

[Speech given by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, at the celebration of the 40th anniversary of INDER and the dedication of the International School of Physical Education and Sports, on February 23, 2001 \[1\]](#)

Date:

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Do not get your hopes up; I am not going to make a long speech (LAUGHTER AND SHOUTS).

Distinguished guests:

Dear students:

I have a problem, because we are here today to celebrate two things: the 40th anniversary of INDER [the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation] (APPLAUSE), and the dedication of the International School of Physical Education and Sports (SHOUTS). What should I do? What should I talk about? And this has come about purely by chance; the school was not dedicated two or three months ago because there was no time to do it. Now it has come to coincide with this anniversary, and in my view, the two things are very important.

There is a lot that could be said about INDER and its 40 years history. Some of our comrades here have recalled part of that history. Humberto also mentioned a few things related to INDER, but it would have been best to separate the two events: the anniversary of INDER and the inauguration of the School.

I would prefer not to talk too much about our sports history. At the exhibition hall, where four of the school's best students awaited us –a Mozambican girl, a Haitian girl, a Venezuelan boy, and a Bolivian girl, who said she was a swimmer– when I saw all those photographs of our excellent athletes, of some of the glorious moments in revolutionary sports, I thought about this and wondered, why so many photographs? Is this a glorification of Cuban sports, a chauvinistic display? Are we not perhaps humiliating the athletes, or young people, or students from other countries by extolling Cuba's victories? The problem was that I had forgotten for a moment that we were also celebrating INDER's 40th anniversary. Now I realize why they put up so many photographs of Cuban athletes.

We have made advances and achieved a great deal of success. Do we feel proud? No, not yet. Do we feel satisfied? No, we will never be totally satisfied.

Nevertheless, I was fully aware at all times that this was a great day, because if we have done well in sports, if we have a worthy history in sports, it is precisely because we have accumulated the experience and prestige necessary to establish this International School of Physical Education and Sports.

Yes, looking at this school you can feel a sense of satisfaction. Can you feel a sense of pride? No. Let us simply say that we are convinced and confident that a great many things can still be done in the future.

If there is one thing to regret, it is the fact that the school seems small in terms of the number of

students that it can accommodate.

I had been pushing for eventually reaching a total enrollment of 2000, because it is a five-year program, and that way there could be a larger number of new students every year, 450 or 500. But when I saw the scale model in a small room by the entrance, I realized that we could not expand enrollment that much.

I had an idea about this school. I knew this location, because I had come here many times. I had toured this whole area, even farther beyond, on the other side of the hills, when we were developing genetic research centers for cattle. That is why there are so many dairy farms nearby.

Years ago, many years ago, there was a small sugar mill on this spot. I think it was called Portugalete. There was no sugar cane left in the area. I remember reading about the campaign led by Máximo Gómez in the province of Havana, and when Maceo was marching towards Pinar del Rio, he passed through this area. The name of the sugar mill comes up in the accounts of that heroic war. You can see how relatively close the mambises (independence fighters) were to the capital.

Gómez achieved great feats and carried out highly daring military operations. When Maceo was returning from Pinar del Rio, there was a very important battle fought near here, in the province of Havana, before reaching the town of Madruga, where both Maceo and Gómez took part. All these places are full of history. And then, in the major effort to reinforce the defense of our country, there was a need some day to build a school here, along with other military facilities, such as workshops for optical equipment used by the artillery. There was even a communications and chemical defense school.

The years passed, times grew difficult, many of the concepts related to defense changed, and as a result, the army regular forces were reduced thus some major facilities were left idle. This was one of them.

And what a coincidence, that it was precisely in a former army facility that the international medical school was established. In that case, it was a large naval academy, used to train personnel for the merchant marine and fishing fleet as well as for the Navy, and not only officers, but also navigational equipment technicians. The academy was freed up when these personnel began to be trained in other, smaller schools, and thanks to the excellent condition in which these facilities were maintained, it was possible to use them for an international medical school. This event coincided with two hurricanes. One of them wiped out the Dominican Republic and hit Haiti very hard. It lost some of its force while passing over the high mountain range that separates Haiti from the Dominican Republic and arrived in Cuba somewhat dispersed, but it reorganized, although with less force, and passed through almost half of our island. It was advancing like a car or a truck along the Central Highway, until twisting away to the north.

