation and sensitivity towards the arts while paving the way for the ambitious purpose of attaining a widespread comprehensive general culture for all of our people.

We want for our people to be knowledgeable not only in the arts, but also in history, science, economics, geography, the environment and the most varied fields of knowledge, and to have a profoundly humanitarian conscience.

We are pleased to know that from the two graduations combined, 6,147 youths have decided to pursue higher studies and that, of these, 3,555 will pursue a Bachelor's Degree in Art Instruction. These young people accumulate an immense amount of knowledge that is essential to the lofty aim of creating a society of justice where everyone is given equal opportunities.

The "José Martí" Brigade, created exactly one year ago today, is a special source of encouragement for these young art instructors, inspiring them to continue with their education, to be disciplined and organized and to commit themselves wholeheartedly to their tasks. With the establishment of its full structure, the Brigade under the direction of the Council of State was fully assembled this past May 19, on the 110th anniversary of the death in combat of our national independence hero.

The revolution has given the Young Communists League the huge political task, of contributing to the success of the art instructors' program, which had a false start in the past but is fruit of our dreams for a better and more educated society. The Young Communists League is responsible for coordinating the work of the "José Martí" Brigade. It must ensure the quality of its work, that it improves itself constantly and that its members honor their commitments. Supporting the work of YCL members who coordinate the Brigade efforts at the municipal and provincial levels is a top priority for this youth organization.

After a year of work, art instructors are working with 480,526 children and adolescents at schools and to 85,599 in art workshops. Efforts to enhance artistic talent and cultivate art appreciation are also undertaken by Cultural Centers, which organize activities for 227,390 children and adolescents; this figure will be more than multiplied in coming years, when the contingent of young people who today study to become art instructors reaches all of the country's schools and communities.

Numerous anecdotes have been pulled together from all over the country, telling of work experiences during this past school year. They show just how many possibilities to improve human beings are opened up by the work and guidance of art instructors who work in schools, correctional centers, prisons and other social institutions. Here are some anecdotes, told by the very art instructors or their coordinators:

What does Yennys García Betancourt have to say? Specialty: theatre. 'Fernando Cuesta Piloto' National Urban School. Cienfuegos Municipality.

Well, I hadn't included this one with a number of other comments but as I've already mentioned it, I can't leave it out now; it was due to some words. She said: "My school is in the heart of the People's Council of San Lázaro, many of whose inhabitants" —this is where I disagree with Yennys García Betancourt. I didn't want to include this comment, but the people who transcribed my notes made a mistake; I had crossed it out and it made it here anyway. She must be an excellent instructor, but she said: "Many of its inhabitants have a low educational level and criminal backgrounds". That's a bit too much to say, I disagree; I know our people and I know some are more humble than others; but all Cubans had extremely low levels of education before.

We didn't know a thing about anything in the past; 30% of us were illiterate, 90% semi-illiterate, and we were very far from something like what we are witnessing today, a phenomenon that is so impressive, so exciting; we were very far from something like what we witnessed several weeks ago, I mean, the graduation of doctors from Cuba and other countries; the creation of the Henry Reeve contingent,

whose members, more than 1,000 in number, are now in the two places where the most trying and dramatic catastrophes of recent times have occurred: one, in response to the hurricanes, in Guatemala, the other, in response to the earthquakes, which resulted in the deaths of more than 50,000 people and injured more than 80,000 others, 90% of whom are suffering traumas due to fractures of the upper or lower extremities or other parts of the body.

It is easy to enumerate the dead and injured, but one must think of the terrible sorrow and suffering of those victims, those human beings directly affected by the tragedy.

All of you surely remember the day when, while participating in the graduation ceremony, I stumbled and fell; I wasn't paying attention, I was looking at you, there in Santa Clara, when I fell and shattered my knee-cap in eight pieces, and the upper part of my right arm, where I had something a bit more serious than fissures, what I thought I had at the time; that was perhaps the most serious and most trying injury. I remember how I suffered. Before then, I knew of this kind of suffering through others; but I went through the experience myself, and that is why I speak with so much passion when I recall so much suffering and so much sorrow caused by these catastrophes (Applause).

Let me continue commenting on what comrade Yennys said, which is very interesting. She said: "At first, I was a bit afraid at having to work with children of such peculiar backgrounds. I started with a group in the fourth grade, described as the school's most difficult group. I would never have expected and was overwhelmed by the affection the children showed me". Just imagine this girl, she's practically a girl. I remember very well how we chose the students for the program. They were students completing their junior high school, and were going to enroll in a special 4-year senior high school program, to live as boarder students in the art instructors' schools created that year, in the course of that one year.

I remember the program, when we discussed each and every subject, until it was up and running and, and of course, as you would expect, as it's with everything, it is still being improved. The students were very young; generally speaking, you are the youngest graduates we have.

I remember, for instance, the graduation of social workers. I'm not sure what it's going to be like when we meet with them because, not counting all of their relatives, you need more than two stadiums or sport complexes, if you will, a coliseum like this one, with capacity for 15,000 people, to house them, and they also constitute an immensely powerful force that is already having a huge impact on our society. What a force! No one dare underestimate these young people, much less the nouveaux riches and the thieves, because they will help eliminate a number of evils that still plague our society, as we try to build a better world closer to the people than it has ever been over the course of history.

