

[Speech given by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, at the closing of the 4th International Economists' Meeting. Havana, February 15, 2002. "Year of the Heroic Prisoners of the Empire." \[1\]](#)

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Distinguished guests:

You have given me a truly difficult task. At this moment I should like to be as eloquent and as erudite as many, we could say almost all, of those who have spoken here.

All my life I have tried to find the essential nature of things and, starting from that essential nature, to try to guess what is going to happen or what might happen. Sometimes things do not happen when we want them to happen or do not happen as soon as we want them to, but happen later. I do not think that I am the only person who has been wrong about some predictions. Everyone knows that revolutionaries want things to happen soon, but they take a little longer.

We ourselves tried to begin to make the Revolution in 1953 and later we had to resign ourselves to waiting five years, five months and five days, it seems like some cabalistic thing, doesn't it? That does not come from Cavallo; it is actually a word in the dictionary (Laughter).

Here we have really heard many interesting things, and I had the privilege to be present at most of the plenary sessions. We have attended the four annual economists meetings and the difference between the first meeting and this one are striking, and one should ask why. I am not going to give an answer, one must ask oneself or rather understand that it is what has happened over the last few years that has more or less changed even the language used at this meetings.

We have learned some remarkable things in these last three years and especially in the last two years and most especially in the last six months because of events that were seen coming and which today are here.

In that first meeting in 1998 it was still the end of history, and from what we see today, that is still a long way away. Months, half years, years of economic growth, miracles in Japan which began to stop being miracles about four years ago in spite of the fact that so much was said about that miracle; miracles in east Asia which seemed to be on an unstoppable trajectory; miracles in the economies of our neighbors in the North, where they kept a record. They took note of every day that went by without a crisis until the end of the year 2000 when signs indicating a reduction in industrial output began to show. Then the well-known theories were trotted out immediately: that when there had been so many consecutive months of backsliding in industrial output then it was already a serious problem for the economy, it was starting to be a downturn, a recession, etc.

Employment began to fall in the United States and what many expected began to take place, as an inevitable consequence of the way in which that economy had grown and of the changes that had taken place. Everything had changed.

At meetings like this one can see the relativity of things, of historical figures, of the interpretations given to every event. Up until now they talked about the unfairness of the economic order and the international financial institutions, both global and regional, the latter depending on the former. And we have sometimes mentioned here some of those institutions, I can say sincerely that we did not mean to hurt their representatives who have been with us, helping to give this meeting the character it always wanted to have, that of an open debate of ideas, positions, viewpoints, because we should not be afraid of listening to any point of view.

From the first meeting we were aware of the attitude of many of the participants towards the representatives of those institutions. The first of them to come was the World Bank, which has attended the four meetings. This time there have been new things, very well-known people who had not come before, they would not have had much to say then, but this time several of them were in attendance: two winners of the Nobel Prize for Economics and one Nobel Peace Prize, although the latter has done us the honor of attending meetings in our country on more than one occasion. We even heard via television someone whom they say will be a future Nobel Prize winner and maybe he will. But I do not know if those who decide who will get the Nobel Prize will take it upon themselves to grant such an honor, and the large amount of money that comes with it, to people who have decided to speak frankly about the realities which they see today.

In 1998 what could distinguished academic and professor Joseph Stiglitz have told us? He was not yet a Nobel Prize Laureate and this crisis had not yet happened, although perhaps the one in Southeast Asia had, it was the first, then the Mexican, which is not usually associated with the one that began in 1998 in the Far East. Now these are events that have been happening one after the other.

And here we were meditating, because that is what we did, meditate and meditate, while the others were saying what they thought according to an approved agenda: first, economic issues were discussed, among which the situation in Argentina predominated, precisely because —as I said to Pérez Esquivel after the afternoon session was over— Argentina was the paradigm of neoliberal globalization and today it is the paradigm of the failure of neoliberal globalization.

There was ample discussion, trying to explain the causes and possible solutions of issues related to the economy and globalization and this theme took up, we could say, about 30% or 40% of our time. Other economic issues were discussed, particularly those in the agenda of the meeting. I was not able to hear what was said today about the multilateral investment agreement, but it is something fairly well known. It was mentioned here by Professor Borón, if I remember rightly, as proof of things that can be done, such as the timely denunciation of that conspiracy, because it was worked out using the favorite technique of the world masters, that is, conspiracy.

Yes, I said world masters because some of those institutions that we mentioned here do not exist in their own right; they exist because there is a world system of domination. These institutions, both the IMF and the World Bank have very well known masters, although their roles were different.

I think that the World Bank has been dragged to do things and obligated to give up the tasks assigned to it at the end of the war, which were to promote social development, and it has been forced to dedicate, completely, to salvage operations. I know the opinion of the majority of those who work at that institution, they are opposed to those tasks which have been and still are imposed on it, although our powerful neighbor to the North has no veto right there as it does in the International Monetary Fund; a veto power it uses in an unrestricted way. Just like in the UN Security Council, where they have used their veto right at least four or five times more than all the other members of the Security Council combined. A decision is never taken which they oppose.

If it happens there, in no less a place than the institution which represents the world, that embryo of an international authority, a world authority, to which they do not even want to give the funds to keep it going, what will they not do with the International Monetary Fund —and I beg those of you who are here

representing the IMF to take any mention or reference to that famous institution as a criticism of a system and not of the professionals who work there or come and go and where not all opinions are exactly alike either. Some hold some opinions and others hold other opinions that are less extreme right wing, less radical, less brutal.

I hope that in the future... Well, there is no need to say, "I hope", because these meetings will become increasingly interesting. If so much news has piled up in six months, what happens in the next 12 months will really merit serious analysis, since highly significant changes have taken place, both in the political and the economic fields.

How the famous FTAA, which was discussed here, is getting along will have to be analyzed too. It is a subject that was discussed here not very long ago, in a meeting on that issue specifically. It is something that was discussed here by the Sao Paulo Forum people as well. Almost all intellectuals and all people who think, who know the issues, have already made up their minds about the FTAA and, as a rule, the overwhelming majority of them are opposed to the FTAA.

The dangerous thing about the FTAA is not the points of view of intellectuals, economists and political thinkers, the dangerous thing about the FTAA is that the ordinary people in the countries of our hemisphere do not have enough information about it. Many of them have high levels of illiteracy and there are hundreds of millions of people who do not have the education but only their personal experience to try to understand what the FTAA means theoretically.

Look how this hemisphere has fallen into debt. Even parliaments were not consulted about it; often not even cabinets were consulted. It was the ministers of the economy or finance who, more or less in combination with the highest political authorities, made the decisions. In fact, the huge debts —and I think someone said it here— began to be contracted on a massive scale under tyrannical governments, bloody governments who did not consult anybody. Perhaps those debts and their aftermath partly led to what is known as the democratic opening, which is no doubt something much better than what was there before, because the vanishing and murdering of people largely ended and repression was considerably reduced, although it still exists. But all of those enormous debts were contracted behind the people's back. Often the private banks or the government banks tried to persuade the population that it was a big deal that they had solved the economic crisis because they had managed to get a loan of 10 billion or 20 billion or 30 billion from the International Monetary Fund. No one knew what the consequences of that would be, they could not understand.

In 1985, 17 years ago, important meetings were held in Cuba all through that year: meetings of Latin American students, peasants, women, workers organizations and of political and intellectual figures of all stripes. The meetings could not be held here, but in the Karl Marx Theater that can sit 6,000 people. There were days and days of analysis, of speeches. Yes, we listened to 100, 120, 130 speeches.

What was the purpose? To build an awareness about the debt. There are lots of material and some messages from those days. I remember that after each one of those meetings we would send the materials on what had been discussed to all heads of states, with some obvious exceptions. The Pope was included, as a head of state, and afterwards we were pleased to see that one of the causes the Pope took up was precisely that of the debt which was discussed in the Rome Synod in connection with the fight against poverty and the debt.

The Africans were not yet very concerned because their debt was not very high, they had not borrowed as much as the Latin Americans, therefore, they did not attached much importance to it. Now, they do. The Latin Americans took it more seriously.

Of course, some goals could not be achieved. But, back then it would have been enough if one country, just one of the big three, had reacted against the debt and said: "I am not paying" and then a real solution to the debt crisis could not have been avoided and at least 10 or 20 years of moratorium would have been won.

A few minutes ago someone explained that this idea of not paying a debt had a historical precedent around the beginning of last century. I think it was Borón who said that.

And do you know which country it was that could have taken that decisive step? It was Argentina, which was suffering the worst consequences. But perhaps the time has not yet come to make public some of the efforts made to try and persuade one of the big three. The big three were: Brazil, Mexico and Argentina.

I rather not say more here, because the effort was to build an awareness, to mobilize the masses and to try to persuade some leaders to make the decisions that would have made it possible to find a solution, like the solution that should have been found ever since. This gave time to the rich countries, especially the big creditor countries in the North, who were then playing around with interest rates. Generally, the agreements were such that when interest rates went up the rates of debt contracted also went up. It was not like now when they have lowered the rate to 1.75 on this, the 12th time that, resorting to such desperate measures, they lowered the interest rate to that point to do battle with the recession.

So, if the debt in Latin America was 300 billion back then, the debt in the middle of last year, 2001, already stood at 750 billion. It had more than doubled and I would have to make a more accurate calculation to know how much it will be in 2002. Someone over here said that the Mexicans had reduced their foreign debt a little last year. In Argentina and other countries, however, it grew and I do not know who could look up the data to find out if the debt actually reached 800 billion. It is just that now conditions are different, because this is the most serious and threatening economic crisis there has been since the end of World War II.

Nobody should have any doubts about that; I know you do not, because you have said so here.

Now a much larger debt has to be paid off, and now, in addition to a huge debt, the national assets, fundamental assets, with few exceptions, including the most hallowed, have been privatized. Before, they were debtors who had something and now they are debtors whose debt has risen greatly and it continues to rise but they have nothing.

These hundreds of millions of dollars in privatization must be added to that debt. Before, they were like a reserve; today, they are no more. Which is why the situation is much more serious.

And that debt is now compounded with that of Africa, and Asia to the point where it exceeds two trillion, although, in that sum we, the Latin Americans, had as the Olympic champions; we are in first place, gold medal; without gold nor any hope of gold. This is a world problem.