A few weeks later, maybe four weeks, a much more powerful hurricane passed a certain distance south of our coasts, with extremely high winds, and hit Central America through Honduras. That was Hurricane Mitch, which claimed tens of thousands of victims and caused enormous destruction. The young Hondurans here, who shared their culture and dances with us, must know very well how terrible this hurricane was, and how much damage it caused. And not only there, but also in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, to a greater or lesser extent. The first three countries I mentioned were the hardest hit. This led to the idea of sending a contingent of doctors to Central America to try to save as many lives in this area every year as the number lost to the hurricane. This was how our offer to send 2000 doctors to Central America originated.

We had not forgotten about Haiti or the Dominican Republic; we offered them our cooperation as well. A doctors' brigade was sent to the Dominican Republic, and another much larger was then sent to Haiti, where it still remains.

We were proposing long-term, comprehensive health care programs, instead of merely doing what many others do, which is to send a small emergency medical team for 10 or 15 days. We were offering

programs that would last for years, comprehensive health care programs, based on the figures we had on infant mortality during the first year of life and from 0 to 5 years of age, which are rather high.

When we claimed that we could save as many lives every year as those that had been lost in that disaster, we were basing our claim on solid foundations. It has now been demonstrated that during the first year of work, in some of the areas where our doctors were stationed, the infant mortality rate was reduced from 42 deaths per 1000 live births to 16.

But we were thinking more about the future than about that particular point in time, and that is what led to the idea of the Latin American School of Medical Sciences, for young people from Latin America (APPLAUSE), or in this case, Central America. We had offered 500 scholarships, but the demand was so great that we had to grant over 1000 scholarships for medical students from Central America.

It is not that there is a shortage of doctors in the countries of Latin American countries; you could actually say that there is a surplus. But the practice of medicine has become extraordinarily commercialized throughout the world, as has sports. As a consequence, all the doctors tend to be concentrated in the capitals and big cities. There are no doctors for the small towns and villages, much less for the rural areas, and even less for the mountainous regions where there are poisonous snakes --something unheard of in our country-- and dangerous insects. In some cases there are even wild cats. And of course, one has to walk for hours or even days to get to these places, where there is no electricity, or anything of the kind. If it is at a very high altitude, it can also be very cold. And at times there are great numbers of mosquitoes. All of this can make the work of a doctor a true act of heroism.

You may be wondering why I am talking about the Latin American School of Medical Sciences, which was founded with the purpose of training doctors based on a new concept of true humanism and solidarity. Together with education, medicine is perhaps one of the greatest and most noble of professions. Yet it is sad to see what is happening practically everywhere, and it is not that they are bad doctors because there are some very well trained doctors. It is not a lack of goodness, but rather, the fact that money and purely economic and material interests tend to overshadow those sentiments, which are indispensable in all professions, we could say, but fundamentally in the medical and teaching professions.

Engineers can stay in the cities, industrial engineers, civil engineers, and specialists in the building of bridges or large installations. There is no need for engineers or architects in the mountains, in the countryside, in small villages. There may be a need for agronomists, but not for researchers or scientists, unless they are going there to gather samples or conduct tests. But in the countryside, in the mountains, in the most remote places and the smallest villages, it is crucial to have both doctors and teachers.

Teaching is still a more humble profession, and there is a tradition of teachers working in the countryside. Medicine is a higher status profession, since doctors are University graduates, and this has not always been the case with teachers. Today, the vast majority of our teachers are University graduates, and we have quite a number of university-level teacher training schools for both the primary and secondary school levels.

At the time of the triumph of the Revolution, there were no doctors prepared to march off to the countryside, nor teachers for the mountains and remote places; on the other hand, there were 10,000 unemployed teachers in the cities.