Let no one think they are stupid, or illiterate, or ignorant, because it is they who are working and who today are ensuring that our country earns hundreds of millions of dollars that were lost or squandered; and I would go further because, including electricity, and all sources of energy, including many other things, the sum which our country will have available shortly is much higher than the one I mentioned, and no hurricane will stop us.

One has already passed and is now forgotten or, better said, it was crushed by the work our people are carrying out. And there was the other that turned Havana into Venice, and the world was getting nervous, while thousands of Cubans made use of every available resource to restore normality in a matter of days. In the meantime, planes were carrying brigades belonging to the Henry Reeve contingent south-west, to Guatemala, or south-east, to far-off Pakistan, to reach regions that are 3,000 or 4,000 meters above sea-level. We are talking of the Himalayan mountain side, whence Mount Everest emerges, a symbol of that summit which the peoples of this world, our people included, aspire to reach in the social field and in terms of justice, a summit which no one has reached, not in millennia. But I do believe that today, at a time when we face more difficulties than ever, no other country in the world is as close to that peak as ours is.

Neither nature nor the empire will be able to crush our people's spirit, nor prevent us from reaching our

goals.

I'll continue with what that young girl said, she's practically a little girl. That is why we cannot be critical, not in the least, if she used a certain phrase because she didn't write it for publication, she didn't write it for anyone else, those who transcribed it for potential inclusion in a speech were in such a rush, perhaps, that they didn't even notice what it said. It's not important, anyway.

She said: "I started with a group in the fourth grade, described as the school's most difficult group. I would never have expected and was overwhelmed by the affection the children showed me". The children from that neighborhood, which is probably very poor and must have areas where living conditions are very hard.

Hassan must remember it, because he visited the city's poorest quarters with medical students during the first years of the Battle of Ideas; he visited those places in search of testimonies and to help tens of thousands of children, and we would receive news about these places every day.

She continued to say: "...and they were so taken with my theatre classes that I put together a theatre group with most of my students, the Abracadabra group, which today represents the school. The most difficult part was convincing the parents, using a thousand persuasive arguments, to let their children rehearse at extra-curricular hours". What does that mean? Saturday, Sunday, in the afternoon, in the morning? At what time, before or after the power cuts? (Laughter) "I met with them on several occasions, and receiving their support during the preparation of our screen plays was something unexpected".

"The mother of one of my students was in prison". It's sad, isn't it? But that doesn't make the town or neighborhood a den of criminals. Society is the one guilty of those crimes, because those neighborhoods didn't materialize out of thin air; the civilized and cultured order that conquered us and exploited us for centuries, that brought slavery with it and established a society of abysmal differences which lasted until the triumph of the revolution in 1959, with very, very, very rich people, who didn't live over there in San Lázaro, they lived in La Víbora first—there are some remnants of that society, no, not anymore, there are working-class families there now— and then they moved to what is today Plaza, and then they moved to what used to be Miramar and is today a part of Plaza, or over there, near the Country Club which existed at the time the revolution triumphed, there were many places like that there, they were there, as I recall, over there, near that cadets school in Ceiba, beyond Caimito. Farmland was already being re-distributed there at the time, very far away from that neighborhood, that neighborhood at the outskirts of the city.

"My school is in the heart of the San Lázaro People's Council, in the Cienfuegos Municipality". I made a mistake, I got everything mixed up. Where's the young instructor? She must be out there somewhere. Where's the young girl? (Applause). It's not in the province of Havana. I don't know what's there but, in any event, wherever it is, one should be careful. I spoke of San Lázaro here in Havana, of its history, there are probably neighborhoods just like it in other parts, like Santiago, the neighborhood of Cuabita. Where are the people from Santiago? (Shouts from the audience). Recall that small neighborhood or that big one near the landing field and the Santa Ifigenia cemetery, those neighborhoods are everywhere.

Since I was talking about Yennys García, where is Yennys? Yennys! Run! Come over here and give me a hand (Applause). Every cloud has a silver lining, as the saying goes (Applause).

Tell us about it here, can you do that?

She says yes, that she can tell us about it, without mentioning the name of the child.

Yennys García: The thing is, as the Commander was saying, working with that difficult group was an extraordinary experience. You know that all children are restless, joyful but, well, those children had

special characteristics. So, I got there and I set out to change things and to bring art into classroom, which is the great task all of us art instructors have, that is the reason this project came into being; get children to mingle with each other and help them get along with each other better, communicate better, and, so I rolled up my sleeves and started to work with them.

It's very difficult for all art instructors at the beginning, because every school is something new, something unknown, but the children who received me were full of joy. To my surprise, the parents, after they realized how important theatre was to their children and how it was changing them, started to help me with the preparations for the play we were staging, with the rehearsals of the artistic group.

There was another child I taught in that community, whose mom was in jail and whose family had a number of problems. The important thing is that I managed to get that child involved in art and that his classmates began to accept him better when they saw him develop artistically.

That's what's important about our work, and I believe all of us art instructors have similar experiences, because there are always people and children, all children have that fantasy hidden somewhere, and that's why we're here, that is our reason for being, to dispel the world's darkness, the darkness of problems, to dispel whatever traumas children may have and to bring out that beautiful bit of sunshine in them. I think that is the most important part of each and every one of our experiences (Applause).

