

**SPEECH BY DR. FIDEL CASTRO RUZ, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF CUBA, TO REPRESENTATIVES OF BRAZIL'S
NATIONAL STUDENTS UNION. BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL. JULY 1,
1999. [1]**

Date:

01/07/1999

Dear friends,

I have no idea if the sound system is working. Is it working? (SOMEBODY SAYS SOMETHING) I have another doubt: whether or not you can understand my Spanish (exclamations) because if the sound system is not working and I cannot communicate with you, then what am I doing here?

Allow me to begin by saying that I will not be able to make the speech that I might have liked. Actually, I should not say speech because I do not usually give speeches but rather converse with the audience. (applause and exclamations) I really had to make a great effort and use my imagination to figure out what this place would be like, whether it would be suited to reflection.

I see you sitting on the floor, very elegantly, if I may say so but I had thought there would be chairs here. I had forgotten that the Brazilian Students Union lacks the resources to rent chairs. Not long ago, I spoke to the students of Venezuela at the Aula Magna of a university where there were around 1200 students, and a few thousand outside... What is it over there? Can they not hear? (Laughter and applause) Actually, it was a very different place from this; I do not like stadiums for rallies and ceremonies. Anyway, I will leave aside things I could have said here today and try to make my remarks short. As you know, I have a reputation for talking extensively.

We arrived late but not because we planned it so, rather because of activities that came up and prevented us from being here at three in the afternoon. It's now five o'clock passed and on top of that there is an important soccer game, so I must definitely be brief.

I sent ahead two batches of 5000 booklets. One contains the speech I gave to the Venezuelan students at the National University 40 years after my first visit to that same place. There, I tried to deal in depth with many issues concerning our hemisphere and our world. I do not need to repeat them I will only ask that, when you do not have anything else to do, you do us the honor of reading it. The other booklet contains the speech given less than a month ago at a cultural Congress attended by around 1000 delegates, close to 700 of them foreigners. I do not have to repeat the things I said there because you will all get a copy.

I brought a few papers here with me but I practically will not need them: a few documents, the speech I gave at the Summit --a very short one lasting only three and a half minutes-- and another one that lasted around seven minutes, no more. One comrade made reference to the matter.

Now, I would like to know... (explosions are heard) Are those bombs? Is it the prelude to a NATO intervention? What are those explosions? (Laughter) What I want to know is what you would like me to talk about or explain to you. (Exclamations) I need someone to translate what is being said. Very well,

then you do it, you have a good ear and you know "Brazilian". (he IS TOLD that they are greeting him and voicing their support)

First of all, I should say that it is to be assumed that you have a million questions about your country, about Latin America and the Caribbean, and about the world. I neither can, nor should, answer the questions about your country because I am a guest here, a visitor who must abide by the strict rule of not voicing judgements about the country.

To help you understand, I should explain that I was very pleased to learn that only 24 hours after the famous Summit a Congress of Brazilian students would be held. Also, that thousands of delegates from all of the country's universities would attend and that you were doing me the immense honor of extending an invitation to participate, if only for a few minutes. From the very first moment I was full of enthusiasm, joy, pride and hope for your interest in having me here (applause) and I was determined to do everything possible to come.

It is interesting to note the two events taking place. One of them brought together 48 heads of state and government: approximately one-third of them Latin Americans, another one-third Europeans and a similar number of Caribbean heads of government. What a great thing! For the first time, Caribbeans and Latin Americans were meeting because the Caribbean nations are usually forgotten. They were the lasts to achieve independence; when the Revolution triumphed in Cuba, hardly any of them was independent. It has been only in the last 30 years that, one by one, they have attained the status of independent countries.

When Latin America severed ties with Cuba, and we were left completely alone as we were expelled from the OAS --and we shall always be grateful for that (applause)-- the Caribbean nations did not belong to the OAS since they were not independent states. Later, as free nations together with the Panamanians led by Torrijos, they waged the battle to break Cuba's isolation. Thus, step by step, relations between Cuba and the rest of Latin America were resumed with few exceptions. Such exceptions, nonetheless, have either an Interest Section or certain ties with Cuba.

Today, the Caribbean nations --as independent states-- are Cuba's closest and most consistent friends, (applause) that is why we were so pleased with a Summit where they would be taking part. Yes, there have been other summits, two actually: the so-called Summits of the Americas, to which we are not invited because, apparently, we do not live on Earth. But, we were invited to this Summit.