When the Revolution triumphed, the United States opened its doors to all of the doctors who wanted to leave Cuba, and of the 6000 in the country at the time, only 3000 stayed. They also took over half of the professors from our medical schools. They took professors from other university departments, too, as well as teachers from the small number of senior high schools, middle schools and junior high schools in the country at the time. I am not referring to technical schools, because there were very few technical schools in our country in those days. I do remember a certain kind of middle school from those days, the

so-called home economics schools. Today we might ask ourselves what these home economics schools were. Were they perhaps schools for housewives? Were they perhaps schools for girls who would fulfill no other duty than that of taking care of their husbands and children?

The education system in our country was very poor at that time. Today there are more university graduates in Cuba than there were sixth-grade graduates at the time of the triumph of the Revolution. And one can only imagine what kind of sixth-grade education they received given the disastrous condition of our public schools in those days.

Today our country has a very good education system. But I could also add that, in spite of this, we are still not fully satisfied, even though our primary school students, children the same age as the ones who were here doing gymnastic exercises for us, score almost twice as high in tests as the average unfortunately achieved by children in the rest of Latin America.

Education is enormously important because it is the basis for everything else and the considerations I have described are what led to the founding of the Latin American School of Medical Sciences. It became Latin American because of the requests for scholarships received from other countries. The school had a large capacity and when over 2000 students entered the second year, it had already become a Latin American School. This year, this semester, total enrollment should reach around 5000 students but we have room for them there. There is also another school of basic sciences in the area where students will do the first two years. This is following an initial semester used for upgrading and preparing students so that they all have the basic knowledge required for these first two years, which are usually the two most difficult for any medical student.

Not all senior high schools in the region are the same, some are better. That is the reason for these six months of premed. But as part of our medical training methods, from the very first year of medical school, students begin to have contact with hospital facilities. In this case, during the first and second years, they go to polyclinics and family doctor offices, where they learn how to write up charts and files and acquire a series of practical skills as part of their training. During the last four years, they go to medical schools near major hospitals, either in the country's capital, or provincial capitals, or other large cities.

Based on this experience, the idea came up of to open an international sports school, when we learned that these facilities were available. They had not been used as a school and training center for defense personnel for many years, but they had been well cared for and maintained despite the fact that they had not been used for so long. It seemed like the ideal place, because it had plenty of space, buildings, classrooms, workshops, and warehouses. All that was needed was a few repairs, a few changes so that it could be used as a school. They also needed to prepare playing fields and ensure that there was sufficient student housing for the first classes.

When the school began operating in September, there were around 400 students, because not all of the countries that received the scholarships were able to send students. A number of scholarships had been offered to 43 countries of Africa, but many of them have so few resources that not all of them could send students and benefit from the scholarships offered. Naturally, there could not be many scholarships, because these countries are very far away, and the students would be separated from their families for a much longer period. It is not the same as in our region, where there are countries, like Haiti or the Dominican Republic, that are very close, or Mexico and Central America and the northern part of South America. We have a lot more ties with the sports institutions of Latin American countries; these countries have more sports facilities, greater development in sports, and even a greater need for physical education and sports instructors.

That was how the scholarships were distributed. But then we realized that there was additional room, and we thought it would be worthwhile using it. It was at this point, and given the relations already existing and the cooperation developing between Cuba and Venezuela in the field of sports, that we said: These spaces that will not be filled this year should be used, because if 200 more students were enrolled,

there would still be 400 spaces left for the next course, and so we offered 200 scholarships to young people from Venezuela. That is why almost a third of the students are Venezuelan. All the Venezuelans, please, raise your hands. (SHOUTS.) As you can see, it looks like a forest of hands. (APPLAUSE.)

Of course, in principle, the scholarships available should be used based on ratios and quotas. The situation this year was an exception, because there was space not being used. We will have to carefully study the distribution of scholarships for the next intake.

You should keep in mind that for a small country like Honduras, for example, or El Salvador, 10 students mean more for the future development of sports there than 150 Brazilians. With a population of 160 million, 100 scholarships for Brazil would fall far from helping to solve any problems.

Actually, when it comes to a big country, more than that country needing scholarships to a school like this, it is the school that needs a given number of Brazilian students, based on the principle that every country in the hemisphere should be represented.