Commander in Chief: Well, she forgot to say something, but she explained things very well. And I'm glad this has allowed us to see an art instructor in action, to listen to her talk about her work.

What she forgot to say was: "To our satisfaction, the mother had a day off coinciding with the day the play was staged, so she could see the fruit of her young child's hard work, with such a young a teacher". I was right, you saw her here.

What did Carlos say, for instance?

Carlos Ruiz Silverio, Placetas Municipality, Guaracabulla Jagueye People's Council. Specialty: music. "Enrique Villegas" Grammar School.

"While teaching my workshops, I met a splendid little girl in the school who filled me with joy. Whoever doesn't know her and hears her sing might say she's in an art school, but she's not. She's a little country girl who, until recently, didn't even know what a musical instrument was. Her voice, however, impresses everyone. I decided to have one of my students, who plays the guitar, provide the musical accompaniment for a song I had her sing. The results were excellent. Those who watched and listened to her performance were very moved by the talent of this little girl, who had blossomed and, thanks to the technical training, was already yielding beautiful fruits".

What happened with Oslendys Baño Rodríguez, from the Guines Municipality, whose specialty is music, who works at the "Felix Varela" School?

This art teacher put together a group whose repertoire includes everything from the national anthem to the most renowned of Cuban cha cha cha. He put together a music band in different schools, then joined them into one big band whose performance on May 19 reverberated throughout the municipality and left housewives, neighbors, workers and other members of the community impressed and amazed, seeing how little children could perform those pieces.

What about Eliécer Fernández Rodríguez, specialty: visual arts, "Jesús Martínez" grammar school, Niceto Pérez People's Council, rural area, San Cristóbal Municipality, mountain region?

Residents of the municipality say that, since his arrival at the community, life has not been the same. He put together a group of people with craftsmanship skills and improved the appearance of that remote place with crafts and murals depicting natural settings. They tell us that, thanks to him, they

have come into contact with and been able to appreciate visual arts and even hold exhibitions there, on the mountain, where prizes have been awarded. Eliécer tells us he was lucky to have been assigned to work in that area; he confesses that, at first, he did not want to go, but that, after arriving there and seeing that he had the opportunity to change the lives of those people, he didn't give it a second thought and has remained there to this day. He feels he has become a more sensitive person and loves what he does immensely.

Another example is the case of Yuderquis Martínez Sardiñas. Specialty: visual arts. "Juan Delio Chacón" People's Council. "Omar Antonio Bautista Ramírez" Special Correctional School No. 1.

It was difficult for me, she said, to understand the need of assigning me to work in a correctional school, bearing in mind the particular characteristics of these centers. However, I have seen that my work with them has improved communication and that they have become more sociable people. It seems that art works a certain magic.

Yuderquis mentions the name of one of her students and she adds: "He has a glass eye; I've worked closely with him, he has talent for visual arts".

"I am satisfied with the results I've obtained. I think this child will never forget me and may even think of me as a mother, knowing that, not being his mother, I offer him all of my love to win myself a place in his heart, something I believe I am achieving".

What does María de los Ángeles Hartermar tell us? Her specialty is theatre. Gerona Centro People's Council.

"I won't deny that I was a little scared when I first got there. I had never before worked in a prison as an instructor. I was surprised by how well received we were; they welcomed our initiative. It fell on them to break the ice and they did an impressive job. A band that played non conventional instruments (sticks, cans, buckets) performed. They actually played very well. One of them approached me, he wanted to show me a play he had written about his life as an inmate and the lessons he was learning there. This has taught me that we should not underestimate people when they are willing to change and turn to art as means to do so".

Following a year of work and experiences like the ones we have just read about, 123 of the best brigade members will go on to staff the Schools for Art Instructors, which have grown and today have a total of 2,950 professors; of these, 799 teach general subjects and 2,151 teach the various specialties.

More than 370 graduates from higher education institutions, specializing in music or visual arts, have also become professors in these schools.

The contribution of artists and intellectuals who have joined in these educational efforts has been truly valuable. What we need even more than this contribution is the participation of the artistic vanguard in our efforts to forge this new generation of instructors, who have already become an indispensable force in the colossal struggle to raise the overall educational level of our people.

In May 2000, when the decision to begin this program was made, we had a mere 2,000 instructors in the whole country. Today, counting the students who are working in schools and graduates who staff the abovementioned centers, we have a total of 22,025 youths in this program.

A few days ago, the sixth school year of our 15 Schools for Art Instructors began.

Today's students have enrolled in their courses with a better sense of what specialties they will pursue. Whereas only 7% of those young people who enrolled in the first academic year had some prior artistic instruction, 41% of those who have enrolled this year have some knowledge of art thanks to the amateur movement, received classes from a teacher or come from a vocational art school.

Enrollment continues to be predominantly female (64.5%) and about half of our future art instructors come from working-class families.

In keeping with the principles of justice and equality that inspire our project, these schools have been opened to young people with disabilities since the time of their creation; programs of study have been adjusted to meet the needs of these young people, without diminishing the quality of the education provided. In the year which has just ended, 43 young people with disabilities were enrolled in classes; of these, 18 have physical and motor disabilities, 8 are blind, 2 deaf, 7 deaf and dumb, 4 visually impaired and 1 suffers from a visual and physical-motor disability. Eight of these youths graduate here today and join the ranks of the noble and enterprising army of art instructors, as is their due right, demonstrating that no obstacles are insurmountable for human beings.

