

[Remarks by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, at Round Table No. 3 of the Millenium Summit on "The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century." New York, September 7, 2000 \[1\]](#)

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Dear colleagues:

Only a few of the faithful remain here at the end of this fascinating theme. The others are also faithful to this theme but I perfectly understand that previous engagements have kept them from staying here full time. It is almost as a matter of conscience that I will say a few words based on my deepest convictions regarding what has been discussed here.

You said (he is addressing President Chávez) that you should make a short presentation tomorrow to the plenary. I am not sure how much time they will give you.

President Chávez.- Five minutes.

President Castro.- Five minutes to cover all this? (Laughter) Well, you have succeeded in leading a round table that has been interesting. I attended the round table held this morning but I can assure you that I have felt a deep sense of satisfaction listening to what has been said here.

If instead of those of us here --including representatives of a few developed nations-- there had been 100 Third World countries, they would have all expressed more or less the same viewpoints.

Therefore, I am sure that when you speak, whatever you can say in a few minutes will reflect the sentiments voiced here this afternoon. We will gladly grant you a vote of confidence --at least I will, and I am sure that the others here will do as well-- so that, as chairman of this round table, you will elegantly but truthfully convey our concerns as they have been stated.

I still remember the time when the United Nations was founded. It was immediately after a terrible war against Nazism, in which unexpected alliances were formed among forces with disparate ideological tendencies bent on fighting that terrible evil threatening humanity.

That war claimed 50 million lives. Several of the main countries at war emerged victorious, and in conjunction with other less powerful nations they founded this institution. Even Cuba was there. Cuba was not at all independent, Cuba was a semi-colony. Actually, almost all the other Latin American countries were semi-colonies, and the majority of countries present here today were not independent either.

Now, we are living a completely new situation. In fact, we cannot really speak today of a United Nations system. We do not have a United Nations system. What we actually have is a system of domination over almost every country in the world by a small number of powerful nations, which under the aegis of the United States --the most powerful of all-- decide upon everything on our planet.

Yesterday I saw a portrait of what the United Nations has become. At lunch there were a number of tables. At some of those tables we plebeians were seated, while there was one table –I watched it closely– where the powerful who rule the world were seating. I mean political rule because it cannot be said that all of them rule in economic terms.

Also at that table was a smaller group of those who dominate the world not only politically but also economically. As is only logical, that table was chaired by our distinguished friend Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, who was to give a speech. Next to him, as is also logical, sat the President of the United States. To his left was our friend the President of Mali, because they needed to add a bit of color somehow. To the right of President Clinton was the President of France. And immediately next to him, also lending some color, was our friend Obasanjo, an illustrious personality. To the left of the President of Mali was Jiang Zemin, leader of a great country which does not dominate the world economically but does have considerable political power. To the left of Jiang Zemin was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and a bit closer this way, where I could only see his back, was the President of Russia, which is not a major economic power but is a major political power, and especially a major military power. I make a distinction between a superpower, which can destroy the major power about 12 or 14 times over, and a major power, which can destroy the superpower about six or seven times over. So each of them has more than enough power to destroy one another.

Other complex issues could have also been discussed here such as the consequences for the whole world of the projected nuclear shield. Anyone with a minimum of common sense who has heard the candidates –one advocating a partial shield, the other a total shield– can perceive the consequences of such insanity for the Third World, the same whose development is a source of concern to us.

Well then, that was a real portrait of our United Nations today.

Someone here, I think it was the Prime Minister of Belize, said that those who have the right to decide whether or not the veto privilege is maintained are those who can veto any agreement reached by all of us and any proposal to the contrary.

The veto amounts to a kind of divine right, an absolute power, besides which Louis XIV pales in comparison. While that historic character may have said, "L'état, c'est moi," anyone at that table who is a permanent member of the Security Council could say, "Les Nations Unies, c'est moi," especially the mightiest superpower in every field.

This is a reality but that does not mean that it will last forever, far from it; it cannot last forever because the political and economic order that currently prevails in the world is simply unsustainable and can only lead to disaster.

Their power is very great, especially that of the superpower, since it is the leading economic power, the leading political power, the leading military power, the leading technological power and the leading scientific power. When the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia said that his country has two Nobel prize laureates I was close to asking him where they were, because according to the information I have, over the last ten years the powerful have stolen 19 out of 21 Nobel prize laureates in physics, 17 out of 24 in medicine, and 13 out of 22 in chemistry. They carry off all of the science prizes. And they do not only take them from the Third World but also from Europe. Since the Inter-American Development Bank was founded 40 years ago, the rich have stolen a million professionals from Latin America and the Caribbean, including our finest minds. They have plundered us of our greatest talents. We have trained them in our modest universities but they have taken away the most talented. One million!

The cost of these one million professionals in the United States –I did the calculations a while ago– would be around 200 billion dollars. And that does not include the cost of senior and junior high school and primary education. They have stolen even our minds. What instruments of domination do they use? Those of modern technology.

I had some other figures here, but there is no point in even mentioning them. I wanted to talk a bit about the economic situation, not just the social and human situation. I think I had a figure here somewhere about how the developed nations control 97% of the world's patents. They have all of the money in the world as a result of the system established after the last war. Everyone is familiar with the conflict between the ideas of Keynes, from England, and White, the head of the American delegation to Bretton Woods.

Some had conceived of a more logical economic system. The United States controlled 80% of the world's gold at that time. A monetary system emerged from Bretton Woods that gave all powers to the United States. Later came the total and absolute veto power in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, another major instrument of economic power for the United States, which is the only country with veto power. An economic system has been established that allows the United States to control everything new that is created: the WTO, the plan for a Multilateral Agreement on Investments –something they tried to smuggle in– and many other institutions thus leading to the total dispossession of our prerogatives in every field.

