

[Key address by Army General Raul Castro Ruz, at the closing session of the 9th congress of the UJC](#)



Delegates and Guests,
Comrades all:

It has been a good Congress, since last October when it began with the open meetings attended by hundreds of thousand of youths and continued with the evaluation meetings conducted by the organization from the rank and file through the municipal and provincial committees where the agreements were worked out that would be adopted in these final sessions.

If there is anything we have had aplenty in the little over five years that have passed since Fidel made the closing speech at the 8th YCL Congress, on December 5, 2004, that is work and challenges.

This Congress has been held in the midst of one of the most vicious and best arranged media campaigns launched against the Cuban Revolution in its 50 years of life, an issue I will necessarily have to refer to later on.

Although I was unable to attend the meetings held prior to the Congress, I have been informed of the essentials of every one of them. I am aware that there has been little talk about achievements in order to focus on the problems, and to look at the inside the organization avoiding the use of more time than necessary to examine the external factors. Such is the style that should permanently characterize the work of the YCL in contrast with those that tend to look for the mote in the neighbor's eye instead of doing what it is their job to do.

It has been rewarding to listen to many youths directly linked to productive activities to proudly explain in simple words what they do, barely mentioning the material difficulties and bureaucratic obstacles they must face.

Many of the shortcomings discussed here are not new; they have accompanied the organization for quite a long time. The previous congresses had adopted the corresponding agreements on them; however, they have more or less been reiterated, which is proof of the lack of a systematic and thorough control of their accomplishment.

In this sense, it is fair and necessary to repeat something reiterated by comrades Machado and Lazo, who chaired many of the assemblies: the Party feels equally responsible for every flaw in the work of the YCL, very especially for the problems concerning the policy with cadres.

We cannot permit that, once again, the documents approved become dead letter or are kept in a drawer like memoirs. They should become the guidelines for the everyday work of the National Bureau and for every member of the organization. You have already agreed on the basics, now you should act on it.

Some are very critical about the youth of today while forgetting that they were young, too. It would be naïve to pretend that the new generations are the same as those of past times. A wise proverb goes: A man resembles his times more than he does his parents.

The Cuban youths have always been willing to take up challenges. They have proved it in the recovery from the damages caused by the hurricanes, the fight against the enemy's provocations and the defense-related tasks, just to mention some examples.

The average age of the Congress delegates is 28. They have been growing up during these hard years of the Special Period and taken part in our people's efforts to preserve the main socialist conquests while facing up to a very complex economic situation.

It is precisely because of the importance that the youth's vanguard is aware of our economic situation, that the Political Bureau's Commission --considering the positive experience of the analysis of the same issue made with the Deputies to the National Assembly [of People's Power] -- decided to offer the YCL municipal assemblies an information describing in all its crude reality the present situation and its prospects. Over 30 thousand members of the YCL received this information, just like the main leaders of the Party, the mass organizations and the government at various levels.

Today, more than never before, the economic battle is the main task and the focus of the ideological work of the cadres, because it is on this work that the sustainability and the preservation of our social system rest.

Without a sound and dynamic economy and without the removal of superfluous expenses and waste, it will neither be possible to improve the living standard of the population nor to preserve and improve the high levels of education and healthcare ensured to every citizen free of charge.

Without an efficient and robust agriculture that we can develop with the resources available to us, --avoiding the dream of the large allocations of the past-- we can't expect to sustain and rise the amount of food provided to the population, that largely depends on the import of products that can be grown in Cuba.

If the people do not feel the need to work for a living because they are covered by extremely paternalistic and irrational state regulations, we will never be able to stimulate love for work or resolve the chronic lack of construction, farming and industrial workers; teachers, police agents and other indispensable trades that have steadily been disappearing.

If we do not build a firm and systematic social rejection of illegal activities and different expressions of corruption, more than a few will continue to make fortunes at the expense of the majority's labors while disseminating attitudes that crash into the essence of socialism.

If we keep the inflated payrolls in nearly every sector of national life and pay salaries that fail to correspond with the result of work, thus raising the amount of money in circulation, we cannot expect the prices to cease climbing constantly or prevent the deterioration of the people's purchasing power. We know that the budgeted and entrepreneurial sectors have hundreds of thousands of workers in excess; some analysts estimate that the surplus of people in work positions exceeds one million. This is an extremely sensitive issue that we should confront firmly and with political common sense.