We have continued to improve the curriculum; the program of studies for the specialties of music, theatre and dance have been modified to offer students a more comprehensive education that is more in tune with the activities they will carry out as art instructors. Workshops on other art disciplines are offered in all specialties.

A considerable greater number of audiovisual instruments and computers, and extraordinary teaching tools, have been made available to the schools. There is now one computer for every 15 students.

The 8 software packages employed in general post-secondary education are used, in addition to one which was designed specifically for the Art Appreciation and History course taught at the Schools for Art Instructors.

Research is not separate from study, appreciation or teaching of arts. The scientific conferences in which teachers and members of the “José Martí” Brigade participate every school year encourage the creation of teaching instruments that help develop workshops, contribute to the overall improvement of the educational process and offer those who have graduated as art instructors a space to share rewarding experiences in their work with children and adolescents.

The maintenance and restoration of the 15 schools for art instructors continues; most of these schools were set up in former educational facilities which were made functional again as part of the feverish, creative process set in motion by the Battle of Ideas.

We must pay attention to every detail to make these schools a model of education, discipline, creativity, ethics and morale.

We hope that all first course graduates who are still working will honor their commitment to work as art instructors for no less than 5 years, as was first agreed, and that those who graduate today will work for no less than 8, as they vowed, in that beautiful profession that takes spiritual treasures and knowledge to all corners of the nation, to children and adolescents especially, and which guarantees a brighter and wiser future for all Cubans.

Central state administrative bodies must respect this commitment, and refrain from usurping art instructors to use them in other areas, as they did in the past, because this will not be tolerated.

And take heed, about this and many other things; we have the case of the art instructors, for instance. There is also the case of those who are graduating as physical education and sports teachers and we are witnessing this pirate-like brain-drain there as well. Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.

Yes, very few have not been guilty of brain-drain from one sector to another. Party cadres, yes, revolutionary people who wanted to be cadres but who didn't know a thing, who had no experience, who weren't even experienced in the building of socialism, they got mixed up in all sorts of silly things and entangled in red tape; but brain-drain between sectors betrays a lack of revolutionary ethics. “This

is a good professor, so I'm taking him with me because he's trained".

That's the way many teachers were taken away of their profession in the first years of the revolution; they needed someone who knew how to read and write, so they took one from here, another one from there: "I'll give you this", "you'll be closer from home". There was a kind of feudal war going on, it must be said.

For instance, the case of Cuba's Central Bank, an extremely important institution that is becoming more and more important; they were training programmers there, people versed in computer sciences, and other state bodies, who weren't offering any kind of training, would come to them and say: "I have this really nice hotel, there's a good salary and tips in it for you". Or they would say: "Look, I'm taking this teacher with me for him to teach this, that and the other". They were always tempting people, offering them things, and these are capitalist vices, capitalist habits, no one can imagine the number of things like that that were done.

A society that aims to be different, a new society that sets high goals for itself, drags with it all of the vices of that corrupt society it wishes to change. These vices weigh down on it. Only time and work, if one works hard can make the difference. And nothing is more common and widespread in the world than the mistakes of revolutionaries, of those who want to change society or change the world. That is why only a few revolutions achieve progress and no few of them, of the few, end up failing over the course of historical periods.

I believe our country is making a huge effort to move forward and that this is perhaps due to the strength of its adversary, the magnitude of the difficulties it faces, which have forced all of us, in one way or another, to improve ourselves. And we will most likely continue to make progress and to be in the lead as we move towards that goal we call "a better world", the goals we have set for ourselves.

What we were doing to each other was shameful, perhaps explainable at first because almost no one knew how to read or write. Then, they would go to a school and lure the teacher away. That happened for many years and it happens still. Today, of course, they would like to lure a university professor, but they can't offer him just any job, any position like pushing papers behind a desk.

Central state administrative bodies must respect this commitment "and refrain from the embarrassing practice of usurping art instructors, as was done in the past, as this will not be tolerated". I don't know what they could do with an art instructor eager to do something else or who forgets his promise and wants to become an artist. The instructor may have an exceptional talent, I don't doubt that many of them will become artists, great artists even, I got this impression when I visited that school in Boyeros. But they have a duty, the revolution has trained them for a certain task and doesn't chain them to that task for life, though we know that many will be so enamored of their profession, young people like you, that they will devote their entire lives to providing an education to their fellow citizens, to forging revolutionaries, to forging talents in the art world.

The first program was a 5-year program, the second is a 7-year program. Now we have radio and television programs, they're not from the United States, they're not designed by the government that wants to bring about a democratic transition in Cuba. Imagine a transition towards the past. That's what they have in mind and, curiously enough, one of the first items on the list of this plan coordinated by a lunatic that —as I was saying last night— the illustrious president of the United States has appointed president of the Commission, or who knows what, for a Transition in Cuba, is to go to Europe and ask for help with the transition from European flunkies and, yes, no few mercenaries.

If Europe, if rotten Europe wants to help them, that's Europe's problem. We say to them: let the rotten Europe take a shot at it and see what happens. It insulted us once, offended us, pretending to take away humanitarian aid it never actually gave us, what it got from uneven trade and from selling manufactured products and buying raw materials was much, much more. Just look at how expensive anything they sell is, that's how they maintain sky-high profits, buying raw materials at low prices, raw

materials like nickel, tobacco leaves, not even rolled tobacco, nickel to produce stainless steel, etc.