May all tariffs be removed to allow Tom Thumb to compete with Gulliver in the production, technology and everything else. Our countries have really no chance so, I find it very encouraging that we are growing aware of this. I think it is necessary to build an awareness, and to speak clearly about it. Every time we can communicate a message, we do it through the media. Although they are in control of the leading media in the world, we, the poor, have ways of getting our messages across by various means. In our battle against the blockade and against many other things, we can get our message across by satellite to many universities in this country. And through the Internet, we can reach every corner of the world.

Yesterday we could listen to a Cuban television program, a round table discussion, on the Internet. That is, there are means and ways. However, I think the best way to build an awareness lies in our opinions, which have been expressed this afternoon. Then, there is crisis. I do not recall any time in history in which major problems have not been solved through major crises, and the current world order is leading to an tremendous crisis.

There is no longer a real economy. There is a virtual economy. World exports total somewhere over six trillion dollars a year. However, everyone knows that 1.5 trillion dollars are involved in currency speculation operations, following the elimination of the gold standard in 1971 precisely at the time when the United States' gold reserves had dropped from the initial 30 billion dollars to just 10 billion. With those 30 billion, it was able to maintain stability buying gold when there was a surplus and selling gold when there was a deficit.

Everyone knows that, but in 1971, after so many hundreds of billions of tax free dollars had been spent in the Vietnam war, Nixon simply made the unilateral decision, without consulting anyone, to eliminate the gold standard for the U.S. dollar. This led to instability in all currencies. De Gaulle was opposed to this, of course, he was opposed because he knew what would follow: the unleashing of speculation. Today, 1.5 trillion dollars are involved in currency speculation operations every day, in addition to another 1.5 trillion in speculation with all sorts of stocks and shares. This has absolutely nothing to do with a real economy.

For example, some stock markets have turned 1000 dollars into 800,000 dollars in a period of just eight years. This is more of a perception, something in the realm of imagination, based on prospects even if the companies involved register losses. A colossal virtual economy has been created. An enormous bubble has been inflated and one day it will burst. This is absolutely inevitable. Then, we will be faced with the major crisis that might help to create a new world political and economic order.

Meanwhile, we can build awareness, delve more deeply into these problems and spread ideas like all those that have been expressed here. Because everything that has been said here and many other

ideas should be disseminated. We cannot be pessimistic. I am convinced that this will happen within a fairly short period of time. We know of everything being planned to bring about a world division in the next century. The two American presidential candidates have said that this will be the "American century" for Latin America. But, disputes are cropping up not only with Third World countries but also with Europe due to a conflict of interests. Somebody very wisely pointed out today that globalization began centuries ago with the division of the world. Before World War I, there was a major expansion of foreign investment. Today, there is a new kind of globalization corresponding to special circumstances associated to communications and all other occurrences.

It is my conviction that a crisis is coming. Today, there has been a kind of rebellion here. At least this assembly and this meeting have allowed us to freely express ourselves in this small room and to say what we believe in. But I am sure that an ever greater number of people will begin to dare to say what they think, despite their dependence on the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and one kind of credit or another. It is our privilege to be able to speak with absolute freedom because we depend on neither the International Monetary Fund nor the World Bank. For ten years we have had to endure a double blockade -when the USSR collapsed we were left doubly blockaded- and we have withstood thanks to the work carried out by the Revolution throughout 30 years and because our country and our people had a sound political consciousness and a great spirit of solidarity.

A half million Cubans have voluntarily participated in internationalist missions. And I was not exaggerating when I said that we could have 6000 doctors available. We have the reserves to mobilize 6000 doctors in a matter of weeks, on a voluntary basis, which is the way it has always been done. I was describing this morning a program we had proposed when discussing AIDS. It was noted that the new medications that have been developed could not be applied even if they were provided for free, because the indispensable infrastructure does not exist. We said that we can help the United Nations, the WHO and the nations of Africa to expeditiously create the necessary infrastructure and that everything could be put in place within a year. We cannot sit back idle and watch while many millions die and this plague that could destroy an entire continent continues to spread. This is it.

I feel that this meeting will be very useful because many people have met and spoken, and exchanged ideas. I am sure that at this round table, more than in any other place, the most painful things have been said. And I believe that you Chávez, as chairman of this meeting, have contributed to the expression of these sentiments.

I will leave with the impression that everyone has been able to speak at this round table. None of the powerful sitting at that table at lunchtime yesterday has been present here. Those of us here are notably the smallest, the plebeians, along with a few large countries, like India. In other words, the ones who suffer most have been here and we have been able to talk freely. I think this is highly positive.

I will continue to reflect on these matters. I spend many hours and a lot of time reading, looking for information, trying to find out what is happening, and for me this has been extremely encouraging, because I can see that our consciousness is growing. And with this consciousness we can pressure and struggle. They cannot ignore us when we speak the truth and always more truth. And then, when a crisis erupts, we will be prepared for a change in these institutions, and we have to be prepared for a change in the political and economic order that currently prevails in the world.

Excuse me for having spoken for so long but there will be a record of it, because I have it taped here, I have a small tape recorder to record what I am saying. I am glad it has been recorded. I do not know if they will throw me in jail for this, but I like historical records, and later I can recall and meditate on everything said. I like to have a record and study it.

It was worth coming to this meeting, despite the major and minor inconveniences I usually face when travelling to New York for obvious well-known reasons. I think it was worth it, not only because of the countless friends I have had the chance to meet again, but also because of what I have heard at this round table.

Thank you very much.

President Chávez.- Thank you, Fidel. Surely, you will not be thrown in jail because this round table will absolve you.

Thank you for your comments.

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