The Revolution will not leave anyone helpless. It will strive to create the necessary conditions for every Cuban to have a dignified job, but this does not mean that the State will be responsible for providing a

job to everyone after they have been made several work offers. The citizens themselves should be the ones most interested in finding a socially useful work.

In summary, to continue spending beyond our income is tantamount to eating up our future and jeopardizing the very survival of the Revolution.

We are facing really unpleasant realities, but we do not close our eyes to them. We are convinced that we need to break away from dogma and assume firmly and confidently the ongoing upgrading of our economic model in order to set the foundations of the irreversibility of the Cuban socialism and its development, which we know are the guarantee of our national sovereignty and independence.

I know that some comrades sometimes get impatient and wish for immediate changes in many areas. Of course, I mean those who want it but not with the intention to play along with the enemy. We understand such concerns that, generally, stem from ignorance of the magnitude of the work ahead of us, of its depth and of the complexity of the interrelations between the different elements that make society work and that shall be modified.

Those who are asking us to go faster should bear in mind the list of issues that we are studying, of which I have mentioned only a few today. We cannot allow that haste or improvisation in the solution of a problem lead to a greater one. With regards to issues of strategic dimension for the life of the entire nation we cannot let ourselves be driven by emotion and act losing sight of the necessary comprehensiveness. As we have said, that is the only reason for which it was decided to postpone for a few other months the celebration of the Party Congress and the National Conference that will precede it.

This is the greatest and most important challenge we face to ensure the continuity of the work built in these five decades, the same that our youths have assumed with full responsibility and conviction. The slogan presiding this Congress is "Everything for the Revolution," and that means, foremost, the strengthening and consolidation of the national economy.

The Cuban youth is destined to take over from the generation that founded the Revolution; and leading the masses with their great strength requires a vanguard that is convincing and that has a capacity for mobilization through personal example; a vanguard headed by firm, capable and prestigious leaders, true leaders and not improvised leaders; leaders who have been through the irreplaceable forge of the working class where the most genuine values of a revolutionary are bred. Life has eloquently shown the dangers that come with the violation of that principle.

Fidel said it clearly in his closing remarks at the 2nd YCL Congress, on April 4, 1972, and I quote:

"No one will learn to swim on the ground, and no one will walk on the sea. A man is shaped by his environment; a man is made by his own life, by his own activity."

And he concluded: "It is by creating that we shall learn to respect what work creates. We shall teach to respect those goods as we teach how to create them."

This idea that he stated 38 years ago, and that was surely received with an ovation by that Congress, is another clear proof of the agreements that we reach and then do not fulfill.

Today more than ever we need cadres that can carry on an effective ideological work that cannot be a dialogue of the deaf or a mechanical repetition of slogans. We need leaders who bring sound arguments to the discussion, who do not think they own the absolute truth; leaders who are good listeners even if they don't like what some people say; leaders who are capable of examining other peoples' views with an open mind, which does not exclude the need to refute with sound arguments and energy those views considered unacceptable.

Such leaders should foster open discussions and not consider discrepancy a problem but rather the source of the best solutions. In general, absolute unanimity is fictitious, therefore, harmful. When contradictions are not antagonistic, as in our case, they can become the driving force of development. We should deliberately suppress anything that feeds pretending and opportunism. We should learn to work collegially, to encourage unity and to strengthen collective leadership; these features should characterize the future leaders of the Revolution.

There are youths all over the island with the necessary disposition and capacity to take on leading positions. The challenge is to find them, to train them and to gradually assign them greater responsibilities. The masses will confirm if the selection was right.

We observe that progress is being made in the ethnic and gender composition of the organization. In this sense, we can neither afford regression nor superficiality; the Young Communist League should work on this permanently. By the way, allow me to recall this was another thing that we agreed upon 35 years ago, in the First Party Congress; but we left its accomplishment to spontaneity and did not follow-up on it as we should, even when this was one of Fidel's first statements since the victory of the Revolution and one he has repeated a number of times.

As I said at the beginning, the celebration of this Congress has coincided with a huge smearing campaign against Cuba, a campaign orchestrated, directed and financed by the imperial power centers in the United States and Europe, hypocritically waging the banners of human rights.