Previously, Mexico had invited us to a Latin American Summit held for the first time without the United States participation. The Mexicans firmly resisted the pressures and gave a small space to the hemisphere's Cinderella, that is, Cuba. We have been there ever since.

This time it meant the opportunity for participation by the Caribbeans, Latin Americans and Europeans --not from all of Europe but the 15 members of the European Union. It was, unquestionably, a very important meeting because, really, there are contradictions between the interests of the Europeans and those of the United States.

The United States wants to swallow up all of Latin America and the Caribbean through the so-called FTAA --the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. As I already said, Cuba has been left out despite strong opposition from the Caribbeans and some resistance, more or less strong, from some Latin American countries.

In my view, this was a significant meeting, given the fact that those Europeans who want to be independent met with those of us in Latin America and the Caribbean who also want to be independent.

Somebody here --I think that clever and enthusiastic young man-- voiced some criticisms of the meeting, and I would agree with any criticism because I have made some awfully strong criticisms myself. It is not that I have criticized the meeting but rather certain concepts and events presently

developing in the world.

There is a story behind the point that he made about the Helms-Burton Act. Our delegation, after analyses and exchanges with the Latin Americans, had drafted a paragraph --one that, curiously enough, was accepted by the Europeans-- stating that they were opposed to all extraterritorial legislation or actions, especially, or more or less, like the Helms-Burton Act. But, these documents issued at Summits only come after hard labor particularly when there are conflicting interests, and there were many.

For example, the Europeans firmly and unanimously opposed any mention of defense of the United Nations Charter, any reference to condemning intervention in other countries, any indication of defense of the national sovereignty. National sovereignty, the right to non-intervention and self-determination, that is, a paragraph that contained what were and still today are for the immense majority of the world --perhaps today more than ever-- sacred, vital and non-negotiable rights. (Applause)

It was a source of concern. We left Cuba on Sunday. The foreign ministers conference was beginning on Sunday and the Summit on Monday. Those matters were being discussed in the so-called experts meetings. There, they had come to agree on a number of things: the demand by several Latin American countries of a paragraph in which reference to the Helms-Burton Act was maintained --and here there are two different things but very closely associated. Our expert at the meeting, the deputy minister of Foreign Relations, tried hard for the reference to the Helms-Burton Act to remain clearly stated. But, at the same time, there was the righteous demand raised by other countries for the line in question not to refer solely to the Helms-Burton Act. Actually, the paragraph stated, more or less literally, the extraterritorial nature of legislation with an impact on trade, such as the Helms-Burton Act.

That night, they did not reach full agreement. On Sunday morning, they had a formula: the Europeans accepted a line on the issue but in a broader concept, that is, against all forms of extraterritoriality, although they took advantage of the situation and removed the specific reference to the Helms-Burton Act. The matter had been left pending until Sunday. On Saturday, at a quarter to midnight, we were informed by our foreign minister already in Rio that Europe had accepted a paragraph clearly stating the following:

"This strategic partnership is based on full compliance with international law, and the purposes and principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations, the principles of non-intervention, respect for sovereignty, equality among States, and self-determination."

It was simply left pending whether or not the name of the Helms-Burton Act would be there. We analyzed the matter because the foreign ministers meeting was to begin and no agreement had been reached on this. Upon arrival we told our representatives: "At this point in time, to have a paragraph on non-intervention, sovereignty and the rest is a great success. Whether or not Mr. Helms and Mr. Burton's names are mentioned is not important, all the more so when this line condemns all extraterritorial attempts." I also said: "Forget about these two gentlemen who are not worthy of mention in a document like this. They are by now sufficiently discredited. We are not going to begin the Summit meeting, where so many things are to be discussed, with the issue of a minor point in which the only thing argued is whether or not the names of these two gentlemen should appear."

A few press dispatches have reported that Cuba was defeated, embittered, and so on, but the truth is really the opposite. We were pleased because the key issue, the strategic issue was the paragraph that the Europeans did not want to include under any circumstances related to non-intervention, respect for sovereignty, etc. That is the story of this issue.