Moreover, there was no WTO in 1985; there was something called GATT. Yes, we had hoped to hold a GATT or UNCTAD meeting here, we were going to use this conference center, plus an extension for the offices needed, which in the end became a hotel, because we realized that it was not even worth the bother; the United States was fiercely opposed. The GATT metamorphosed into the WTO. That is another of the powerful tools for plundering and exploitation, and it is in the hands of the world masters.

The latest meeting in Qatar was mentioned here at some point. They found a desert country that was really hard to get to by road or by boat and not only because of the distance but the fare to get there was also very expensive.

I have to say, to honor the truth —and it was also mentioned here this afternoon— that Americans and Canadians with Internet, intellectuals and generally middle class people, communicating through that very channel, were the ones who organized the Seattle protests, the New York protests, the Quebec protests. So that the G-7 and the others no longer have anywhere to meet. I thought that perhaps in that new orbiting space station they might prepare a few cabins to get the G-7 group together. They have already admitted that it is becoming very difficult, so they have found themselves a mountain in

Canada for a G-7 or a WTO meeting, a very high, far-off, cold and deserted mountain.

Last year Davos looked like the trenches World War I which some of you have seen in the photos of the Battle of Verdun or the Battle of the Marne. And the Swiss, always so peaceful and neutral, had an army there with helmets and all kinds of gears so that those protesting could only get to that hill where they do winter sports. And so, having learned their lesson, they went to no less a place than New York for their meeting. Now they have changed their language a bit; they used certain misleading and mealy-mouthed words, which is a method, a style. But it could not even be in Switzerland, thus they took advantage of the situation and the security measures adopted there in that city after September 11.

Perhaps this is related to some of those events that are taking place at this time. If you will give me a few minutes I will take up this point later when I am getting close to finishing, which I hope will not be too far off.

They are even in crisis about places to meet. Perhaps one day they will ask us to allow them to meet in Havana although it is more likely that they will choose Guantánamo naval base. (Laughter.)

I have heard you talk, for example, about the Manto Base and the others here and there and I thought that we too have a foreign base for almost a century now. It was imposed on us in the first few years after that intervention when Spain was exhausted and could not keep fighting its colonial war. An intervention that followed misleading speeches and a joint declaration of the U.S. Congress which ended in a war, an occupation and something called the Platt Amendment which gave the U.S. government the right to intervene in our country with its armed forces if there were any disturbances that threatened its interests. It was an amendment which they made us add to the Cuban Republic's constitution, one that deeply hurt many patriots to whom they offered this alternative, with reference to the country's independence: Take it or leave it. And that was when the fourth year of military occupation was already over and the Constitution of the Republic was under discussion. It must have been awful. Some were completely opposed whatever the consequences but others thought that accepting the amendment was unavoidable.

There was no longer a Liberation Army, it had been disarmed. The Revolutionary Party, founded by Martí to carry out the Revolution, to lead that Revolution, no longer existed.

Martí founded a party to organize, direct and make a Revolution before Lenin founded his revolutionary party in Minsk. He was the first and he was not a Marxist because he could not be one.

This society had recently emancipated from slavery and there was no proletariat. That man had the genius to tackle the most complicated problems in the face of Spanish propaganda and he even used some phrases from Marx, one of them is very beautiful: "Since he took the side of the poor, he is worthy of honor." But what vision he had, writing at the end of the 19th century about "alca-ish" attempts! When I say "alca-ish" I mean the ALCA (the Spanish acronym for the FTAA) and not to that Al Qaeda organization, although the difference between them is not all that big. (Laughter).

I should say in passing that the stupid and brutal crime committed in New York did tremendous damage to everybody. It harmed not only the American people and economy; it also accelerated the process of the world economic crisis, although this was already on its way. It dealt a blow to all those groups we have spoken about, groups of intellectuals, of economists, of people worried about globalization, those who were waging a battle. It had a paralyzing effect inside the United States where the role of those opposed to globalization became much more difficult, where, given the prevailing anger and confusion, they even ran the risk of being called terrorists. Perhaps, if this terrorist attack had not happened, the Davos lot would not have been able to meet in New York—they came up with that later, taking advantage of the situation. It affected the meeting at Porto Alegre in Rio Grande del Sur which 100,000 people would probably have attended but to which only 50,000 or 60,000 turned up, according to estimates.

The anti-FTAA meeting took place there and although the American and Canadian delegations were among the largest many others could not attend because the recent events had dealt a blow.

The same was true of the Sao Paulo Forum. This time the Sao Paulo Forum met in Havana. Since the Porto Alegre one had taken place, those who were going to attend did not lose hope and the meeting went ahead, a very important meeting. But the terrorist act dealt a blow to these struggles and provided an excuse for new policies and for openly interventionist theories.

Here, in fact, an attempt was made to describe what was happening, when somebody used the phrase "military dictatorship".

One could even speak of The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon, this is for those who have read this work of Marx or have read The Civil Wars in France, which is indispensable reading for those who like to study Marx and those who go through certain schools, especially when it is a matter of works like these two, because it is much easier to read The 18th Brumaire than it is to read The Capital. The latter's content is strictly economic and the other is a beautiful way, an elegant and entertaining way of describing historical events. In other words, there was nothing dogmatic about Marx and when he dealt with these subjects he did it in a really persuasive way.

These are economic problems, apart from those I have mentioned about the debt and which gave rise to the digressions we made about the political and social movements affected by the barbarity and stupidity of those acts which we sincerely condemn because we have been giving these matters a great deal of thought, and because we waged a war, which lasted 25 months, waged it successfully, and I still cannot remember in the many battles that our Column 1 troops fought, from which all the others were derived, one single case of an innocent civilian killed.

Ours was a liberation struggle and we treated our prisoners very respectfully, they were not held prisoner for even 48 hours, 72 at the most. When we began to take large numbers of prisoners we handed them over to the International Red Cross. We gave our medicines to the injured and we released the prisoners immediately. They were our arms suppliers, so it was only natural that we treated them well. (Laughter.)

At first, they struggled and fought back to the last bullet. They cost us lives, they cost us military supplies. They thought we were going to kill them. Their heads had been filled with such ideas and it was only our consistent behavior that convinced them that the opposite was true. Then, once they felt they had lost a battle, it was easier for them to stop fighting. There were some who surrendered on three different occasions.

We were not supplied with funds, or arms or anything from abroad. We had not even met a Russian bureaucrat. No one brought us our ideas, our tactics. Engels once said that ever since wide avenues had been built in Paris and breech-loading rifles had been invented, insurrections had become impossible. I always meditated on that and I did not agree because, if I had we would not have tried to make a revolution. Actually, the objective conditions here were not all that favorable —they were somewhat favorable, of course, as later events would show— and the subjective conditions were not much better either. Dogmatism was rather predominant in revolutionary thought and we were quite influenced by the ideology of our neighbors to the North; it was the midst of the cold war.

Our ideas were flexible about different kinds of struggles; we did not reject anything out of hand. Combinations of armed struggle and a mass movement, or capturing a fortress to give arms to the people, under the slogan of a revolutionary general strike. The fact is that we worked on a formula for taking power and yes, based on Marxist-Leninist ideas.

To Marx we owe the clear idea of what society was. Before we had contact with those ideas, society seemed like a huge forest to us and we were like someone lost in that forest. To Lenin we owe the theories on the state. Both of them showed us class society, the history of exploitation, historical

materialism, but of course these were not doctrines to be applied mathematically. When you try to apply them to one era or another, you realize that they are much influenced by the events, which were taking place when they were compound in a theory. However, many of their principles are universal as far as the brief history of humanity goes, because what we know about humanity and what can be called history and not legend, is not really much. I think that the oldest history is 3,500 years old. What is 3,500 years in the history of our species? This species which has developed a civilization and I subscribe completely to that Marxist concept, that humanity's pre-history will come to an end when the capitalist system disappears. I do not forget that we have not yet even entered our history and when some stupid people go around saying that this is the end of history they are confusing events and concepts, they do not realize that we are reaching the end of pre-history.

Well, with pre-history come also barbarity and increasingly brutal forms of plundering and ever more subtle and perfidious ways of stealing from the masses. One sometimes feels envy for tribal times or for the age of the first groups who lived in elementary forms of society because they were more free to think, no one thought for them, not even the tribal medicine man or he who led the rituals (Laughter). Today, the masses are practically prevented from thinking, otherwise they would not be drinking Coca Cola in places where Coca Cola had never been heard of and where they had much nicer soft drinks. They would not be eating those famous McDonald's burgers, and who knows what kind of meat they are made from, because it has to change depending on where they are and there may be some that even use cat meat or who knows what. (Laughter.) Yes, yes, these are all attacks on customs, on cultures, on identities, on civilization.

This neoliberal globalization has brought with it a number of things, not only in terms of the economy, culture and ethics, but in every sense, it prevents us all from thinking. Some people do not bother to think: fashion is such and such, long skirt, short skirt, the soap is such and such and so on, the soft drink is this or that or this brand of whisky. And hardly anyone stops to think, they read it in the papers, in the magazines, or they learn about it from the ads on television or at the cinema. These are facts.

I harbor the notion that we are reaching a decisive phase. When so many things were said here, it caught my attention that nobody mentioned something as disgustingly unfair as unequal terms of trade. Such words are hardly said any more. We have already forgotten that if in 1949 a truck or a tractor was worth so many tons of coffee, or so many tons of sugar or of any of the basic commodities produced by our countries, today we have to give more and more of those commodities. They have less and less purchasing power because it is not only our money that has been devalued, our products have also been devalued.

Everyone knows that, it has been said, it has been written about and it is one form of plundering. There are ever new forms of plundering, otherwise there would not be so much hunger and so many calamities, so much poverty, so much extreme poverty. All of those figures that have been quoted here have an obvious cause, a system of plundering. At least while the socialist camp and the USSR existed—with all of the well-deserved criticism than can be made of them—the others were afraid. The emergence of a workers' revolution in 1917 meant that the big companies, the big monopolies and governments were a little more careful, had a bit more respect for the unions, a bit more respect for the working class, and so subsidies and other concessions were obtained, which have been swept away little by little over the last few years.

It is scarcely 10 years since the USSR disappeared and since there is now only one hegemonic superpower, nobody seems to care about what might happen or about social injustice.