Mexico has 100 million people, and so 10 or 15 scholarships are nothing for Mexico. But it is essential to have 15 Mexican students, or a certain number of Mexican students, so that Mexico is represented here. This is because these schools' mission is not only training physical education and sports teachers but, perhaps above all else, it is their mission to bring together the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and developing a network of optimally trained sports professionals.

These professionals will be able to communicate with each other in the future and help to form a powerful sports movement among nations that have been called upon to unite. More than called upon to unite, they need it badly if they want to preserve their identity, their culture, their independence, and their hopes of one day constituting one big nation, something that the great founding fathers dreamed of in the early 19th century. It would be a great community of nations that speak the same language, and have similar habits, similar religious beliefs, that is, much more in common culturally than the highly dissimilar countries of Europe, which have practically erased the borders separating them, after centuries of warring among themselves. They are now seeking to establish a common currency, and are uniting because, given the current world order in the world today, no small country alone has any possibility to survive and develop.

We are not talking about science here, we are talking about sports, looking to the horizon and into the future. We are talking about training specialists in accordance with a truly humanist doctrine, just as those medical students are being trained. We will have to fight against the vile and vulgar commercialization of sports.

While it is tragic to turn health care into a form of merchandise, it is also tragic to turn something as noble as sports and physical exercise, something so closely related to human health and wellbeing, into some kind of merchandise. Today, Cuba is practically struggling alone against the repugnant commercialism that has invaded sports, in which there is no longer any such thing as amateur athletes, even in the Olympics.

We know very well what the Olympics are all about. Many countries that have not bothered to cultivate sports devote themselves to buying athletes, athletes from countries that have neither sports facilities, nor trainers and who often have no choice but to pursue this route of professional sports and commercialization.

At least we have the honor, over and above the honor of the medals we have won fair and square, and sometimes against the biased judges of the mafias created in certain sports –all of these gold, silver and bronze medals, or the top places occupied by our country, which have made it the country that has won the greatest number of gold medals per capita of all the countries in the world– more than the honor of having won these medals fair and square, I repeat, we have the honor of not having won a single medal, of any color, with athletes stolen from other countries. Throughout 42 years of revolutionary struggle,

and the 40 years since our sports institution was founded, all of the medals we have won have been won with athletes born and trained in our country throughout the years. We have waged a lengthy and tireless battle to create a sports culture, to create a sports movement like we have today, devoting attention and resources to training instructors and building facilities. This is what has allowed our country to reach a place of honor in sports that no one can deny, and that is now recognized by the entire world.

There are three things that our country is universally recognized for. One of them is its development in the field of education, and I am mentioning this first because general education comes before anything else. It began with the literacy campaign carried out to benefit the large percentage of citizens who did not know how to read and write. We then went on to ensure that everyone had a sixth-grade education, then ninth-grade, then senior high school level. Now all children and teenagers are guaranteed primary, secondary and senior high school education, and many of them go on to study in the dozens of higher education centers also created by the Revolution.

That is why our country is recognized as occupying an outstanding place in the world in the field of education, just as we are recognized as occupying a place of honor in terms of public health care and sports.

I have mentioned three fields, and it would be difficult to find three more humanistic fields, namely education, health care and sports (APPLAUSE), whose services are provided to all our children and all our citizens absolutely free of charge (APPLAUSE).

These are not the only activities developed by our people over these years. There are also culture and literature, for example, which are now advancing faster than ever before. Science has not been forgotten. Scientists are essential and cooperate with education. There can be no highly developed education or medicine, or even well developed sports, without the support of science.

Our people's efforts have been directed not only at overcoming social injustice, not only at eradicating extreme poverty, and while doing this we have had to endure 42 years of a blockade because the empire does not punish politicians embezzling thousands of dollars in many parts of the world – I do not want to mention any names because, among other things, it is highly unlikely that there are any exceptions among the head honchos of politics. The empire does not speak out against injustice, crime, children begging in the streets, or beggars sleeping under bridges or in doorways. It does not speak out against hunger. It does not speak out against death squads, it does not speak out against corruption, and it does not speak out against those systems or those governments where the rates of poverty and illiteracy are mind-boggling.