Cuba's positions have been strengthened and I say it in all sincerity. Many of the issues included were Cuban initiatives endorsed by many Latin American countries. A number of them are very sensitive to the idea of NATO and the United States having the right to launch bombs and missiles at any moment, on any day, under any pretext, against cities, industries and worse still, citizens, the population of the country. (Applause)

You may rest assured that our very distinguished neighbors in the North did not want this meeting to take place, nor are they very pleased with the meeting and its results, even if these may have fallen short of satisfying all of our hopes. I would say that, in this case, our expectations were met because we were aware that we could not expect more from a meeting with these characteristics. However, I understand that millions and millions of people with significant and fair concerns may not feel satisfied with such a document which, in my view, should be taken as a first step.

Anyway, I took advantage of the occasion to hold discussions with a number of European leaders. I also had to make a strong, difficult and in a way audacious speech. I simply dropped a small but powerful bomb touching on two or three sensitive issues. Some say that the tension was so thick in the air that you could cut it with a knife. At the end, I was under the impression that an icy wind had blown in the room. Almost at the end of the session, after careful thinking, I decided that it was my duty to address the issue for which I only had four minutes. Then, after my statement the President of Brazil, whose turn it was to chair the meeting at that moment, immediately said: "This important and sensitive issue should be discussed in the heads of delegations private meeting." All members do not attend such meeting but only the heads of state and government so as to speak more extensively on various subjects. He said it as soon as I had finished speaking and then reiterated it at the end of the meeting, before the private session began.

There were 15 European leaders at the meeting, 11 of them NATO members. What did I do? Well, there had been a declaration and a solemn commemoration in Washington on April 24 last, a month after the outset of the butchery and genocide in Yugoslavia. It was NATO's Declaration of Principles made with a baseless but obvious euphoria because they believed that three days of bombings would suffice, the less optimistic thought of five. However, a month later the Serbian people continued to resist... Take heed that when I say the Serbian people I mean millions of men and women, children and old people but especially children, pregnant women, civilians completely innocent of any crime, unless it were a crime their capacity for martyrdom, the courage to die and the determination to continue singing patriotic anthems or happy songs, like you, while protecting with their bodies the crucial bridges connecting the two parts of the capital city.

We had three diplomats there, three comrades with one cell telephone who communicated with our country every day. I usually asked them one single question: What is the mood of the population under the bombings? And I was amazed by the answer: "They are still putting on their concert at such and such a time, every day, and thousands of people participate. The people have an incredibly high morale."

We were not thinking about the government because we can neither certify nor deny the accusations made against the Yugoslavian government. That is, the ethnic cleansing that have taken place on both sides ever since Europe irresponsibly disassembled Yugoslavia where throughout 45 years and despite their national, religious, cultural and ethnic differences those peoples had lived in peace.

When the West, mostly Europe, disintegrated Yugoslavia there began the wars and mutual slaughters among peoples who had constituted the Yugoslavia that lived in peace for almost half a century.
(Applause)

As I have told several European leaders, no ethnic cleansing and no crime can justify genocide against a nation of millions of innocent people (applause and exclamations) and that is why we advocated a political solution to the problem. Any day in the future certain messages might be made public which were sent to various places. We had realized, from the very beginning, the enormous mistake and predicted quite accurately what would happen as, in fact, it did until the day when overwhelming pressures forced the government of that country to accept the conditions set by NATO, under the hypocritical label of a political solution that consisted of caving in to all of the attackers' demands.

No pressures can excuse the decisions made by governments, certainly not. I can assure you that Cuba,

a country that for many years has lived in constant danger of such things and even worse, has been determined to resist and has resisted for 40 years. If one day a deluge of bombs were to fall on our small island, I am certain that our people would be as heroic as the Serbs have been. (applause) Also, as we said recently, we would not need mediators who would only be received when the attackers sent a message admitting their defeat and announcing their withdrawal from the country or the cease of the attacks. (APPLAUSE)

A government can accept, or refuse to accept, pressures. We know very well what the leaders of our country would do if one day we could no longer withstand the pain of seeing how much is destroyed, or the pain of seeing how much is sacrificed. Although we believe that there is nothing more sacred than freedom, that there is nothing more sacred than dignity. What is a man or a woman without dignity? What is a man or a woman without freedom, without a homeland, without the will to sacrifice everything?