I calculated the profits Europe was making through trade with Cuba —I spoke about this in Santiago de Cuba, on July 26, at the 50th anniversary of the revolution— and it's more than 200 million dollars, money we gave them, and they were giving us three or four miserable millions, which the generous donors spent in five-star hotels. We warned them: "We don't need that petty handout", and, when they persisted with their insults, the people protested, in front of their embassies, more than 500,000 people protested in front of each of their embassies, and so many people were out there that a third, simultaneous protest march could have been organized; make no mistake. And when they came, we said to them: "No, we don't want any humanitarian aid", we can actually even offer it to you, because you have less doctors per capita than we do, and there are people there who go blind because they can't afford surgery and you don't have the qualified professionals we do, nor can you send a team of doctors to any corner of the world. All you can do is threaten to intervene, threaten to bomb; and that's where the Yankee lunatic has gone asking for a hand, to Europe.

What can Europe do to us? It can do nothing. Thank God there's a country that can say that. A country that doesn't need the Yankees, that doesn't need Europe. We are part of a changing world and we are a strong revolution and a formidable people that knows how to fight against its adversaries and to struggle against its own errors and its own weaknesses (Applause).

Let them carry on with their nonsense and their mercenary ways. No one will be able to place Cuba's art education in mercenary hands; they will try, no doubt, to steal, and they do often manage to steal talented people and artists (Applause).

You will be the professors of tomorrow, and so will other young people who are studying today, artists who build consciences and forge minds, who are not indolent or unconscious and forget that a child who begins studying an art form when he is five, six or seven years old, who goes through an art school, who has the opportunity to study at an art institution free of charge, will later shine as an artist, as the true wealth of talent we give our people will one day shine forth.

A moral consciousness must be forged early on if we are to be spared the ingratitude of some who reach the top of the ladder in the art world and surprise us with their desertion; one day we get the news: "so and so didn't come back". And why does so and so do not come back, if not because they are lacking in conscience, in love for the people who nurtured them and gave them everything, in spite of the blockade, in spite of the sacrifices demanded, in spite of threats? (Applause). They owe to those workers who cut sugar cane, who drove tractors, who worked for endless hours, in agriculture, in industry, anywhere; at a primary school, at a secondary school, at a university, everywhere.

A revolution is the triumph of virtue over vice, the triumph of honor over dishonor, the triumph of moral and patriotic integrity over mercenary impulses and vice; the most those who cannot build values on ethical foundations can do is to steal talents, because talents are formed spontaneously in many of those countries, through the initiative of the citizens themselves, there are no art schools for everyone like here: they exist only for the rich or very rich. In our country, they are open to everyone, without exception (Applause).

We were talking about teachers, those who educate, who create for the benefit of everyone, and of those who steal from us and want to take our artists and athletes, or our brains in any field of science. As with everything else, they also tried to take all of our doctors and, of the 6,000 we had, not all of them experienced, they took half, 3,000. This did not prevent us from reaching the figure of 70,000 today. More than 25,000, according to calculations I must verify, are studying medicine today. We have an enrollment of 7,000 every year; more than 12,000 are studying at the Latin American School of Medical Sciences; 20,000 Latin American students, most of them from the region's poorest countries, will begin courses in the first quarter of next year. And nothing but respect will be read in the eyes of those who attempted to deprive this country of doctors. Now, they see an entire nation transformed into a university training professionals in many specialties, most importantly in that humane specialty that

restores health and saves lives: medicine. History has already meted out due punishment for the crimes they committed against us. You will see 100,000 doctors come out of Cuba, because we are helping to train doctors for the whole world, while they haven't a single doctor they can send anywhere (Applause).

Mercenary attitudes will never give us an internationalist doctor; mercenary attitudes will never give us a valuable and glorious contingent specialized in natural disasters, epidemics and serious illnesses like AIDS, which is the scourge of entire nations and continents, almost to the point of obliterating their populations; and they cannot prevent us from offering aid, because, for each and every one of those doctors we had, those they stole from us, some 3,000 of them, there are 8 times that number participating in internationalist missions or helping peoples in times of immense pain.

First they took 3,000 and then others who had graduated; and, in spite of that, we now have 25,000 doctors, a new type of doctor, offering their services in the Third World. And, here in Cuba, nearly 50,000 of them keep working. How many times the original number? Fifteen, sixteen or seventeen times, distributed across all of the country's municipalities, reaching all corners of our nation, from Sandino, next to Cape San Antonio, to Maisí, in Baracoa, on the mountains and the prairies.

We are well aware that our system is not perfect, but no other country has ever had as many doctors working so close to the population as we do. No other country has ever had what we have in greater and greater numbers: networks of outpatient clinics, that is to say, primary care centers, and not only that but also physical rehabilitation centers attached to those clinics, which now have equipment they never had before, new standardized equipment, which can be maintained and repaired, something which becomes impossible when you have 40 or 50 different brands in use, as was the case until recently in our country, and those outpatient clinics are already becoming a model and centers offering training for doctors.

There will be tens, or rather hundreds and hundreds of university campuses offering medical programs.