It did not speak out against apartheid; it invested in and traded with it. It even knew about and tolerated the fact that the racist and fascist South African regime had acquired nuclear weapons, hoping that they would be used against the Cuban internationalist combatants fighting the racist and fascist South African raids into southern Angola.

It does speak out against Cuba. I know that there are some diplomats here because I heard them mentioned. It is incredible to see the shamelessness that abounds in this world and the sad a role some governments play, that is, some members of the international community and the governments that brazenly speak out against Cuba at the Commission on Human Rights. Cuba, a country where there has never been a vanished person, a political assassination or anyone tortured. Never mind the thousands of times that liars and slanderers have claimed that people are tortured here. They can stand before a hundred thousand, half a million Cubans and ask them if any of them has ever heard of anyone tortured in our country.

I wonder if any other country in the world has been so devoted to humankind, to educating its people. And now we have reached a higher stage, we are moving towards a comprehensive, multifaceted education which encompasses, among others, some things that many developed countries lack;

because being rich does not mean being educated, as being developed does not mean being educated.

There is a great deal of shamelessness in international politics. I hope they do not think that we are scared by their miserable maneuvers in Geneva! They do not know how much we laugh at their ridiculous behavior, because it is there that the low ethics, the low sense of morale and the precarious dignity of some governments which behave like Mafiosi --under the pressure, the tutelage and the orders of our powerful neighbor to the north, the only superpower that rules in the world today-- is put to the test.

Cuba stands here as an example, to the shame of those who kowtow! (Applause). Cuba, a small country just a few miles distant from that empire, a country which has had the courage, the sense of honor, the dignity and the determination to endure 42 years of blockade and 10 years of special period to reach this millennium more united than ever, stronger than ever, and with a greater capacity than ever for solidarity, a greater capacity than ever to share what we have, with more human capital than anyone (APPLAUSE).

Our neighbor to the north would not be able to send 2,000 doctors to those places in Central America where our doctors go. I said 2,000 and that is certainly an overstatement. It remains to be seen if they could send 1,000, not for a week or 15 days, but for a year, two years or three years, providing services to Third World countries, those that were colonies, those that for centuries were plundered by those who today claim to be civilized and educated, by those who claim to be champions of justice. What they in fact lack is a political consciousness, the kind of conscience that our people are increasingly acquiring in order not to be deceived or enticed, much less demoralized.

Now there are some people talking about so-called common Latin American positions. Yes, there should be a dignified, honorable, courageous, independent common position, and that would not mean shamefully supporting the empire, but rather opposing the empire's loathsome maneuvers against a country that has written a page in history that will be extremely difficult to ignore or write off. (Applause) And the more the empire and its acolytes insist on carrying on with this loathsome behavior, the stronger will be Cuba's commitment and its determination to struggle.

Actually, it is incredible that at this same Commission on Human Rights where they will discuss and vote the Yankee resolution or that of the miserable lackeys who propose it in their name, or their allies who are there to support it, --since the empire does not forgive being refused anything when it comes to Cuba-- an overwhelming majority also vote in favor of numerous resolutions presented by Cuba.

Cuba is the country that puts forward the most resolutions in favor of human rights, and the overwhelming majority supports these resolutions, because opposing them would be going too far. So, the United States is left all alone, or with three or four or more of its partners in exploiting the world. But, sometimes these are no more than 10 or 15 while Cuba's resolutions always obtain 30, 35, 40 or even more votes. That is how this world operates.

Today's world is plundered and oppressed by the empire and its richest allies with their ruthless economic order, their financial institutions, their debts of trillions of dollars imposed on underdeveloped countries, which are forced every year to pay back more than they borrowed, thus increasing exponentially a debt which continues to multiply, leading hundreds of millions, billions of people toward the edge of an abyss of hopelessness. This world order cannot continue, this order is unsustainable, this order will come crashing down since it is impossible to go on underestimating nations, it is impossible to continue plundering and looking down on nations that are learning and growing ever more aware of their right to wellbeing and to life.