If you analyze the figures for unionized workers, you will discover that they have gone down to 15%, to 10%, to 7%. The workers' movement has been destroyed, the same as many parties or they have been transformed leaving society increasingly helpless. The monopoly over the mass media is greater than ever. The media no longer cover just one national area, they cover every country in the world and they can broadcast in many languages, even in dialects and the same program can be heard simultaneously by a minority in one country and in another language by a minority in other countries, in the United

States and outside the United States on cable TV, by satellite, etcetera, etcetera. It is a flood. If one spoke of a universal flood, it would be wrong, but in any case one could speak of two floods: the one in the Bible and this universal flood of information, which is often transformed into a universal flood of lies, a universal flood of deceit. And I said often, not always, it is only fair to note there are exceptions.

We remember that there were many domestic and international television networks that gave coverage to our battle for the return of little Elián who was so cruelly and unfairly kidnapped. And other events have been broadcast, not only during that time but also part of our battle of ideas and our later battle against the murderous Cuban Adjustment Act —I will not expand on that law— the Helms-Burton Act, the Torricelli Act, the blockade, the economic war, all kinds of amendments that have been passed to make the blockade worse, especially when the socialist camp collapsed and we lost our supplier of certain products, we lost fuel, we lost markets. We lost almost everything overnight. One has to wonder how our people could withstand it. I will not even try to explain it. I will only say that it was able to withstand a double blockade.

I will limit myself to saying that a political awareness, ideas and the work the Revolution had done for 30 years were decisive, despite our inexperience, despite the blockade, which they pitifully call embargo, which is like calling murder a sport. It is not an embargo, we have no rights to buy from or sell anything at all to the United States or its industries abroad.

If I say these things it is because they can help to respond some of the misgivings that were still being voiced here.

There is so much that can be done with a minimal amount of resources, a minimum of political awareness, a minimal amount of work for the people, and minimum changes. And I say minimal because, if 10 years ago, 20 years ago we had had the experience we have today, we would not be ashamed of the little we have accomplished in 43 years.

I hope that you understand that much more can be accomplished than even we ourselves had imagined, which is why we place so much emphasis on the question of ideas and political awareness.

And there is a third component missing. Perhaps I will get to it a little later on, in the minutes that I have asked you to lend me, remembering that a delicious cocktail awaits you before midnight. (Laughter)

I have seen only one person, in the third row, who was nodding off, but that happens to me too. (Laughter and applause.) Well, now he is awake. I told you that I look at the audience. And the time comes when I realize that you have the right to sleep; not yet, I hope to finish before that.

To review things, all the institutions have been mentioned, of one sort or another, all the abuses that they commit. The Free Trade Agreements have been mentioned, I already said, and it has already been very eloquently said here that all of those currently super-developed and super-rich nations developed without FTAA's and without WTOs. They developed by protecting their industries and not by making them compete with those who had all the technology because they had universities, research centers, their own researchers. And a significant number of them developed by stealing the best minds from Third World countries where these did not have the smallest chance of having access to a laboratory. They offered them opportunities, not just economic, since people are not moved by economic motivations alone, people are also moved by a vocation or by the desire to do research, to work, to create. What opportunities did they have?

We know that more than half a million Latin Americans, graduates of Latin American universities have emigrated to industrialized countries, mostly to the United States. Until recently, until a year ago, a few months before the crisis, there was talk of hiring 200,000 Latin Americans to work in the high technology industry. They meant university graduates, engineers, etcetera.

Now with an FTAA and a WTO they want to make us compete with their technology, with their

developed, automated industries. The rest can always grow fruit, they want to go back to that time when it was said that man was a fruit collector. That is what they want to do to Latin Americans with their FTAA: have us grow mangos and some vegetables which might be a bit more expensive to grow in California and some other states because over there wages are fifteen times higher than those paid in our countries. Yet, and the Mexicans know this well, the women who work in the maquiladoras in the north of their country earn a fourteen times higher wage when they go work in the United States than when they work in the Mexican maquiladoras, in the northern region. As compared to southern Mexico it might not be fourteen times higher, the wage paid in the United States for the same work might be thirty to forty times higher than that paid in the maquiladoras which are close to the borders with Central American countries.

Which is why we see that they are growing an amazing amount or that exports are growing while they only pay the meager salary of industries that do not even pay taxes and where the domestic component, generally speaking, does not exceed 2% or 3%. What they are exporting is the sweat of the workers, which is why many people lose their lives there trying to emigrate.

Every year 400 or 500 people die on the U.S.-Mexico border—it is already close to that figure, although the statistics are not clear—more than those who died during the 29 years the Berlin Wall existed. It is simply that there were reports on that every day and this is never mentioned, except by some, and let us say, bold people who sometimes do talk about these things.

I was talking to Osvaldito and I asked him: “What are you going to call that thing whose name is FTAA? What name will you use? Are you going to use some adjective?” We have called it annexation, a new tool of occupation, of colonization. They are going to leave us only the hardest, worst paid jobs.

When employment is discussed, I do not know in which category domestic workers, male and female, are put. The experts can explain if they fit in the employed category. And you know what those jobs are like, really the worst.

I did not hear their explanations, but we do not have to think too hard, let us simply say that the FTAA is the annexation of Latin America by the United States.

What is so strange about some countries adopting the dollar as their currency? What hope do they have left? What currency can compete with theirs? Which currency can be safe from devaluation? Even if they have hundreds of millions in their reserves, and there are not many of those, just to protect currencies that cannot be protected, they are unavoidably headed for devaluation.

What is so strange if everybody makes off with the money, especially those who steal a lot but even those who get a bit of money together because they are professionals or small manufacturers? Because that is the only way to be secure. To pay 40%, 50% interest to prevent some people, whose names are well known, from dealing a speculative blow. The economy grinds to a halt and capital flight cannot be avoided.

There are cases, you are quite familiar with them, who have put together an x amount of money—and I say “x” so as not to mention the names of any countries, it is always unpleasant to mention them or make it obvious which they are by the data—by privatizing to obtain funds which have been lost in eight weeks. That is one of the rules.

The countries simply lose track of their money. Argentina does not know where the Argentine money is, and the same is true of Venezuela, that is, the \$400 billion embezzled and largely stolen almost from the time of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution which was, more or less, a few months after the triumph, or after the overthrow of the military dictatorship in Venezuela, in February, 1958. The Revolution triumphed in January 1959.

Everyone knows about the extensive plundering that went on in that country, all the waste. Even the ice

used to cool down whisky was made from Scottish water and came in little plastic bags, so as not to commit the sin of mixing Venezuelan water with whisky that was made with Scottish water. This was called a model democracy. If you ask: How many children complete their sixth grade? They would tell you less than 50%. And how many complete high school? Even less. Has illiteracy been wiped out? No, it is still there. They speak of 15% or 20%, which does not include semi-illiterate people or functionally illiterate people, another category that must be considered. It adds up to millions.

What interest could certain sectors have or what interest could the reactionaries and the oligarchs have in teaching the people to read and write? They were afraid of the people knowing how to read and write and that explains the huge numbers, although, of course, they are not comparable with those in Africa. There are countries in Africa with an 87% illiteracy rate and maybe 15% or 16% of the population with access to schools. Do not just talk about illiterates, talk about those who have no access to schools, those who only get to sixth grade and then see if you can talk of industrial development, the Internet and the training of researchers and scientists. Who are they trying to fool with these facts? It is incredible how they try to fool the peoples and say that they live in a democratic system.

Supposedly, plundering does not exist, but you are all well aware that one needs a computer to add up all the money that has been stolen in our hemisphere since the Cuban Revolution came into existence; the number of vanished people in this hemisphere since the Revolution came into existence. In Guatemala alone they were 100,000 and the number of deaths was more than 200,000. The category of "prisoner" has not existed there since they invaded the country with a mercenary expedition similar to the one in the Bay of Pigs.

Just think what would have happened to us! But by then we already had 400,000 weapons. We would have been, perhaps, the Viet Nam of this hemisphere. It was a matter of life and death to have not given them time to establish a beachhead and to drive them out in less than 72 hours. They underestimated our people, as they usually do. We did not yet have an organized army, according to the rules for what are considered to be prepared and well-trained armed forces.

But the revolutionary war had been won with people who had received nothing more than theoretical training. I cannot remember a single case of the thousands who fought afterwards with our guerrilla army --and there were not that many-- who entered the fray having fired a single shot in training. Everything was based on geometrical methods, without firing any shots, because we could not waste our scarce ammunition like that.

The trade of fighting was learned, with good tactics, against powerful well armed troops trained by the United States, that had a pretty good air force, good coordination between those in the air and those advancing on the ground and modern tanks, good communications. They had everything we did not have, except politics. They went around burning houses, murdering campesinos, stealing from everyone, thus, they did our political work; they were even our arms suppliers, our best political commissars.

Often people caricaturize us and some people think that we were sitting up on a hill talking to campesinos about Marxist theory, and the Land Reform Law and twenty other things. What those campesinos understood was that we treated them well, showing great respect to them, to their families, that we paid for everything we bought from them. Also, since the area was blockaded, we confiscated the large herds to share out the meat and to give animals to those who, in spite of the bombing and everything else, did not leave the area where we operated. Finally, we managed to win with those tactics and concrete actions.

I am not going to call into question what any politician or any organization wants to do about the way to overthrow oppressive and plundering regimes that is up to each person. I am simply saying what we did at a given moment and how the country after, faced with such a powerful enemy, withstood the harassment, the aggressions, and the terrorism. Take good note of that, terrorism, but I am not going to expand on that, because that would take a long time.

Oh! But this country had to be blockaded, because this country enforced a land reform and this was the country in Latin America where the big U.S. transnationals owned the most land. Those companies were the owners of most of the land and of the best land, which they had obtained at negligible prices and exploited for over half a century. And they were also the owners of our public services, owners of the railways, owners of the mines, owners of the most important industries. The Land Reform Law was one of the first laws and from that moment on we were condemned to be destroyed, just as they were doomed in Guatemala after they carried out an agrarian reform.