This, of course, isn't talked about much in cables, no, or on television or the radio, which are crammed full of ads and official lies. The governments behind these media have a lot of nerve.

You recall that we asked Mr. Bush: "Okay, sir, tell us how Posada Carriles entered the United States, tell us where it was he entered the country, on what ship, through what port, and who were the people responsible for letting him in, who were his accomplices". An answer is well overdue, many months have gone by, and they haven't uttered a word on the subject. They deal with the problem by keeping mum, by not answering a single question, because there are many people involved there, in the US government, who authorized Posada Carriles entry into the country, that terrorist, that heartless murderer they now support and shield from justice. They haven't said a word, and we've raised a lot of public questions.

When we expressed our willingness to send doctors to aid the people of the United States, who had to fend for themselves in the midst of the disaster that befell Louisiana, they kept quiet. It was our duty to offer this aid to the people of the United States: it was thanks to that people that US troops were pulled out of Vietnam; it was thanks to that people that Elian was returned to our country; and it is that people which, sooner rather than later, will force the empire to pull its troops out of Iraq, where more than 2,000 young US soldiers have died as a result of a merciless and unjust war (Applause).

We were offering them aid at a time when retired citizens were receiving no assistance and dying in homes, or in hospitals, where chaos prevailed and the cry of "everyone for himself!" reverberated through halls. We wanted to help them. And our doctors could have saved many lives; despite this, they didn't even mention that Cuba was one of the countries that had offered aid. All the while, our friends in the United States kept wondering: "How odd that Cuba hasn't offered any aid!" Total official silence! They forced us to declare what we had done, and that we had been among the first to offer aid.

And when another hurricane was heading towards them again, we weren't among the first, we were the only ones that, days before the hurricane hit, offered them aid. There was no response that time around either; only silence.

Yesterday, I elaborated on the note they sent us not long ago, the remarks of the US Interests Section official, the kind remarks, in reference to the need for Mexico, the United States and Cuba to cooperate in hurricane-related matters.

Immediately, there were cables announcing that Cuba had accepted the aid; yesterday, I went over documents to show you the words we used and the points we made in our response. Now all of that is being talked about. But they shed no light, as a rule they steer clear of the difficult questions, they still haven't told us, for instance, they haven't dared to tell us, nor could they tell us without incriminating themselves, how and where the most heinous and disgusting terrorist in the western hemisphere entered the United States.

Today, they refuse to release five Cuban heroes who fought against terrorism, five innocent Cuban patriots, the victims of the hatred of the mob and the corruption of Miami courts, who were sentenced to life imprisonment.

I don't see Europe vigorously demanding the freedom of these Cubans who remain in prison, even though a fully competent court in the United States declared their trial illegal, that that trial had been unfair, that that trial wasn't worth a damn; however, they are still in jail. That is how the imperial system works, shamelessly and without ethics.

But how strong Cuba has become! Cuba is so strong it can look the empire's European accomplices in the eye, it can look them straight in the eye and accuse them, say to them: you are hypocrites, you are corrupt, you are immoral, you are exploiters, you created modern slavery, in past centuries, following what came to be known as the discovery of America. You created colonialism and have kept it alive to this day. You, and the United States, created uneven trade; you steal hard currency from all countries by forcing them to deposit their reserves, both public and private, in the banks of rich countries, fleeing from inflation and taking refuge in it: that is how you keep all of the world's money at your fingertips. That is why I say to you: you are pillagers, you are thieves and, despite all that, Cuba's money is not yours for the taking. The empire's insolent dollar, however, a dollar that has been taught a few lessons already, continues to bleed us dry in the most brutal manner.

That is what we told Maradona during the first interview he did with us, when we showed him that in a blockaded country, in which many products and services are still rationed and subsidized, an insolent dollar, which they send from over there and can be changed not for 26 but for 24 Cuban pesos, because our peso is gaining in value, with that dollar, for example, you can pay for 150 kilowatts of electricity. And how much do people pay, how much do they pay if they consume more electricity? A mere two dollars for 300 kilowatts.

That is the purchasing power of that dollar they send to Cuba, and how much does the Cuban state have to pay for each kilowatt of electricity? No less than 36 dollars for the same number of kilowatts, and this is a conservative estimate, if we calculated the costs more precisely we would probably see that it was more. That is to say, they send one dollar and it costs us 18 in convertible hard currency. They send two and it costs 36 dollars.

That's what they do with many other things, and our people, being pillaged in this manner, many times didn't receive, --this was the case until recently and it's starting to change-- enough soap, the kind that's rationed and odorless, without perfume, or enough toothpaste, or women's pads in sufficient quantities. We know this well, because, recently, the light industry sector was instructed to step up production to increase the quantity of soap and to perfume it a bit; to increase toothpaste and pad volumes, so that there would be enough for everyone. This plan has already been set in motion. This sector has even received instructions to increase those figures considerably.

So, the country is making efforts in this connection but, all the while, how much money is it spending to subsidize the dollar, multiplying the purchasing power of the dollar?

It is not my intention to go into details about all of this here, but I am letting you know of the situation and I'm letting you know in advance, because we have to work together to put an end to this kind of pillaging, this kind of exploitation. What we've done is not enough, we know well what we have to do, we have to adhere to the principle of a minimum of opportunities for the parasites; a minimum of opportunities for those who receive that currency that is helping to pillage our country, whatever currency it is, because our country has accumulated enough experience to do things correctly and to prevent things like that from ever happening again.