More than one nation in history has done precisely that rather than folding up their banners or giving in to the demands of their brutal aggressors. In such cases, there is always a simple and easy solution, which is heading out to where the bombs are falling and die beneath the bombing. This is the only alternative that, based on our conceptions and our values, would correspond to the leaders who have adopted the decision to fight at any cost.

In fact, the Serbs could not have lost more than they already had; they could not have suffered more destruction than they already had. They had nothing left to lose. I am simply expressing a point of view; we are not criticizing anyone.

More than once in my life revolutionaries have come to tell me: "There is a possibility of peace. We have this or that alternative." I have always answered --in specific circumstances, mainly after the collapse of the socialist bloc-- "It is up to you." You can never advise someone to negotiate or to die; you only can persuade yourself that you must die. "We will respect any decision you make; we would know, without the least hesitation, what we would do under the same circumstances." It is a matter of philosophy, of concepts. That is why it was a very important issue.

That day at the Summit I presented, in two pages, four points and three questions --I am not going to read them. Four points out of 16 we had selected from the April 24 NATO statement proclaiming the right to global intervention, and just three questions, but one had to do with the European Union declaration made here on sovereignty and so on. I asked them --and this will be the only question I will read: "Does this mean that the United States is also committed to respect the principles contained in this declaration endorsed by its allies? What would the European reaction be if under just any pretext the United States unilaterally decided to unleash an attack with bombs and missiles against any of the Latin American and Caribbean countries meeting here?"

That was one question, I do not know if it was the \$64,000 question as people usually say. But, there were two other similar questions. There for the first time I touched on the problem of the proliferation of nuclear weapons supported by the United States, tolerated and kept in secret --a strange and hermetic secret-- for years in the case of a Middle East country in possession of about 300 nuclear weapons. That would be one of the cases where, according to NATO and its new concept, an armed intervention could be carried out.

I asked them if one day they would, perhaps, drop thousands of bombs on that country and its cities, on that country and its population formed by various ethnic groups. Also, whether it was civilized to apply such formulae to solve the problem. And, of course, I firmly stated that it would be criminal if due to this proliferation they had supported, they would one day undertake a genocidal war against the men and women, the children and the elderly in that country.

I will say no more. I will not call names. Three questions and not one answer. In that private meeting, no European representative raised his hand to say: "I would like to answer the questions raised by the

Cuban leader." Not even one.

I had an arsenal of papers with me. I kept a respectful silence and waited all through the meeting for someone to speak on the issues for which the chairman twice asked for answers. Those were " the three unanswered questions."

I should add, comrades, that there are quite a few unanswered questions in the world. There was, for example, the Serbian holocaust at the time the Nazis invaded Yugoslavia. There were concentration camps like Dachau and Oswiecim where, together with other camps and other forms of death, 675,000 Serbian men, women and children were simply annihilated. The West has said nothing about that.

If you want truths, regardless of your political philosophies or party affiliation, I tell you that there are quite a few questions and quite a few answers that merit clarification even if it is only to expose hypocrites, to destroy hypocrisy and to make the world aware of today's realities. Those will be our means to build that world you all hope for.

I listened to what was said here about Brazil and the unity of all Brazilians for building the nation of your dreams. I say that this is not the time to be thinking about our own nations; we must think in terms of the Latin American and Caribbean nation (APPLAUSE) which is also represented here by OCLAE.

The time is coming for thinking about the world as a single nation. The time is coming for thinking about the world because this world has definitely globalized under one single superpower and in favor of a unipolar world, not to save it but to destroy it. (Applause) It is not to bring about the justice we all need but to enslave us even more if it were possible and to plunder us even more if it were feasible. It is to humiliate us even more, to remove our unmovable dreams (Applause) and to obliterate the cultures we must preserve and multiply because unity does not mean the end of our cultures. Unity, integration and justice mean the possibility of preserving everything we love. Cultures and nations will always exist even if we reach the highest degree of unity or disintegration.

We dream of a world not ruled by a false single universal culture (Applause) but rather where all cultures survive and develop; a world where all languages survive and develop, even if we make up some new ones, or use others, or confiscate some if the need be because a language may serve a good or a bad cause. English, for example, the national language of the super-empire, currently serves a bad cause; but English, just like Spanish, French and any of the other more commonly used languages could be put at the service of a good cause.

For example, Karl Marx spoke German but he did not use it for the same purpose as Adolph Hitler. He used it to defend a fair, brotherly and humane world. And many Americans use English to defend just causes.