It was more radical here because some of those companies owned 200,000 hectares of land and in the first Land Reform Law we established a maximum of 1,340 hectares, if they were well cultivated, or a maximum of 402 hectares if it involved extensive agriculture or fallow land. This included compensation in government bonds. That was the first Land Law. To a powerful and influential company that owned 200,000 hectares, that was irreverent. The country held its ground and held its ground for all that time and carried out its mission, then worse times came, and the country held its ground and continued with its mission.

Suffice it to say that when what we called Special Period began, 30,000 additional family doctors joined our medical services in ten years —30,000 family doctors. Today, our people have a family doctor within 100, 150 or 200 meters from their homes. In the countryside, the doctor is a little farther away, but the doctor is there and lives there. These are services that no developed country could even dream of having. Medical services in most of the world are totally commercialized. It is not like that in Cuba, where more than 60,000 doctors provide medical care for free, with all costs covered by the State. We have 2,500 doctors working abroad in comprehensive health care programs in Third World countries without charging a cent.

We have even offered the United Nations enough health workers to create a structure or an infrastructure —whatever you want to call it— to fight AIDS that is, if they raise the funds needed. As of now, one billion has been offered in response to the UN call and no more and I was saying this afternoon that at least 200 billion is needed to fight AIDS because it is growing like a weed. In 19 years no vaccine has been discovered, no one is interested in a vaccine. The big pharmaceutical transnationals are interested not in prevention but in drug treatment and that is why medical services are so expensive.

We vaccinate children here against 13 different illnesses and some of those vaccines are manufactured in our country. But this country has to be blockaded.

We have said that we would give what little money that this country has, or whatever they want, if they can find one single case of a vanished person, or of an extra judicial execution, or a single case of torture in this country. Oh! but this country must be blockaded, this country must be condemned. Which is why I joked a bit when someone raised the issue of the condemnation in Geneva.

It is an exercise that they come up with every year, one to which we are totally accustomed. But they are bent on it, and they lose their sleep; it does not seem possible that in such a powerful country the leaders lose their sleep over that. And the day the resolution is voted, generally there are 25 or 26 votes against at 2:00 a.m., and, depending on what time the vote is, if it is in the afternoon they have more time to manage to change the results to favor them, by applying terrible pressure.

Officials from the new administration use even more acerbic language —those guys don't mess around— when they call up heads of state and openly and brazenly threaten them. Now, who does not need a loan, who does not need a credit from one of the international banks or institutions?

We have met real heroes, extremely poor countries that have defied all the risks. Which is why they win by such a narrow margin of one or two votes at the most. Once they were careless, they rested on their laurels and they lost.

After they had “democratized” and developed “such a splendid” economy in the former socialist countries, where nobody ever stole one cent, creating the most honest administrations in the world, they could count on new allies to pass sentence on Cuba. In those countries there was no privatization, but rather confiscation of wealth by the bureaucrats, and thanks to the principles of that oft-mentioned institution called the IMF and of the free flow of capital, neither short-term nor lazy, the confiscators made off with all the money it was possible to make off with. But, well, that is democracy; that is development.

Social data, what for? When has it really mattered to them, to the world masters that 50 babies of every 1000 live births die within one year, or 60 under 5 years? What does it matter that in Africa there is scarcely a country where the figure is less than 100 deaths? What does it matter if in some African countries, out of every 1000 live births more than 200 children under 5 years die? When has this ever mattered to them? On the contrary, frightened by the population growth, it does not really bother them much if AIDS wipes out whole nations, and some just might disappear.

Pérez Esquivel was speaking about human rights and he mentioned some statistics we would do well to remember.

There is a risk that entire regions in Africa may disappear, and there are countries where life expectancy would be 61 if it were not for AIDS and now it is 38 and soon it will be 30. A disease like that basically affects young people, men and women who are in their reproductive and working years. What is going to happen in some countries where, even though they are not the most affected countries, more teachers die than new teachers graduate? Because things are getting to be like that, in concrete terms, getting to be really disturbing.

What does it matter to those who invented colonialism and capitalism, who brought back slavery from the time of the Roman Empire, and right in the heart of the West? What is it that we have now? A super developed capitalism, which has nothing to do with that other capitalism and which has brought the world to today’s awful condition.

Adam Smith is mentioned, Keynes is mentioned, the Chicago Boys are mentioned, and each of them belongs to a different era, to a different situation.

Can one speak of freedom when surrounded by huge inequalities? Can one speak of the ability to choose when some have billions and others live under New York’s bridges? Because there are poor people not only in the Third World, there are many poor and many marginalized people in the industrialized countries themselves, especially in the most powerful and the most industrialized and the richest of all, which is the United States.

Someone spoke about the number of poor people, whether there were eight billion or 10 billion. The number of poor is actually 40 billion. The poor in the industrialized countries and in Third World countries with a certain development must be included. Some of them have a gross domestic product three times greater than that of Cuba and hundreds of thousands of illiterate people and people who receive no medical care because they practice the doctrine of neoliberalism and their GDP includes the output of numerous free zones.

Now the whole world wants to be a free zone. They have made countries compete with each other and those industries pay only low wages. Medical services are commercialized and a large part of education is commercialized, all recreational activities are commercialized. The work of our 60-something thousand doctors; the work of about 25,000 teachers and professors; the work of sports coaches, since these are all free services, do not contribute anything [to GDP], they are not counted in by the national income accounting methodology. Perhaps the latest Nobel Prize winner, Mr. Stiglitz, would say that this is asymmetrical information. Thus everything is misleading, even the way of measuring GDP, simply because in our country those services are free while only wages and some other expenses show in the statistics.

Wages are also relative. What is the purchasing power of a salary when a series of social measures come into play? It is said that in such and such a country salaries are 10 USD and in another they are 20 USD a month. All of this is a lie. I have already explained that here when there were only half of those who are here now. I will not repeat it now, but simply say there is much falsehood, distortion and deceit. Still, we do no mind.

Gross domestic product does not tell very much. What tell more are the quality of life, educational services, health services, sports, physical health and recreational services. The security of each person tells us more. The complete certainty that nobody will be abandoned, the feeling of complete security that comes from having services guaranteed, whereas, even up there, in the North, where our very rich neighbor lies, more than 40 million people lack medical insurance and those who are supposedly insured are so only partially, not fully, not to mention the high costs.

But this country must be blockaded, this country must be condemned; such are the parameters they use to mislead hundreds of millions of people in the world, although they are not so successful anymore.

It is worthwhile looking into the political consequences of this system and why it keeps all these measures against Cuba in place. They have not managed to intimidate Cuba, and they never will, because this is a revolution based on principles and norms that are unbreakable.

When I heard here how the necessity of foreign investment was preached over and over, I actually wondered: Could not many Latin American countries develop with the money that has flown away? Could they not have developed with the money that has been stolen there? Why do they have to sell everything and why do they have to be tied to a debt, which eats up an increasing amount of their national budgets, 20%, 25%, 30%, with no other hope? They have to sell everything, and they no longer have anything left to sell, other than their people or export their talented people, and they are not paid one cent for them, nor are they compensated for the expenditures the state made to educate these professionals.

It is another type of plundering, plundering in every way: the ownership of 90% of all patents, so we do not even have tariff protection, nor protection of any sort, nor talented people nor research nor customs barriers. Grow coffee, which they pay less and less for, grow mangos, grow avocados, cut down the forests to export wood; hand over products that are not renewable, all the gas and all the petroleum possible; subject any small producer, any small shopkeeper to competition from the big chains of outlets which sweep everything aside; give up any idea of having an airline, there are countries where there is none left; or a sea transportation company, there will be none left; or communications, there will be none left or insurance companies, there will be none left; everything will end up in their banks, their companies, everything will pass into their hands.

And what will be left to our peoples? Because we are not even going to be annexed, or in any case we will be annexed like the Afro-American population was annexed. Almost a century after the famous Declaration of Independence they were still enslaved, and almost a century, or just about a century after the abolition of slavery, whose price was a bloody war, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and many other Afro-Americans had to die so that discrimination, which has still not disappeared, could diminish.

Actually, we are also discriminated against, whatever color we are, because we are Spanish-speaking peoples. We are very useful for sweeping the streets, very useful for picking up fruits, often living illegally, condemned to family separation, because there is no solution there for them, no Adjustment Act, nor do we want there to be because it is a murderous law. However, if they had passed a law like that for Mexico, Central America and other countries, today there would be more Mexicans and Latin Americans than Americans of European descent living in the United States.

Freedom of movement for capital, freedom of movement for commodities but no freedom of movement

for workers.

All will be absorbed, and the bigger danger is that there will not be enough awareness.

When people met here to discuss the FTAA, or when the people from the Sao Paulo Forum met here, all of them had very clear ideas about the basic problems; they understood the issues very well. We made this entreaty: we must pass on ideas, we must pass on the message, we have to build an awareness, because they tell you everything is wonderful, and they say so on the radio and on television, in all the media and then they call an election.

We have suggested a plebiscite, but not next year, a plebiscite in 2004 before the FTAA is approved. It would be worthwhile making use of current lessons to build that awareness, because with their demagoguery and their mass media, they are quite capable of exploiting the lack of education and knowledge of the people in this hemisphere to get them to vote in favor of annexation, believing it is a very good thing because nobody has ever explained to them what the Monetary Fund is, what procedures exist. The only thing they tell them is "It is good for private investment, one must be down on one's knees begging for private investment".

We do not do that nor do we give anything away. When we have the capital to buy a machine, which can be amortized in one year, we do not give those benefits away; we seek out the money and invest it. And, if we need the technology to drill on the ocean bed we do not start dreaming nor hoping. Knowing what the international experience is out there, we make contacts and create joint ventures.

Most hotels in our country are Cuban, and built with Cuban capital because we have held our ground with our consciousness, with our spirit of sacrifice and by risking our own necks. They carry the famous names of companies which have not contributed a penny, but that suits us well. We sign with them a service contract since they provide the markets. And, when all is said and done, we calculate what the advantages or drawbacks of a given private investment are. There are some investors who do not want to enter joint ventures; they want to own one hundred per cent of the company. Actually, there have been very few of such cases, but we could resort to it if there is need for a specific technology to manufacture a product, which would cost fewer dollars to produce here in a hundred per cent foreign-owned company than to import.