Our country moves toward military invulnerability and, take heed, towards economic invulnerability; and what those thousands of social workers, which are only a small, active part of the social workers we have, are doing is fighting to achieve Cuba's economic invulnerability, and the principle they are striving to make a reality is the principle of giving the most to those who work, to those who receive a salary or a pension as workers in factories, professionals, teachers, doctors, workers in any walk of life. Yes, those should be the ones who benefit the most.

As revolutionaries who strive for a better world and a much fairer society, who are today much more experienced people and can take bigger steps toward those aims, we must build a society in which human beings earn a living by working, or receive from society what they deserve for having worked all their lives, who have helped us advance two thirds of the way towards our aims, aims we will have reached in the not-so-distant future. We also cannot forget to share part of what we have, and all of our experience and knowledge, with other peoples of the world.

I insist that are well aware of the many of the things we are doing today, I must say this to our people (Applause). And we won't be any poorer for helping others, nor will we deprive ourselves of anything. The heroic struggle of our people has plowed the fields of time, and there we shall sow the seeds of that better society and world of which the doctors that filled this stadium, this stadium you now fill and will be filled by social workers tomorrow, are a part; doctors who are not only conscious human beings and who struggle against unjustifiable wrongs, but who also inspire those people who, not being social workers, are at their side in this struggle.

And when in each of the people's councils, everywhere, when each and every citizen begins to do what these social workers are doing today and members of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, of women's organizations, when combatants of the revolution, workers, students, members of all grassroots organizations and the Young Communists League and the Party begin to struggle for the same things these social workers are struggling today, these workers who are aware of what's going on, of the nouveaux riches who do not want to pay their due and those who accept bribes or allow themselves to be bribed, then it will be much more difficult for these people to do what they are doing today. I am absolutely certain of this.

For instance, we could teach the government of the United States how to protect the population in case of a natural disaster; this could help save the lives of many poor people.

I believe Miami is experiencing major power failures caused by the hurricanes, that it's without food, without anything, and I know that the 100,000 citizens here who were affected by coastal flooding have been receiving food, have been assisted in every way possible and that social workers are drawing up an inventory of all the things that were damaged, to help them recover what they lost in as short a time as possible. That is what we know is happening, and what will always happen whenever there's a disaster of this nature.

So, with respect to brain-drain between state institutions: well, will radio and television channels hire art instructors? Will the Art and Film Institute hire them? Will the people's theaters hire art students or

teachers and put them to work there?

Who will engage in this sort of piracy? We hope that no one will. I'm looking at Ernesto, head of a television channel, I'm positive he won't be so undisciplined, I'm sure the heads of government institutions won't be so undisciplined, I'm sure tourist agencies won't be so undisciplined, I'm sure state bodies won't scoop up young people who have completed their education, who are programmers or who are versed in computer science, because there are 40,000 programming students in polytechnic institutes that specialize in computer science, forty thousand! And there are 8,000 at the University of Information Sciences (UCI by its acronym in Spanish), who are pursuing higher education studies in the design of computer programs.

Whoever steals must have his hands cut off —this is a figure of speech—, to cut off the thief's hand, that's from the time of the Talion law. I studied law and have forgotten many things but I do remember the Talion law, which made the punishment correspond to the crime, (an eye for an eye) which doesn't actually involve cutting anyone's hand off, but rather that anyone who 'misappropriates' qualified personnel should not be permitted to keep their job. Take heed, I say this on behalf of the revolution, on behalf of the Party, on behalf of the state, whoever is guilty of these 'piracy' between institutions, or any similar acts, will not remain in their positions for long. It is time to put those mistakes behind us for good.

Cuba is today a source of inspiration and a beacon of hope for many. The revolution's humanitarian goals and quest for justice are a point of reference for those who believe that a better world is possible and can replace the world of savagery, violence, egotism and squandering which the powerful have created. In this struggle we carrying forward for the future of humanity, we are encouraged by the support of many artists and intellectuals from around the world who stand with Cuba and defend its right to think freely and not regurgitate the hegemonic discourse, to place its faith in human beings and not the omnipresent market.

The broad movement that has gathered force around the statement entitled "Let us stop a new maneuver against Cuba" (adopted at the 61st Session of the UN's Commission on Human Rights), signed by over 5,500 intellectuals from around the world; the Open Letter to the Attorney General of the United States, calling for the release of our 5 comrades and signed to date by 5,000 personalities, including numerous Nobel prize laureates; and the creation, in Mexico, of the Benito Suarez International Civil Court, to pass judgment on acts of US aggression against Cuba, with the participation of prestigious intellectuals, attest to the feelings of solidarity which the cause of our people arouses in honest people who are moved by principles of solidarity and justice.

When I said that the empire's spokesmen kept quiet, I could have mentioned the document read at the Anti-Imperialist Square a few months ago, a document signed by one of the greatest writers that the literary history of this hemisphere has known, Gabriel Garcia Marquez. There, Marquez described the steps Cuba had taken to communicate with the US authorities and their response when we informed them that that terrorist group, whose mastermind was Posada Carriles, was planning to blow up planes in mid flight with US citizens on board.