All languages should survive! Out of 6000 or 7000 languages in the world, some 2000 have been lost in recent years and it has been estimated that in the next 20 years, another 2000 will be lost. When a dialect is lost it is human spiritual wealth that loses and history, our history as human beings, the history of how we evolved from animals into humans. Sometimes, however, I think that there are many animals that have never known slavery, capitalism nor the exploitation of animals by animals, which often behave better than humans do. (Applause)

All these elements are part of our history, of our civilization and they will be the pillars of our culture when this neoliberal and unsustainable globalization is sunk. And it will sink, in the words of Salvador Allende, rather sooner than later. (Applause)

Prevailing conditions in the world today make this infamous order we are enduring unsustainable. That is why we believe that the most important task is sowing ideas, building awareness so that when that world collapses humankind will be in a better position to rise on its ruins a better world, a more humane globalization.

It was not only Karl Marx who dreamed of globalization. Perhaps, he was the first to conceive a developed world where the developed productive forces would be able to produce the material and spiritual goods that men and women required. Of course, this does not mean changing automobiles every year nor owning three, five or ten palaces or a man with 90 billion dollars in a country that considers itself a model and an example of democracy living just a few miles from a bridge under which the many poor in that same country still sleep covered with newspapers. (ApPlause)

Let's speak of justice, freedom and human rights where there is equality, respect for everyone, culture for everyone because without culture there cannot be freedom, without culture you cannot even be a democrat. (Applause)

What democracy are they talking about when there are millions and millions of people who cannot even read or write and when millions of children die because at a given moment they do not have access to a vaccine or to oral rehydration salts worth pennies? What human rights are they talking about when every year their system kills tens of millions of people of hunger, poverty and lack of medicine, shelter, clothing, shoes? I repeat that tens of millions die every year.

There are some that honestly oppose capital punishment, even in cases of monstrous crimes that are unfortunately committed. Even in cases of the repulsive raping of five, six or seven-year old boys and girls by people responsible for these children.

Our country is one of the 129 nations where capital punishment is still enforced. They say we have tightened our criminal code because two crimes that inflict great social and human damage will receive more severe sanctions --more years in prison or a life sentence, as an intermediate step. More severe sentences are prescribed for intolerable and disgusting serious crimes, and when I say intolerable and disgusting serious crimes I do not mean so to governments but rather to the people who are filled with terror when they learn of such monstrosities. That is because in our country, under specially tense conditions, with a double blockade and new legislation to tighten it --of which the Helms-Burton Act is just another instance-- with new amendments added everyday to increase the blockade and its impact, we are left with no other option.

In our country there is much more freedom for millions of people to come and go --many of them without a visa-- because today tourism is a crucial need for our economy, but not gambling and casino tourism, or sex tourism. Such things are not acceptable to us and we are not willing to tolerate them because all the gold in the world is not worth more than a woman's dignity and, even more so, a teenage girl's dignity. (Applause) Selling minors to foreigners for sex or the removal of their organs is severely punished. The grotesque and repulsive raping of boys and girls with aggravating circumstances is inadmissible.

Large-scale drug trafficking is also punished with the death sentence. These are the two instances because today there is more freedom to move around and foreign investments --those indispensable-- and some joint ventures. There have also been those who have tried to use these companies as facades to receive containers of raw materials and reship them full with products of small industries carrying in inside walls significant amounts of drugs. And we have said: "No! Our country cannot tolerate such an outrage." These are the conditions, different from those in Europe or many European countries, in which we have the primary duty of defending our people.

Capital punishment is more disgusting to us than it is to many who fight it. Yes, it is true, we find it disgusting. We are terribly hurt that poverty, the lack of education, marginality and other phenomena of the world we live in may lead certain human beings to commit such monstrous acts.

I have told several people, many of them our friends who out of religious or philosophical convictions --and I respect their principles and ideas-- do not accept capital punishment, and to others who do not accept it and fight it sometimes with the purpose of using it as a banner of humanism --and some of

them are very rich, extraordinarily rich-- and I tell them: We hurt by the things that happen. We hurt by capital punishment but there is more than one type of capital punishment.