Our country has shown how much the people of a small country are capable of enduring, what they are capable of doing. We warn our enemies that Cuba is less and less alone, that the Cuban people have more and more friends, despite the lies that are the only ideology, the only weapon that can be brandished by those who are devoid of ideas, those who are utterly wrong. And such weapons will not

override nor hide the truth about the Cuban Revolution, nor the truth about our country for much longer. There are people in every corner of the world who, one way or another, express their appreciation, their admiration and often their gratitude to this people which defied all predictions and stood firm when great powers crumbled and it was left alone.

This is why I said that, more than a school, this is bedrock for developing sports in Third World countries (Applause) and above all in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, which are our nearest sister countries. In fact, a small country, a blockaded country that has yet to emerge from the special period can do these things thanks to its human capital, because what costs them 100 dollars costs us one dollar, because human capital cannot be bought with money, nor can all the money in the world achieve what can be achieved with human capital.

Because of the way our people view things, when they see facilities or buildings that are not doing any good or serving any purpose, they may come up with the idea of creating institutions like this one, or like the Latin American School of Medical Sciences. It is because of this kind of thinking that we can send more doctors to the countries that need them than the United States and Europe combined. Note what I just said: more than the United States and Europe combined. We could also send more sports instructors than the United States and Europe combined (Applause). And we could send more teachers than both of them put together. We can give more proof of solidarity and of internationalist spirit than the United States and Europe combined, that is a fact. No comparison is possible, because the noble and extraordinary idea of solidarity and internationalism does not exist in the rich, developed, capitalist world. Such ideas can only arise from the heart of a society that struggles for brotherhood among peoples and nations, one that struggles for justice in the world.

This has been our conduct so far, and it will continue to be in the future, because we trust our people. Those who think that when a leader disappears a revolution disappears too have not understood --and I do not know if they ever will-- something that I said years ago: "Men die, the Party is immortal." In this case, it would be even more correct to say: "Men die, nations are immortal." (Applause) A man's ideas might disappear with him, but the ideas that have taken root in the soul and in the heart of a nation can never die (Applause). The ideas that any one of us may express here are not only our ideas, but also the ideas of millions and millions of people, of the overwhelming majority, of almost all of our people.

That thirst for self-deception, that craving to believe in the existence of so-called authentic opposition forces shows the desperation, the need of the imperialists to comfort themselves after the failures and defeats suffered throughout these four decades. These have led them to search for some illusion of comfort, thinking that a handful of mercenaries, sustained with money from the empire and its allies, constitute a force. Our people's political consciousness allows for a perfect understanding of this, and those who invent such fantasies have no idea whatsoever of how familiar our Revolution's leaders are with our people's thinking and feelings.

We are not wandering about with our heads in the clouds; we have our feet firmly on the ground. We are aware, very much aware, of the unassailable strength of our Revolution (APPLAUSE).

Allow me to add that when I was looking at the scale model of the school, I even asked them to send me a copy. This was because, as I was looking at the scale model and asking about each and every one of the facilities that are already finished and some that are yet to be completed, for indoor gymnastics and some other sports, as I was looking at that scale model and wondering whether the number of students should be increased or not, if another building should be built --and I could not find where to put it, because it would spoil the symmetry, it would spoil the beauty of the whole-- I gave up on the idea of increasing the enrollment.

When I saw all that, plus some playing fields and facilities that are to be built in the near future, I came to the conclusion that even one student should not increase the school's enrollment. Otherwise, we could end up with a slightly greater number of students than is optimal. I say optimal because I will leave this school with a great feeling of satisfaction, of inspiration, over this International School of

Physical Education and Sports that we have fortunately been able to create here with these buildings, most of them already in place or scheduled to be finished soon.

If we take into account that our country has more than 30,000 physical education and sports teachers and is in the process of linking all the available physical education and sports faculties, plus reestablishing certain facilities for training intermediate level sports technicians who will then continue with their studies --and even if we do not count this international school which is being dedicated today-- we have the capacity to train around 10,000 students as teachers in this specialty.