They have cynically and shamefully manipulated the death of an inmate sentenced to jail on 14 charges of common crimes, who by work and grace of a repeated lie and an interest in receiving economic support from overseas was turned into a "political dissident," a man who was induced to persevere on a hunger strike making absurd demands.

Despite our doctors' efforts the man died, something we also regretted when it happened, and we denounced the only beneficiaries of the event, the same who are currently encouraging another individual to persist on a similar attitude of unacceptable blackmail. The latter is not in prison, despite all the slandering. He is a free person who has already served his sentence for common crimes, specifically for assault and battery of a woman who is a doctor and director of a hospital and who he also threatened to kill, and later an old lady, nearly 70 years old, who as a consequence had to be subjected to surgery to remove her spleen. Still, the same as in the previous case, everything is being done to save his life; but if he does not modify his self-destructive behavior, he will be responsible, together with his sponsors, for the outcome we do not wish.

It is disgusting to see the double standard of those in Europe that keep a complicit silence about tortures in the so-called war on terrorism; that allowed clandestine CIA flights carrying prisoners, and even permitted the use of their territory for the establishment of secret prison centers.

What would they say if we had imitated them and, in breach of ethical standards, had forcibly fed these people, as they have usually done in many torture centers, including the one they have in the Guantanamo Naval Base? By the way, these are the same that in their own countries, as we see on television almost on a daily basis, use police agents to charge on horseback against demonstrators, to beat them and attack them with teargas and even with bullets; and, what about the frequent abuse and humiliation of immigrants?

The mainstream press in the West does not only attack Cuba; they have also initiated a new modality of implacable media terror against the political leaders, intellectuals, artists and other personalities that all over the world speak out against fallacy and hypocrisy, and who simply examine the events with objectivity.

Meanwhile, it would seem that the standard-bearers of the so much trumpeted freedom of the press have forgotten that the economic and trade blockade against Cuba and all of its inhumane effects on

our people is in full force and even tightened; that the current US Administration has not ceased to support subversion; that the unfair, discriminatory and interfering Common Position adopted by the European Union, sponsored from its inception by the US government and the Spanish right-wing, is still in force claiming for a regime change in our country, or to put it bluntly, for the destruction of the Revolution.

More than half a century of permanent combat has taught our people that hesitation is synonymous with defeat.

We will never yield to blackmail from any country or group of countries, no matter how powerful they might be, and regardless of the consequences. We have the right to defend ourselves. Let them know that if they try to corner us, we will defend ourselves, first of all with truth and principles. Once again we shall keep ourselves firm and calmed, and we shall be patient. Our history is rich in such examples!

That's how our heroic mambises fought in our independence wars of the 19th Century.

That's how we defeated the last offensive of ten thousand troops sent against us by the tyranny, and initially confronted by barely 200 rebel fighters who under the direct leadership of Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, and for 75 days, --from May 24 through August 6, 1958--engaged in more than 100 war actions, including four battles in a small territory of 406 to 437 square miles, that is, a smaller area than that of Havana City. That great Operation determined the course of the war and shortly four months later the Revolution was victorious. This inspired Commander Ernesto Che Guevara an entry in his campaign diary that I quote: "Batista's army ended this last offensive on the Sierra Maestra with its backbone in tatters."

Neither were we scared by the Yankee fleet positioned in sight of the coasts of Playa Giron in 1961. It was under their very nose that we annihilated their mercenary army in what would be the first defeat of a US military adventure in this continent.

And again we did it in 1962, during the Missile [October] Crisis. We did not give in an inch despite the brutal threats of an enemy aiming their nuclear weapons at us and gearing for action to invade the island; neither did we do it when negotiating behind our backs the solution to the crisis, the leaders of the Soviet Union --our main ally in such a predicament on whose support depended the fate of the Revolution-- respectfully tried to persuade us to accept inspection, on our national territory, of the withdrawal of their nuclear weapons, and we responded that such inspection could eventually take place on board their ships in international waters, but never in Cuba.

We are sure that it would be very difficult for worse circumstances than those to repeat themselves.