Several hundreds or thousands people are sentenced every year under laws punishing crimes with this sentence. But, we should not wait for the world to have changed that much so that there is not a single country including the death sentence in its legislation. We should not wait that long to save millions of lives because there is another terrible kind of capital punishment. I am thinking of those millions, those tens of millions of people sentenced to death every year, most of them children, by the social system you enjoy and defend, I say. (Applause)

As I also said at the Summit: "We shall defend sovereignty as something sacred while some are very weak and others very powerful and while not everybody is willing to relinquish it in favor of universal sovereignty." And right away I asked a question: "There are certainly neither superior nor inferior races; why then are the Latin American and Caribbean nations poor and underdeveloped? Whose fault is it? Perhaps the Hero Children of Chapultepec, the millions of natives exterminated in this hemisphere, or the slaves who died in shackles throughout the centuries would have an answer to these questions." (Applause)

That is why I was telling you that we know how many children die in every part of this hemisphere, in every part of Africa and the world. It is hard to think that while some rich and developed countries --which built their wealth with our natural resources, and worse still, with the blood of the people living in these places, with the sweat and blood of our countries-- continue to enjoy this shameful development, there are among our countries those where the infant mortality rate is 200 per 1,000 live births in the first five year.

Since we know of very rich countries where infant mortality rate is 6 per 1000, it hurts a lot to think that, on the threshold of the next century, there are countries where 40 children die for every one dying in developed countries. Thanks to our experience, our solidarity with the Third World where 26,000 Cuban doctors have worked throughout the last 30 or 40 years, we know how much it costs to save a child and how a child can be saved. We have told them: "If you provide the minimum inexpensive medicine needed, we are willing to send thousands of doctors, like those we are sending to Central America, to Haiti, to Africa."

We have identified a group of countries with the highest infant mortality rate in Sub-Saharan Africa and offered them up to 3000 doctors. Doctors with a humanitarian concept of medicine who are willing to go to the most remote places with exemplary stoicism, with the spirit of martyrs, really, because they have been educated with that consciousness. We have said to them: "Let's not wait until human beings no longer die by virtue of some law or court ruling to save, right now, millions of children and millions of people who could be saved every year." We have also said that if out of every three Cuban doctors one would go to this type of mission, the other two would do the third doctor's job, and we would still be the country with the highest number of doctors per capita in the world, including overdeveloped countries. (Applause)

One of the comrades here, the Uruguayan, spoke about the Latin American Medical School that we recently established, practically in a matter of weeks, after the hurricanes that first hit the Dominican Republic and Haiti and then the huge hurricane that hit Central America. We not only offered the doctors needed to go to the most difficult places --where no other doctors go-- but also a school to train doctors. There are already 1800 students there and next year there will be about 3000. But that is not our only facility; that is for studying the first two years, the most difficult ones. Later, they will go to the other medical schools --we have 21 of them-- because they start working in teaching hospitals, that is, our doctors receive not only theoretical training but hands-on training, too.

Each of those doctors may become a trainer of nurses. Taking their medical texts back to their countries, all they need is for the future nurses to have a sixth grade level and each can train two or three of them, thus increasing the number of nurses. These nurses need not be university graduates, as

it is the case in our country today, because these are formula devised to cope with the problems on short-term bases.

What a coincidence when he said there were Latin American students there! In fact, right now there are a large number of Central American students there because we offered them 500 scholarships annually. We also offered scholarships to almost all the Latin American countries.

For some countries this is important; for a small country such as Bolivia, 70 scholarships annually mean something; for a small country such as Honduras, 300 scholarships mean even more; for Guatemala, or Nicaragua, or Haiti from where we have already received 120 students. There are students from other countries, too. They have come from Ecuador and even from Argentina, Chile and Brazil.

What did we do in Brazil's case, it being such a big country? What good would 60 or 70 scholarships do to Brazil? We asked our Brazilian friends to choose two or three students from each state, not because Brazil needs it but because the school needs it. Because we want that school to become a center of Latin American brotherhood. We want that school to promote a doctrine of what human health care should be like (Applause) and of what a doctor should be like.

At a certain point, I realized that considering that some countries already have a fair number of doctors, we had not included them --one of these was Uruguay. I immediately asked the Uruguayans, the young students and solidarity groups, if they could choose at least 50 students and send them to Cuba. It was not because they might need it so much; perhaps they might not need it at all. It is not a country of jungles or out of the way places; most people there live in the capital and we know that the problems are not in the capital. I said that we were not offering doctors but begging them --and begging you as OCLAE-- to help us, so that there are students from every single country of Latin America and the flags of all these countries can be hoisted in that school.