That is why I thought that if we had to give an additional number of scholarships to other countries at some time, we have 10,000 places available to meet the needs of young people who want to study this worthy subject. Why add one more here, disturbing what could be called the balance between the number of students and the facilities the school will have available? There is no need to disturb this balance when we have the capacity that I just mentioned available, which allows us to accept an additional number of students from overseas.

Of course, our other schools are neither as good nor as modern as this one. Nevertheless, they have trained tens of thousands of teachers, who in turn have trained Cuban world, Olympic and Pan-American champions. Our excellent physical education and sports instructors and professors who have offered their services in dozens and dozens of countries were trained in these schools. Those who teach our children, our teenagers, our youths, our adults, our pensioners who meet in the parks in growing numbers to do exercises, were trained in them. For if a child needs exercise, then a man in his later years --and I can see that Fernández is laughing, we are more or less the same age-- also needs to exercise. So, all our people benefit from the services of our physical education and sports teachers.

The schools also train physiotherapists who work in rehabilitation hospitals, providing treatment for people with physical problems that are the result of some illness or accident. Sometimes they require months and months of rehabilitation. We have seen these physiotherapists who come out of our sports schools working eight straight hours a day, helping a great many people to recover their health, or the ability to move, the ability to lead a normal life.

To speak of physical exercise and sports is to speak of health; it is to speak of discipline, of forming young people's character, of healthy habits, of the battle against drugs. Sports are the antithesis of drugs; sports are the antithesis of alcoholism. Sports and physical exercise are a preventive remedy for many illnesses that can kill or disable, such as obesity, or a decrease in a person's faculties.

To speak of exercise and sports is not to speak of world and Olympic champions, it is to speak of daily, ongoing well-being, it is to speak of a good health, it is to speak of the capacity for study and work. To speak of physical education and sports is to speak of a science, a universal activity.

You might be athletes, but you have not come to this school to be athletes. You have come here to be trainers of athletes, to give a boost to sports in your countries. Do not lose heart if there are only three or five or ten of you. The New Testament reads that Christ sought out 12 fishermen. One of our great patriots also said that "Twelve men suffice to up-rise an entire nation," and no matter how many of you there are in your countries, you should become into physical education and sports apostles, and struggle on (APPLAUSE).

You will be educators. You will proudly carry the tittle of teachers and standard bearers of health and well being to children, young people, adults and elders. Believe me and try to understand this; be aware of the extraordinarily noble, beneficial and beautiful responsibility that you will have and obtain with the sacrifices you make here, far away from your countries, far away from your loved ones.

Make this the very best sports school ever, for you can be completely certain that, given the professors and the facilities this school has, one day they will say about each and every one of you not only that you are teachers and specialists in this or that, they will say, "They are graduates of the International

School of Physical Education and Sports." It does not read Cuba there (HE POINTS TO THE NAME OF THE SCHOOL), but when people talk about this unique and unbeatable School of Physical Education and Sports, everyone will know that it is the Cuban International School of Physical Education and Sports that is being talked about (APPLAUSE AND SHOUTS).

Just like economists from Harvard, from Oxford, who are first and foremost

specialists in capitalist and imperialist economics --albeit it is only fair to acknowledge that some are innovators and some are very good and do not entirely agree with the madness and the chaos that such a system implies-- just as they enjoy world renown, I envy your future world renown (APPLAUSE).

I have always really liked sports, and I am jealous that I am not one of you (APPLAUSE).

I will conclude now because there are 50-meter races with and without hurdles. There are 100, 200, 400, 800, 1500, 3000 and 5000-meter races. There are marathons as well. Can I see the timer? I must be at about the 3000-meter mark. (LAUGHTER).

But, I will not say Patria o Muerte. I will rather say: Long live internationalism! (APPLAUSE AND SHOUTS OF "LONG LIVE INTERNATIONALISM!").

Long live humanity! (APPLAUSE AND SHOUTS OF "LONG LIVE HUMANITY!") Which, as Martí said, is the homeland of each and every human being.

Long live youth! (APPLAUSE AND SHOUTS OF "LONG LIVE YOUTH!")

Long live healthy, strong sports! (APPLAUSE AND SHOUTS OF "LONG LIVE HEALTHY, STRONG SPORT!")

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