We do not lose our sleep over that. The principle stands that the country's interests come first. The principle stands of that which is best for the country, calculated extremely carefully. The nation does not lose control of its economy, nor of its social objectives for its development. Neoliberalism is not so wonderful, since it has not been able to revalue a single currency in the Third World. That sad stage of the special period was sad but glorious and taught us a great deal. In 1994 our peso had been devalued to a rate of 150 pesos to the dollar and in five years we had revalued our peso from 150 to 20 to the dollar.

We challenge you to find one country that has been able to increase the value of its currency sevenfold just once. Now it has gone down a little bit after the bombs started to fall on Afghanistan, for some psychological reasons. The peso was at 22 to the dollar at that time. Many people then began to buy dollars with domestic currency in our currency exchange bureaus. It had been at between 19 and 20. Actually, we do not want to revalue it more than that, we prefer to keep it around 20.

The dollar was at 22 on September 11 and then the peso began losing value. That was fixed by increasing the price of the dollar by four points. The tendency was halted because there was always a greater demand for pesos, since many things can only be bought for pesos. Moreover, pesos earn a higher interest rate in medium term deposits, around 50% more. Yes, 50% more than our convertible peso. For we have a convertible peso, but it is not like the one in Argentina, this one cannot escape, not unless it grows wings and flies off like a butterfly helped by the wind and reaches Florida. The Trade Winds usually blow the other way but sometimes they come from the south and a dollar might be able to escape and reach Key Marathon or Key West, but it can only escape if it flies.

There are other currencies, not only the US dollar. But, it is customary to say US dollars because there is no other way to measure a currency except by using the USD. If you use the lira you go crazy, if you use the yen you go crazy, accounts get complicated even if they are calculated in Canadian currency, because it is at 61% or 65%. We have no option but to make our calculations in US dollars, because it is customary, to save calculations and to save the electricity computers use.

Our monetary policy has not been subject to these tragedies you speak of, that is, what if the interest rate, what if the Fund promised us so much and did not come through, what if the currency is devalued. Which one has not been devalued? Which one is safe?

It is obvious that, in theory, we are perfectly well aware that a common currency in Latin America would be better, but we are far from having the conditions necessary for resolving our problems with a single currency. What will save us, what will allow us not to replace our currencies with the US dollar, what will prevent money fleeing away from us? And I do not know how it will stop fleeing, or how it can stop fleeing, or how to prevent it from devaluing. This is the actual situation, the problems are much more serious, and much more complex.

Interesting things have been said here, including those said by Professor Stiglitz, the Nobel Prize winner for 2001. We are not economic theoreticians but our struggle has forced us to pay attention to much of what happens to the economy.

We have heard some excellent presentations. Professor Stiglitz was relatively cautious here —one always has to be very careful what one says in the Cuban capital— but he has written some excellent articles, some of which we are familiar with: his famous foreword to Polanyi's work; he is the economist who defended other positions at the time of Bretton Woods. It is interesting to look at what Mr. Stiglitz says, his criticisms of the Monetary Fund, and how clearly he blames it for the tragedy many countries are living through.

He has another article which is called "What I Learned from the Southeast Asian Crisis" where he reviews, country by country, the different criteria and ideas of those who were in favor of alleviating the situation for those countries that were in crisis and most of all, how and why they were in crisis. He also explains that they all developed on the basis of strong protectionist measures. But, then they were forced off this line, they were forced to free up everything and so they were left without hard currency, they were left with no reserves to fend off speculative attacks.

There was an irreverent man called Mahatir who came up with another formula and challenged them. But he safeguarded resources; he gave them better protection in the critical situation. Others lost everything, and that allowed many U.S. transnationals to buy industries in those countries at rock bottom prices. This, in addition to their vehement defense of the insane free movement of capital and the total release of the exchange rates. In other words, complete deregulation, as you call it.

Where is the future for those countries? Was there by any chance a minimum planning? I am not suggesting a GOSPLAN for the world. I can be bold and say that it could have happened earlier, before they learned to do things well, actually, with other concepts. I have the moral right to say so having seen what our people have done in these 43 years.

There is not even a minimum of coordination. They put every country to work making chips for the Internet, or for television and get prices of up to a dollar and whenever there is overproduction they are reduced to five cents. Or they put everybody to work making television sets, refrigerators or household gadgets, as we say in the vernacular.

They have the technology and the capacity to produce unlimited amounts of anything; it is just that there is no purchasing power to buy everything that these industries could produce.

And to top it off, they start producing cars in Thailand or in Indonesia, and luxury cars at that, a kind of Mercedes Benz, when half of the Japanese automobile industry is paralyzed. So, the more technology they develop, the greater the productivity of labor, the fewer jobs there are, the higher the unemployment and therefore more crises. I would like China to join the WTO now, to see who can beat the Chinese at producing anything. For now, we have come out on top. We would never think of building a TV tube factory, but we have bought a million Chinese television sets instead.

For us television is an educational tool, a cultural tool. So much can be done with it! We are teaching languages to people en masse with programs we call University for All and we are getting great results.

This very week or next week the review begins. Since university admission depends on school history and various tests, we have set up a program to go over the basic subjects on whom students are required to take tests and improve their preparation. Previously, only those families with a higher educational level or better income could pay review classes for their children because all families want their children to go to university.

I have said that we are ashamed of what we have accomplished, because one day we discovered that not all children born in this country have exactly the same opportunities. It was by researching and further investigating into those problems related to social justice that we have discovered how much is left to do, and this after a number of years of revolutionary struggle, and of having accomplished, possibly, ten times more in the social field than any other country in Latin America.

I said in a Congress of Latin American journalists that we felt ashamed of what we had accomplished when we thought about the things we could have done and which, because of our ignorance, we had not done before and which we are doing today. This includes more than 70 social development programs. One of them is the University for All, and that is not a trifling thing. Another one is to reduce class size in primary schools to 20 students per teacher and that is not even the ideal number. In Havana in two years time, we are going to reduce the numbers from an average of 37 students per teacher to a maximum of 20.

We have brought television classes to 1944 schools that did not have them because they did not have electricity. We solved that problem with solar panels and now they are installing another solar panel to feed the computers, they will be finished in a couple of weeks. Not one of the 1944 schools has been left out of this program. Twenty-one of those schools have only one student—they live in isolated places, perhaps the child of a forest warden—but that student has a certified teacher who is a university graduate in primary education, a solar panel and a television, maybe one of those Chinese, which use 60 watts, they are very economical and have an excellent picture and now a computer which the graduate teacher will use. These teachers have taken an intensive course to be able to teach computer sciences in primary school. They had already studied teaching methodology, therefore, with a 174-hour course they can now teach the computer course approved for children. The teachers, too, will follow-up on these courses and improve their income.

The computer science teachers in the Havana primary schools --everything in the capital is always more difficult-- are taking an 800-hour course. But these are not actually teachers, because we have a shortage of those. They are grade-11 youngsters from senior high teacher training schools.

Right now we have almost 600 video screening rooms, equipped with 29-inch TVs and a solar panel, in 600 villages or small towns, which do not have electricity. Thus we are giving access to television to every inhabitant in the country. They go (to the screening rooms) where their discipline is admirable. They do not go there to drink rum, and it is a real event when the programs arrive. There will be 700 in the first stage and approximately 700 more to come. By the end of this year, all the little villages, there are almost 1500 of them, with 15 or more dwellings will have one of these screening rooms. These are built with very little resources.

How much did it cost us to get solar panels into the 1944 schools that were not hooked up to the

electricity grid? What was the most economical way? Solar panels. Total number of solar panels: 1944. Cost: 2,200,000 USD. Some people, in certain countries, make off with that much in one day, or in a week. Is two million two hundred thousand very much money?

Getting computers into all of these same places is a little more expensive, due to electricity, because some of them have more than 40 students and need more than 1 kilowatt every day. So then a double panel is required and that costs 1900 USD. Around 2.5 million USD have already been spent on this program. So we can say: every child in the country from the age of five on has access to television programs, which are an excellent audiovisual medium, especially if there is a teacher as well, because the audiovisual tools are not there to take the place of the teacher. There are some subjects where we have a shortage of teachers, like English and some others, so we have to find someone there who can help. However, we offer those courses by television.

We now have a third television channel just for education, which reaches a third of the population. What we have done so far has been done with the two national channels, which contribute six hours daily each. On Sundays one provides two hours and the other two hours for educational programs. This time is well used for various seminars, it might be about painting, dancing, writing skills or other subjects. That is, fairly sophisticated knowledge is being made available to the population.

Today I was showing Pérez Esquivel the opinions collected yesterday after the round table on the Argentine problem. On each of these subjects we collect between 3,000 and 5,000 spontaneous opinions and it is impressive what our people have learned in two years. You can talk about the Monetary Fund, the World Bank, you can talk about a whole number of subjects which our people knew nothing about two or three years ago. Obviously, if the subject matter is complicated, the panelists are advised to explain any technical terms they use.

In these programs, like University for All, a one-hour English class via television costs the state 109 USD. If one million people take 160 class hours, that is 1.8 cents per person.

You can see it is very inexpensive. If each lesson in a course is broadcast three times a day, so that those receiving the course can watch at the time most convenient for them – whether at 7:00 in the morning, 2:00 in the afternoon or 11:00 at night – the cost to the state is 5.4 cents of a dollar per person, for the whole course. And those who receive the entire course spend eight cents on electricity and an additional 25 cents, which is the cost in hard currency of the written materials distributed. In total, 33 cents of a dollar for 160 hours of classes.

We have put technology at the service of education and culture for the masses. There is no commercial advertising, there never has been. The only commercials are public service messages, urging people not to drink, not to smoke, offering information to parents about how to better care for their children. There is no commercial advertising of any kind.

As you all know, television programs in your countries are constantly interrupted by commercials. At the peak moment in a program, at the most dramatic point, they break for a commercial. That is unheard of here. Thus, we can put this technology to the best possible use, and at very low costs.

Pérez Esquivel did us the honor of mentioning the 75,000 young people who are being paid a salary to study. These are not students enrolled in the regular school system. What is essential is to ensure that no one completes ninth grade and then, for one reason or another, does not go on to study further or work. In some cases, it is because a 16 or 17-year old girl gets married and leaves school. In other cases, there are other reasons, related to the family, the way they are raised, and many other factors that we have studied carefully and will continue to study.