Following the wave of unsuccessful terrorist actions against Cuban hotels, actions that were discovered and frustrated before they were carried out, these terrorists had an embarrassing situation in their hands and were thinking about blowing up planes from airlines with regular flights to Cuba using the same procedure: getting mercenaries on the plane, placing a bomb inside that could be set off 50, 60, even 90 hours later, when these planes had long left the country.

We informed US government officials of this, we offered them information, sharing with them precisely the kind of information that our comrades, who are today in prison, were obtaining when they infiltrated terrorist groups seeking for information that could serve to protect our people. They, of course, were not the only ones who did this, but they were part of the mechanism the country used to obtain information and prevent acts like those mentioned.

You recall what happened. Even the FBI was asked to look into it, to verify these claims, every investigative tool was made available to them, and, days later, they went out hunting for clues, perhaps they already had some, and they arrested these comrades and subjected them to the atrocious proceedings we know of. They are kept separate from each other; they can't even talk to one another. They have close relatives who have not been able to go and see them.

The brazen hypocrites, who rave and rage against the revolution, that has every right to fight against the mercenaries who support terrorists, who support the blockade, who support the cowardly actions undertaken against our country, say nothing of those they keep locked away in prison. They haven't a shred of decency left in them, they are amoral from head to toe, as they have always been, since their very emergence as industrialized nations, as exploiters of peoples, exploiters of continents and of the world.

When we shared with them that information, which García Márquez talked about, we waited to see what the imperial rulers would say, if what we had informed the President of the United States was true or false, if it was true or false. They never said a word. They never even said if they had received that report or not, or whether the FBI looked into it or not; or if it was true that the FBI traveled to Cuba, that the FBI received this or that piece of information, much of which was obtained by our comrades who are kept in prison there.

These comrades were not only protecting the people of Cuba; they were protecting the people of the United States, protecting US citizens from the actions of Miami's terrorist mob and murderers from Posada Carriles' group.

No one's heard anything about this, they're not saying anything, they're not talking, and they babble about freedom of the press and journalists without borders. Journalists without borders and journalists without honor, who spread lies and make a living serving the empire, it's not the same thing.

There are still many parasites out there living at the expense of the hard work of workers and peasants around the world, especially of the workers and peasants of the Third World, who today account for three quarters of all humanity.

The extraordinary response of numerous intellectuals from around the world and of important figures in the political and social spheres to the invitation, extended by Cuban institutions, to participate in the International Conference Against Terrorism, for Truth and Justice, has reaffirmed our faith in the strength of ideas as weapons against lies and imperialist crimes. It has showed us how Cuba can mobilize a united front and get people to participate in a strategic offensive against hypocrisy, double standards and the use of brutal force by our powerful neighbor to the north.

All of this attests to the admiration and respect commanded by the extraordinary things our people accomplish, in spite of the threats, and is fruit of the vanguard role that Cuban intellectuals have played in these creative and fertile years of our Battle of Ideas.

"...only the spread of culture, mother of decorum, essence of freedom, above all else, can save the Republic and efface its vices", as José Marí profoundly and beautifully said.

The young people who graduate as art instructors today will take the cultural treasures that Cuba has produced in the course of its history to the classrooms and prepare our children and adolescents to walk down the paths of culture and wisdom which the revolution is beginning to trace.

Their important efforts will contribute to the work of a nation that is witnessing an impressive moment of creation in all of art manifestations. Enumerating all of the accomplishments in this field would certainly require hard work.

Address at the National Act of the Second Graduation Art Instructors

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Suffice it to say that we have a system of art instruction that has no parallel anywhere in the world. This year, 1,091 senior high school and higher education students graduated as artists from Cuba's different art institutions. One example are the vocational art workshops offered by the National School of Ballet, in which 4,000 children and adolescents participate, which will soon begin their fourth year; efforts continue to be devoted to improve ballet, dance, music and visual arts programs offered at this institution.

As part of the Battle of Ideas, 1,806 youths enrolled in the Comprehensive Educational Program for unemployed young people recently completed the Cultural Promotion courses offered by the Cultural Education Centers run by the Provincial Cultural Departments.

Cuba is the host of important cultural events and festivals that, through improved design and the participation of the people and intellectuals, have contributed to disseminating the best of Cuban culture and have opened spaces for discussion, debate and artistic presentations. They include: the New Latin American Film Festival, the International Ballet Festival, the Contemporary Art Exhibition, Cucalambeana Day in Las Tunas, the Poor Cinema Festival held in Gibara, the Benny Moré Festival held in Cienfuegos, the Caribbean Festival held in Santiago de Cuba as homage to Venezuela, the May Processions and the Latin American Culture Festival held in Holguin.

The Cuban artists and intellectuals who have gathered under the standard of "In Defense of Humanity" have become a bulwark for the Battle of Ideas, organizing actions at the international level, arranging gatherings with renowned intellectuals from around the world, spreading progressive ideas and lucidly spearheading our struggle for culture, freedom and the dignity of our people.

To conclude my speech, my dearest art instructors, I am happy to say to you what I said to those who graduated from the first program in Santa Clara:

Move forward, you glorious standard bearers of culture and humanism! (Prolonged applause and shouts from the audience). A glorious life awaits you!

Long live art and culture! (Shouts of "long live art and culture!")

Long live humanity! (Shouts of "long live humanity!")

Patria o Muerte!

Venceremos!

(Ovation)

Versines taquigráficas

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