More recently, the Cuban people offered an everlasting example of their capacity for resistance and their confidence in themselves when, as a result of the demise of the Socialist Camp and the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, Cuba sustained the fall of its GDP by 35%; the reduction of its foreign trade by 85%; the loss of markets for its main export items such as sugar, nickel, citrus and others whose prices plummeted by half; the loss of soft credits with the subsequent interruption of numerous crucial investments like the first Nuclear Power Station and the Cienfuegos Refinery; the collapse of transportation, construction and agriculture as we abruptly lost the supply of spare parts for the equipment, fertilizers, animal food and raw material for the industry, which caused hundreds and hundreds of factories to be paralyzed and led to the sudden quantitative and qualitative deterioration of food supplies for our people to levels below those recommended for adequate nutrition.

We all suffered those warm summers of the first half of the 1990s, when the blackouts exceeded 12 hours a day due to the lack of fuel for electricity generation. And, while all this was happening, scores of Western press agencies, some of them with ill-concealed jubilation, were sending their correspondents to Cuba with the intention of getting the first reports of the final defeat of the Revolution.

Amidst this dramatic situation, no one was left to their own fate; this gave further evidence of the strength stemming from the unity of the people that defend just ideas and a work built with so much sacrifice. Only a socialist regime, despite its deficiencies, can successfully pass such a tough test.

Thus, we do not lose any sleep over the current skirmishes of the international reaction's offensive, coordinated --as usual-- by those who do not want to accept that this country will never be crushed, one way or another, and that we rather disappeared as we proved in 1962.

This Revolution started only 142 years ago, on October 10, 1868. Then, it was a fight against a decaying European colonialism, but we were always boycotted by the emerging US imperialism that did not want our independence and waited for the "ripe fruit" to fall in their hands by "geographic gravity." And so it happened after more than three decades of war and enormous sacrifices made by the Cuban people.

Now the external actors have exchanged roles. For over half a century we have been attacked and continuously harassed by the now modern and most powerful empire on the planet, assisted by the boycott implied in the insulting Common Position, which remains intact thanks to the pressure of some countries and reactionary political forces of the European Union with various unacceptable conditions.

We ask ourselves, why? And, we simply believe it is because essentially the actors are still the same and they do not renounce their old aspirations of dominance.

The young Cuban revolutionaries have a clear understanding that to preserve the Revolution and Socialism, and to continue having dignity and being free, they still have ahead many more years of struggle and sacrifices.

At the same time, great challenges hang over humanity and it is the first duty of the youth to tackle them. They should defend the survival of the human species threatened like never before by climate change, a situation accelerated by the reckless production and consumption patterns fathered by capitalism.

Today, we are seven billion people on Earth. Half of this population is poor, while 1.02 billion are going hungry. Thus, it is worthwhile wondering what will happen by the year 2050 when the world population is 9 billion and the living conditions on the planet are more deteriorated.

The travesty in which the latest summit ended in the Danish capital, last December, shows that capitalism with its blind market laws will never solve this nor many other problems. Only conscience and the mobilization of the peoples, the governments' political will and the advancement of scientific and technological knowledge can prevent man's extinction.

To conclude, I'd like to refer to the fact that on April next year it will be half a century since the proclamation of the Socialist nature of the Revolution and of the crushing victory over the mercenary Playa Giron [Bay of Pigs] invasion. We shall celebrate these extraordinary events in every corner of our country, from Baracoa where they tried to disembark a battalion up to the western-most end of the nation. In the capital, we shall have a popular march and a military parade, and the youths, the intellectuals and the workers will be the protagonists of every activity.

Within a few days, on May 1st, our revolutionary people throughout the country, in public squares and in the streets that belong to them by right, shall give another resounding response to this new international escalation of aggressions.

Cuba does not fear the lies nor does it bow to pressures, conditionings or impositions, wherever they come from. It defends itself with the truth, which always, sooner rather than later, ends up being known.

The Young Communist League was born on a day like this, 48 years ago. That historical April 4, 1962, Fidel stated in concluding:

"Believing in the youths is seeing in them not only enthusiasm but capacity; not only energy but responsibility; not only youth, but purity, heroism, character, willpower, love for their homeland, faith in their homeland! Love for the Revolution, faith in the Revolution, and confidence in themselves! It is the deep conviction that the youth can do it, that the youth is capable of doing it; the deep conviction that the youth can carry on great tasks."

That's how it was yesterday, how it is today and how it will continue to be in the future.

Thank you very much.

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