We now know precisely what we have to do to ensure that none of these young people leave the school system. We need to work with the families, and work with the young people, trying to motivate them. We have learned a fair amount about this. I talked about all of these two days ago, but many of you

were not here then. These are young people between the ages of 17 and 30, in the ninth-grade category; they all have at least a ninth grade education. Some of them are senior high graduates; we expect the ninth-grade education category to disappear in a few years. And there are 75,000 young people involved in the program, because they are all we have in that situation. If there were 100,000 of them, we could still do it, or if there were 120,000. And it does not cost us anything. We pay them a salary that helps them to resolve a lot of problems, and if we do not offer them a full-time, permanent professional job, we provide them with training, and they will be provided with suitable jobs, as they are made available. Not all the provinces are the same, since some have a certain amount of development in the tourism sector, for example, while others have other industries. They all vary in terms of the employment available.

Sometimes we are dealing with a mother of three children. Sitting over there, in the third row, during a students' congress, there was a young woman from the province of Guantánamo who has three children. She was the happiest woman in the world, and she has not missed a single class. The average attendance rate at these schools is 95%.

It is incredible to see what can be done, and what it costs us with an exchange rate of 20 to 1; the results are such that you would find it hard to believe, but it is because our peso has a purchasing power.

Now, just look at the confidence shown by our people. When there was a change in trends at our currency exchange bureaus, and more dollars than pesos were being bought, we felt the need to provide the public with information and guidance. And as a result of that, the situation did not last even two days more. That is how the people trust the banks, because the money people have in savings accounts has never been tampered with.

There were some rumors claiming that the currency exchange bureaus would be shut down, but the people were given assurance that they would remain open. They were also ensured that the prices for goods sold in pesos would remain unchanged, except for the prices in the farmers markets, where the vendors freely set them.

Now, we are confronting the effects of the hurricane, the most destructive to pass through the country. Six million people are receiving assistance that were affected by this hurricane which bent the steel towers used for television communications in some places, or the high-tension cables.

Today, the country is confronted with this problem, with the economic crisis, and now it is confronted with the problem of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. The only people we have not mobilized to deal with this are the 2000 students from the nursing school; some of them are sitting over there on the left side of this hall. Their school is yet to be completed. But they are already studying nursing, beginning in tenth grade.

We have a shortage of nurses in the capital and these are excellent students. Do you know where they are studying? In 52 different locations. They were selected from the different municipalities, and they will work in facilities close to their homes. The principal of the school is an exceptional person. Did she come today? (Yes, they tell him.) She is a very good principal and they know it. (Applause.) And they are very motivated. They are not participating because they are in the tenth grade, there are still very young. There are other schools where the students are senior high graduates, and these students are involved in quality control. And then there are also the schools for training social workers, another source of employment we have created. There is 7000 senior high school graduates enrolled.

University education will be vastly expanded. There will be part-time university courses taught in the different municipalities, just as we are doing with the young people aged 17 to 30, in senior high school classrooms, which are free from 5:00 p.m. onwards. There are classes from 5:30 to 8:30 four days a week, and now they are asking for a fifth day.

These programs are underway, and what do they cost? Nothing. There is no need for new buildings or new teachers to give the classes. I said, you have the computer labs there, the software needed for whatever you need to do. They will be provided with general knowledge and language classes, so they can later enroll in university.

Today we have professionals, economists, lawyers, qualified personnel in every municipality of the country, and there are enough of them to work as assistant university professors. The part-time university courses were going to be taught on Saturdays, but now we can offer them three days a week. And there will be no need to leave the municipality where they live, since there are limitations with transportation. We are changing the methods we use to simply and economically increase opportunities for university studies.

You discussed here unemployment benefits, and countries that have money and can subsidize such benefits. But human beings should not be made to feel they are not wanted. The most humiliating thing about being unemployed is feeling that you can be spared; this damages your self-esteem.

There are tremendous strengths that we have gradually discovered. The successes in all these new programs derive from the thirst for knowledge inherent in human beings. Why should they be provided with subsidies? Why not create schools? And if we cannot provide them with a job within a relatively short time, we will raise their income the next year, and we can even create a new profession, the profession of being learned. They can continue to study until they become learned.

I have no doubt that many of these mothers –the majority of participants in that program, 65% are women– will graduate from university and their children will be with them, enjoying all educational, health care and recreational services. They will lack for nothing. And this is what we are doing for all of society.

We have discovered that there is a significant connection between knowledge, culture and crime, and this is especially important in a hemisphere where crime is on the rise, as you all know perfectly well, and where there has also been an increase in drug use, a terrible scourge from which we have been spared. And I do not know what they are going to do now that the problem of Ecstasy and similar drugs is on the rise. Statistics show that the use of these drugs among young people is growing, it has doubled and tripled, and they are cheaper than cocaine. It is a question of education, and we are focusing on educators, not transmitters of knowledge, in line with the principles of a great Cuban philosopher from the first half of the 19th century, who said, “Anyone can teach; only those who are like living gospel can educate.”

We will take a leap forward in quality when we have these kinds of educators, an educator with 20 students in class for now and 15 students in the future. And we are developing and trying out programs with the aim of having one teacher for every 15 students in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades, at the junior high school level.

There will be no unemployment. We will continue training people. We have promised all of our young people that they have jobs guaranteed, with only one condition: that they be properly qualified. With the new ideas that have been developed, we have gradually decreased unemployment, as I said earlier. At one point it had reached 8%, and by the end of the year 2000 it had decreased to 5.4%. Today it is 4.1%, and by the end of this year it will be between 3% and 3.5%, unless we have managed to lower it even further.

The category of unemployed must disappear. Human beings cannot be considered superfluous, and a society where human beings are superfluous is not valid, it cannot stand up to an ethical or humane analysis, and it is therefore doomed from a moral and humane point of view.

It was not possible to think in these terms in the era of the Roman Empire, or the Middle Ages, but today there is enough knowledge and there are enough arguments to defend the minimum of rationality

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needed in a society to ensure that no one is superfluous. We have gone even further; but I do not want to add any more. What cannot be achieved in a relatively rational society?

We have seen how industrial technology, ever more modern and productive, has led to unemployment, and unemployment is an evil, like a looming shadow, that the system cannot escape from. You examined this issue right here.

Yesterday was a special day for me. Our minister-president of the central bank explained some very interesting facts, when he addressed speculation and the total lack of a connection between the real economy and the speculative economy. It is impossible to forget that the value of stocks on the stock markets of the industrialized countries is practically equal to the annual gross domestic product of the entire world economy. The inflated value of these stocks was 31.2 trillion dollars, while the worldwide gross product in goods and services was 31.3 trillion.

Look at how far things have gone. In the United States as well, where the gross domestic product is around 10 trillion dollars, the value of stocks on the stock markets is 1.3 times greater.

He provided another rather surprising piece of information when he spoke of how the price of stocks of some stock market groups in the United States had increased by 570% between 1981 and 1999, while actual profits had only increased by 61%.

Is any more evidence necessary to prove that the economy no longer exists? What economy are you talking about? Now, really!

Economists will have to become experts in gambling and guessing games, because the economy has become a casino. Economists today have become employees in the casino of the world economy, and it is very important for these employees to know how the casino works. We already know that three trillion US dollars are involved in speculative operations every day.

I remember that in Copenhagen, during a summit meeting on social problems, a rather prestigious European leader I met told me with despair about the 1.2 trillion US dollars involved in speculative operations every day. In the ten years that have passed since then, that figure has grown to three trillion dollars a day, while on the other hand, total worldwide trade operations amount to only around eight trillion dollars a year. That means that every three days there is a greater flow of money for speculative operations than that needed to cover world trade for a whole year. What kind of economy is that?

So you have to be an economist, an expert in political science, an expert in gambling, and on top of all that, an astrologer, in order to interpret events.

Sometimes you start to despair when you see the same phenomenon repeating itself over and over again, and it seems that we are powerless to do anything about it, but I am far from pessimistic. New worlds will not spring from anyone's head. As you know, those who have dreamed of such things since the time of Plato are called Utopians. But not everyone is a Utopian. Jose Martí complained bitterly of this, and he said: "To those who call me a dreamer, I say that today's dreams will be tomorrow's realities."

I am speaking to you as a dreamer who has lived through the experience of seeing dreams become realities, and who has lived through the shame of seeing that the realities could have been greater. Although our dreams were ambitious, I speak with the shame of not having dreamed, when we were first beginning, of all of the things we are now making realities. (Applause)

I said earlier that there was a third decisive element missing. Not just awareness, not just knowledge: there was a third essential thing needed when you dream of changing the world.

The brief history I spoke of is full of dreamers who did not see their dreams come true, because in addition to dreams, knowledge, awareness, desire and good will, the proper objective conditions are needed, and the objective conditions are brought about by history. There will never be profound changes, and there never have been, if they are not preceded by grave crises. That is the key.

Great solutions have only ever emerged from great crises. This is what I say to those who have asked what is to be done. One of the things that we can do is to be prepared, to sow ideas, to build awareness. With the optimism of those of us who believe our views are based on real facts, we are not even frightened by the prospect of an FTAA coming along and swallowing the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean. That actually reminds me of a biblical fable –since I had to study Sacred History every year, which is what they called the Old and New Testament. The fable was about a prophet named Jonas, if I remember correctly, whom did a whale swallow. But the whale could not digest him, and he emerged fully intact from the whale's belly.

I believe in realities, and I believe that in the near future, even if we are swallowed, the 500 million of us living in Latin America and the Caribbean will emerge intact from the belly of a whale that will never be able to digest us. (Applause)

And so we should not harbor any fears. We must believe in the laws of history, the laws we have come to know through reflecting on them, through making deductions, through study and observation of the realities. The problem with the system, as has already been said, is that it simply cannot sustain itself, and anything that cannot sustain itself eventually collapses.

Right here, when we were gathered for the Sao Paulo Forum, from this very same podium, I said to the Argentines: Do not worry, do not spend too much time thinking about a strategy. Do not despair searching for a strategy; it is not necessary. That government will collapse on its own; you do not even need to blow it. (Laughter) That is what I told them. And I had said the same thing even before then, because we had foreseen these realities in our analysis and discussions.

We studied the history leading up to 1929; the difference between 1929 and what was happening now, when the stock markets were more inflated than ever. What guarantee was there that it would not collapse and the bubble would not burst, with even worse consequences this time, given that the role played in the world by that country was greater than ever, and 50% of U.S. citizens had their money invested in these stocks, which had become so inflated that some that had cost 1000 dollars were now worth 800,000 dollars? They had grown 800 times in value. It was outrageous, insane, it could not be sustained. Nobody knew when it would begin, or how it would begin. But it would certainly begin, even without the terrorist attack. What the terrorist attack did was to speed up the process, as you all know so well.

Therefore, I have absolutely no doubt. That is why I began by recalling the efforts made with regard to the debt in 1985. The system managed to gain a bit of time by inventing new formulas, Brady bonds, and so on. It gained a bit of time. All that it could manage to do was to gain a little bit of time when that was still possible. But now there is not much time left to gain. Things have now become so complicated that they have very few possibilities left, and every solution carries the cost of aggravating the future damage. Giving things away? They are not going to give anything away. Those who control the world economy are fundamentalists about this.

I was speaking about something that they have ignored until now, and that they are perhaps beginning to understand: the fact that we are facing a crisis. And I said that no solution has ever sprung forth from anyone's head, or from ideas, or from propositions; solutions must come up from realities, and they must come up from a crisis.

And crises do not come when people want them to come, either. They simply come, and sometimes they come fast, because events now travel faster than ever, too. Do not believe for a minute that today's empire can last as long as the Roman Empire did, or the British Empire later, or the other

empires or semi-empires in history. Today, events occur at a faster pace. You could almost say that they move at the speed of light, at the same speed with which operations can be carried out from one side of the world to another, in a fraction of a second, or the way communications take place over the Internet in a fraction of a second. This is the speed at which events move today, and they cannot move any other way, because this is the speed at which science and technology have developed. This much History shows.

Without going too far back, the French Revolution could not have come about 50 years earlier or 50 years later than it did. There was an absolute monarchy, very well consolidated, a feudal system. There are about 10 or 12 volumes by Jaurés that explain in detail the habits, laws and regulations of feudalism that made it impossible for that system to survive. Theoreticians came along, as the crisis became more obvious, but it was not the theoreticians who made the revolution. They formulated ideas and principles, but it was hunger and the unsustainable situation that led to the revolution at that precise moment in time.

No one had ever heard the names of those famous leaders who would have never even been mentioned if the crisis had not erupted, and along with the crisis came some of the main leaders of that revolution. Some had been priests or bishops, others were bourgeois or intellectuals, but they were all brilliant. And almost all of them, as well, lost their heads one by one: the Girondists, the Jacobins, Danton, Marat, Robespierre, the moderates, the radicals. And then came Napoleon's coup d'état. No one would have ever heard of any of these figures. It is clear that crises not only bring changes, they also bring leaders, they bring the actors who lead or participate. And things never happen in exactly the same way in any other place.

We have talked here about the people who organize the grassroots committees, the people who organize the protests and rally and communicate on the Internet, the masses that move with tremendous and surprising force. Changes also have precursors. Many of you here are young people, but you have already accumulated a great deal of knowledge and you have showed that here. Something I found truly impressive was the round table discussion on the crisis. It will be broadcast on Sunday.

They were going to do a program on that today, but they had to do another one. Yesterday's roundtable did not have to be repeated by the participants for television; it will be broadcast in its entirety, with the spontaneity with which the participants spoke at it. It was filmed and will be broadcast. Our people are learning more everyday. People with great talent, erudition, experience offered brilliant explanations. We shall publish all of it in a special newspaper supplement, and print maybe 200,000 or 300,000 copies. We do not do things in dribs and drabs.

There was a discussion of Ramonet's book at the Karl Marx Theater last Sunday, with 6000 people there. There were students there – many of whom have been through here – from the social workers training school and others, and the people involved in the battle against the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito and the dengue outbreaks. There were 3000 of the 6000 students from the student social work brigades there. Since these courses are new, we only have around 1000 graduates, and now 7000 new students have enrolled. We have used the strength of the university students.

Between July 15 and August 6, in 16 days, 6000 of them visited 505,000 households in the country's capital, gathering opinions on the most varied subjects, taking notes on everything and leaving room for the people in the households they visited to express their thoughts on any subject they wanted to add to the subjects already covered; there were over 30 subjects. It took four months and 300 computers –run by the students themselves– to compile the results. In other words, a huge amount of information and knowledge that can only be obtained in this way is being gathered.

I can point to another fact, which is the strength of the country that lies with the youth, the students, the workers, the women organized and united; and with all this strength it can do anything. They weighed 2.2 million children under 15 years of age, to know which ones might be undersize or

underweight for their age. Then, with this information, it would be possible to provide individualized treatment to all those who needed it. They also learned about the factors that could contribute to a child not receiving adequate nutrition during the first three years of life. Such children generally begin pre-school with a lower intellectual capacity than those who have been adequately nourished, because really, children must be cared for from the time they are in their mother's womb.

It should not matter if one family has a higher income than another, or if some parents are better educated and learned than others, or if some families live in a three-bedroom apartment while others sleep six to a room. We cannot wait until hundreds of thousands or a million new homes are constructed to change material living conditions. The issue of marginality is not simply one of living in a neighborhood with makeshift housing. There are other factors involved. We cannot change things by building housing only, but rather through the kinds of programs we are implementing, which have a decisive importance in the search for the greatest justice possible. This justice did not exist totally, but it will exist, and it will exist within a short time, I can assure you.

For next year, Verrier, we can publish a leaflet with a description of all these programs. Some have already been completed, and with a minimum of resources. The important thing is wanting to do it. But in order to do it, you need to have the strength to do it, and the strength is there, with the masses. This is what I have to say to those who had doubts.

If you want another moment in history, well, in the 17th year of last century, the conditions were created for a major social revolution, the Russian Revolution. Before that there was the Mexican Revolution, after Porfirio Díaz. Under those tremendous conditions, the crisis was set off, and the leaders emerged with the crisis.

Before that, in Haiti, the French Revolution itself unleashed a social revolution –not a socialist one– because it was impossible to sustain a regime of 300,000 slaves dominated by 30,000 French colonists. This could not last much longer, and one day it all fell apart, with the leaders of the slave uprising emerging from among the slaves themselves. Nobody had ever heard of Toussaint Louverture or the others. And 30,000 French soldiers, led by one of the most brilliant officers in the famous Napoleonic army, could not crush the slaves' revolution.

This had major consequences, because many of those French colonists came to our island and Cuba became a slave society, a producer of coffee first and sugar cane later. The criollos, or Cuban-born Spaniards, were the owners of the lands inherited from the first colonizers, while the Spanish controlled trade, administration and public security. And the whole system was held up by philosophies, beliefs and principles that seemed immutable.

The very independence of the Americas did not come until there was a major crisis. There were precursors, individuals who had distributed declarations on the rights of man, who spoke about freedom, equality and brotherhood, which have still not really been established in any country on Earth.

Monarchist beliefs were still strong in our hemisphere. But when the famous Napoleonic army occupied Spain, and a Bourbon was dethroned to be replaced by Napoleon's brother, the Spanish people upraised.

The first juntas from the Spanish colonies of this hemisphere responded more to a sentiment of loyalty to Spain. There were a few exceptions, like those led by Bolívar and others in Venezuela. That was where Miranda was active, after taking part in the struggle for the independence of the United States and fighting in the battles of that revolution; he was named the first president of Venezuela. The struggles became revolutions for independence, waged over the course of over 15 years, until the last shots were fired in the battle of Ayacucho.

Neither Sucre, nor Bolívar, nor any other of those figures would have made it into the history books 20 years earlier or 20 or 30 years later.

Our own wars of independence began in the same way, at the right moment. The subjective factors can only move too quickly or too slowly, but they start and develop, and subjective factors can have a decisive influence. It is possible for a revolution like the Bolshevik revolution to end up like it did, although it was authentic. And I totally agree that when the revolution expected in all the industrialized countries did not take place, the revolutionaries did not give up but decided to build socialism in a single country, which was in fact in contradiction to the theories of Marx, and yet they did not hesitate to do so.

Many things could be said, different views and opinions. When the balance of powers in the world could have been broken, it was prevented by subjective factors. And in the end, we too have carried out the Revolution in a single country, here, among all the countries of Latin America, where with the exception of Mexico, all of the other so-called governments, and I must use that term, joined with the United States against Cuba. Sometimes we blame governments for problems, when in fact neither independence nor governments exist anymore. Their power is being ever more diminished to a minimum. The political parties in our hemisphere have been completely discredited. They have been destroyed by the established political and economic order, and this dates back a long way.

Almost 200 years have passed since the first struggle for independence, and how much has changed? What has happened to the indigenous peoples? What has happened to the slave descendants? What has happened to the descendants of the colonizers themselves, or the mestizos and all the others? The world knows what has happened to them, as it knows about the infant mortality, illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and other calamities you have discussed here. No one is ignorant of these things.

We are very much aware of the conditions in which we undertook the Revolution. During the first years, of course, the existence of a socialist camp was very useful to us. I would not call what they had real socialism, but rather virtual socialism, because something imported is not the same as something autochthonous. A political process or revolution achieved through artificial insemination, or cloning, is not the real thing. And what really happened was a sort of cloning of the experience of a country that jumped from feudalism to socialism, where 80% of the people were ignorant peasants at the time of the revolution; a handful of the proletariat in the least industrialized country in Europe, which, as a result of World War II, spread to encompass the most underdeveloped, agricultural region of Europe.

We now reach the stage when the United States emerged from that war as an invincible power, with all of its industry intact and 80% of the world's gold. This allowed it to impose the infamous Bretton Woods Agreement, until two-thirds of that gold was misappropriated and squandered, and it had only 10 billion troy ounces left, with a known value of 35 dollars, and a mechanism that guaranteed the stability of this price by buying gold when it was in abundance and selling when it was scarce. It worked like a precisely well-oiled machine until after the Viet Nam war, when 500 billion dollars were spent tax-free and only a third of the original gold remained, bringing an end to the gold standard. Gold was replaced with paper, with the bills printed by the Department of the Treasury or the Federal Reserve, and since then they have used paper to cover their enormous deficits, and an internal debt that has grown five-fold in a few years.

They use this paper to buy our goods and services. They use this paper to sustain a deficit of up to 400 billion dollars, while we are prohibited from having any deficit whatsoever: "Close schools, close hospitals, cast the people down into hunger, onto the streets, into unemployment," they say. We know all of this, because we hear it from all of the doctors, teachers and professors who come here to participate in meetings and recount the tragedies they face in Latin America.

These are the rules applied, one law for them and another law for everyone else. And besides paying us with paper, they force us to sell them our natural resources and industries, and in some places even the trains, parks, streets, highways, and so on and so forth.

Zero deficits. What does it matter to them? None of this makes any sense, none of this has any basis in

logic, none of this has any justification, except for the justification and logic of strength, of power in all fields. We have talked about all of this here, and if not here, at the conference where Ramonet launched his book *Silent Propaganda*.

He points out some extremely interesting phenomena there. We were going to print 10,000 copies, and in 24 hours we changed it to 100,000 copies, because there are most important ideas in this book, with an addition on the last few months, after the events of September 11.

His book is based on the enormous power of our neighbors to the North. I will not always refer to it as the empire, because I do not want to confuse our view of the system and of those who lead the country with our view of the American people. Whenever possible, I try to avoid mixing them all together.

Ramonet's point of departure is an in-depth study of the influence of the U.S. media. He had already warned us of the colossal cultural aggression of which we were being made victims, and of the destruction of national identities.

Two years ago, the defense of national identity was the key issue at the congress of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba, an issue that united our artists and intellectuals 100%.

Ramonet continued to develop this idea, which he has discussed in a book that, in our opinion, is of great value. Of course, the predominant element of his theory is that the empire's main source of power and control is precisely its monopoly over and use of the media. And after September 11, it was necessary to include the concept of the guardian of security, as he calls it, or, in two words, the military element.

Within his theories, and even in the name he gave to one of his lectures, "Delicious Despotism", he was obliged to include the military element. This is what I had begun to speak of earlier.

What is the reason behind these enormous expenditures on war? Is it perhaps an attempt to inject money into the economy? From my point of view, the answer is no. This administration is also Keynesian in its own way. They have injected a bit of money into circulation, in the hopes of renewed growth, for a short while, if they can manage it. Their fundamental formula is through lowering or practically eliminating a large number of taxes. They have in fact given up on the dream of the five trillion dollars that were supposed to be accumulated over the course of 10 years as a result of surpluses. Now they know this will not happen, and they have a growing deficit once again.

Many people in the United States dreamed that the surplus would be spent on ensuring health care, improving schools, ensuring pensions for the large numbers of retiring Americans, that is, the post-war generation. All of these dreams have been shattered, and furthermore, the reduction and elimination of taxes is much more beneficial for those who have more money to begin with.

Does it make any sense to inject money into a country whose people have lost the habit of saving, where personal income savings are below zero? Yet, they want to boost the economy by injecting money.

The increase in military spending falls far below the injection of money into circulation through tax cuts. These are desperate measures, like the Japanese lowering interest rates to zero to promote investment, and the United States lowering them to 1.75%, the lowest rate I can remember; I do not know if it has ever been lower.

So why is this happening? Why such a huge military budget? Why such huge investments in new technologies? It is because they are beginning to understand that the world is becoming ever more ungovernable, that it can no longer sustain itself merely through the enchantment of its commercials, that it needs force, that it needs more aircraft carriers and more aircraft and more sophisticated aircraft. It needs to declare a world war and threaten 80 countries – because they say there are now 80

countries that could be the targets of its attacks.

Some may ask, are you not worried? We are the least worried country in the world, because we have spent the last 43 years being threatened. We have been close to annihilation, yes, literally annihilation, all of us, and yet the people have not so much as wavered.

I do not recall a single compatriot losing hope or panicking in 1962. I do recall an entire nation of people full of indignation when our ally at the time, without even consulting with Cuba, made concessions and agreements. They know very well that these people cannot be intimidated, whether they are included on a list or not. They cannot imagine just how little we care whether we are included or not. Because there is another question that has to be considered first, and that is whether or not we would exclude the United States from the list of terrorist nations, although not all U.S. administrations have been the same.

Thousands of our compatriots have lost their lives as a consequence of the dirty war, of all sorts of terrorist attacks, of Cuban passenger planes blown up in mid-flight, of bombs set up in our hotels, of plans and more plans that I do not want to describe in detail, although we could if it were necessary.

Now they have adopted a new style. Now it is not only the top-level authorities and spokespeople, but also the ambassadors of the United States who make declarations and give instructions. There is no longer an electoral campaign in any of the "very independent" countries of Latin America where the U.S. ambassador does not stick his nose in and make a speech. If it is in Nicaragua, for example, then the grand ambassador makes a grand speech. In the past, they were discreet proconsuls; today, they behave like consuls who have no qualms about announcing their preferences and desires. And just look at the tone and the style in which they do it.

Even here, where they do not even have an embassy, but just an interests section, they have tried to adopt the same style, issuing statements critical of the government, and on whether or not we should be excluded from the list of terrorist nations. It is like someone who is at the bottom of a hole saying to someone else who is up on safe ground, and who has 100 times more moral right and reason, "Get me out of this hole and I will save your life."

It is absolutely futile to use these methods on the Cuban people, because they are a people with convictions, a people with awareness, with culture, with unity, with moral integrity. They can never be intimidated, neither with lies nor with threats.

This country could be wiped off the face of the Earth, but it can never be subdued, it can never been dominated, it can never be conquered.

We live by our ideals, our principles, and our ethics. That has been our life, and that is the life of all these young people, and millions of young people like the ones you see there on the right side of this hall. That is the life of our people, it is the life of our children, who will be incomparably more cultured than us, more educated than us, who will have more knowledge of the world than us, and who have unlimited confidence in their people, unlimited confidence in our ideas, unlimited confidence in the Revolution. That is the current situation in our country, and that is our response. Make no mistake about it.

What is all this about threatening to use military force? And against a list of countries that is said to include as many as 80. What happened to the idea of an organization called the United Nations? What about that organization's legal standards? What happened to legal and ethical principles?

When you ask why all these seemingly absurd and inexplicable things are happening, it is because what they are really afraid of is not actually terrorism. What they fear more than that is the rebellion of the peoples. What they fear are the movements that build an awareness and mobilize public opinion, which have already waged major and memorable battles in numerous venues, and have made it almost

impossible for them to even meet together. That is why the promoters of this policy have reacted with such fury and arrogance, resorting even to haughty treatment of their own allies and to flirting with the idea of using their formidable, brutal, blind and seemingly invincible power to sow panic and terror among all the peoples of the world.

The consequences of this will be even greater resistance, even greater opposition, even greater protests, even greater discontent on the part of this species threatened not only by the worst form of slavery and colonialism ever known, but also endangered in terms of its very survival. It is this awareness that has mobilized many people from the middle classes of the industrialized countries, who have gained ever greater knowledge of the dangers looming over the environment and over their very lives and the lives of their children and grandchildren.

Everyone knows the facts, I do not need to repeat them here, about what is happening to the ozone layer, about the pollution of the atmosphere, the poisoning of the seas, the scarcity of drinking water, and so on and so forth.

The Californian, or some of the others here, spoke of a California without water, or with problems involving the water table. This is not happening only in California, it is also happening in Guanajuato. The current president of Mexico, when he was the governor of Guanajuato and visited our country, explained how the waters that used to be 12 meters deep are now 400 meters deep, and there is no source to feed them. When I asked if they could inject rainwater, he said, "It's full of chemical products," and the only practical solution was highly localized irrigation to save water.

There are major problems in the Middle East that threaten with future conflicts, anyone can understand that. The human race is growing by more than 80 million people a year. Between 1981 and 2001 –years in which International Parliamentary Union conferences took place in Havana– in that space of just 20 years, the world's population grew by 1.4 billion people. That was more than it had grown from the time the human species first emerged until the beginning of last century, which ended just a short while ago. This phenomenon is unstoppable, and is related to erosion and a whole series of other problems that every one knows and understands.

This struggle against neoliberal globalization is a common cause shared by all the peoples of the world, who cannot calmly accept the breaking of the Kyoto Protocol, which means some hope; who cannot understand why nuclear shield are being built in the world, with who knows how much money being spent on them, when the Cold War is supposed to be over and the adversary has long ceased to be a superpower, and its national budgets are smaller than the United States' military budgets.

Who are they going to get to believe that the North Koreans are going to build a missile, a nuclear weapon that can reach U.S. territory? Nobody could believe this. Or that Iran could be a threat to the United States? Nobody believes that either. Perhaps they were thinking of Russia, which still maintains a number of missiles that could reach U.S. territory. They use the pretext of the other countries they are threatening. And mixed up with all of this are the other factors we have discussed, the tendency towards total and absolute domination of our planet. This is, in our modest opinion, the current state of affairs.

If I have not looked at my watch earlier, it is because I was afraid, and now, in any event, it is too late to do anything about it. (Laughter) I have been talking for three hours. But I have not kept our friend here awake (he points to one of the delegates), he has been sleeping like a baby (laughter and applause) and now he is wide awake and refreshed (laughter) and ready to enjoy the delicious cocktail prepared for him by the Association of Cuban Economists. (Laughter and applause)

All I will say is that the current economic and social order is unsustainable, that many ideas have been contributed here, and that we are caught up in a battle of ideas. I am convinced that this has been one of the meetings where the most ideas and opinions have been put forward, coinciding with what everyone sees and perceives more clearly every day.

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We will be left with the satisfaction of having witnessed the enormous wealth of knowledge and intelligence possessed by the 500 million –or perhaps a few more– inhabitants of our hemisphere, from the Rio Grande to Patagonia, as Martí said. What a wealth of knowledge has been created! And this a wealth that our powerful neighbor to the North is not interested in importing; it would rather deaden our great minds than give them visas to enter the United States. But at least we have a great wealth of human capital, of economists, thinkers, men and women gifted with the knowledge so essential at this point in time.

We will bid one another farewell equipped with conviction, and above all, equipped with confidence in our future. At this moment I could say something similar to what Salvador Allende declared before meeting his glorious death at La Moneda: Sooner rather than later, the world will change!

Ever onward to victory!

(Standing ovation.)

VERSIONES TAQUIGRAFICAS

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