We are not creating capacity for 3000 students because within four years there will be 6000 Latin American students studying in Cuba, who will later serve the cause of human health and human life, like pastors, missionaries or priests.

Cuba is a poor country under an increasingly tightened blockade. But, although we abruptly lost the market for our sugar and other products, our fuel supply, our credits and many other things, we have resisted for 10 years such blows, and we shall continue to resist, and we increase our human capital by the year. That is what we have! And because we have that, we can say what that immensely rich country cannot say even when its Gross Domestic Product annually reaches ten trillion dollars --around six hundred times as much as tiny Cuba.

I am sure that if it asks for volunteers to go where our doctors have gone in Central America, in Haiti or in Africa, it would not pool 2000 doctors. I would venture further and say that together, the United States and Europe could not pool 2000 doctors. Unquestionably, in those countries there are a lot of good people but their life-style is very different from those who live without electric power, medicines and doctors; who do not have a computer, three TV sets, an automobile, a big residence, and who do not shop in supermarkets via Internet without even bothering to go out in the street. It would not bother me to be proven wrong on this. If they could pool 10,000 I would be even happier. And if they could pool 20,000 I would invite them right away to send them and the indispensable medicine, for we could inform them with almost mathematical accuracy the number of lives they would save every year, the number of lives they would save every year!

We could also tell them: If you are so humane then join other countries, for Cuba knows how many it can send. And if they can pool 6000, we have already offered 6000; if they can offer 10,000, all our doctors, nurses and health technicians need is to hear about it and in less than a week we would have 10,000. And if one out of every three were necessary, as soon as they knew about it, encouraged by the struggle for a better world, they would go. They would thus help humanize those who are immensely rich and who feel rightly sorry --I really mean it, feel rightly sorry-- when a dog starves, so that they can

also feel infinitely sorry when they learn, if they have not learned it yet, or when they become truly aware, that millions and millions of human beings die every year because they do not have the means that dog has to save themselves. (Applause)

Our country lives by values. It has resisted thanks to values, waging not only economic battles but also battles against terrorism, against assassination attempts.

Yesterday, I was telling the students at the University of Rio de Janeiro that while working on the lawsuit filed against the United States government, putting together documents and evidence, I learned something I had not known for 40 years. That is, the number of plots to kill me, directly organized by the CIA, or planned by groups created and trained by the CIA to which it granted "independence". Also plots induced by the CIA and imperialist propaganda: Six hundred and thirty-seven plots! Believe me that I was amazed at those numbers. I hope that among the documents we will be forwarding you --we have already included two-- we also send you the lawsuit that Cuba has filed.

If you [ADDRESSING MEMBERS OF THE CHAIR] committed yourselves to sending them, not to the two million students because we do not have enough paper for that, but if the OCLAE, for example, needed a certain number of copies in the corresponding languages to send these three booklets to all the student leaders in Brazil and Latin America, we would be willing to send them to you. Some topics I have not referred to here you can find in those two speeches I mentioned and in the lawsuit that we have filed against the United States for 181.1 billion dollars. It has been filed in a court of law for the loss of 3478 lives and the 2099 survivors disabled as a consequence of the mercenary aggressions and terrorist actions.

If you [ADDRESSING MEMBERS OF THE CHAIR] commit yourselves, we will send those three so that you can send them to those present here who will not receive them now and to others elsewhere.

Ricardo, I dream of the day when you can organize a Latin American congress of student leaders. (Applause) If you do not have a place, you can count on Cuba (Someone from the audience says next year in Havana) anytime you want. What we need to do is carry forward a united struggle. We have to work together to create a consciousness, to sow ideas.

Forgive me for keeping you seated or standing so uncomfortably for so long. I am sorry if I have abused your time a little, I know there is a soccer game tonight at 8:30 p.m.

I think that given the circumstances in which we have met I have said quite a lot. Now, I beg you to excuse me and I thank you.

See you soon!

Ever onward till victory!

(Ovation)

Versiones Taquigráficas - Consejo de Estado

Source URL: <http://www.fidelcastro.cu/en/discursos/speech-representatives-brazils-national-students-union-belo-horizonte-brazil?width=600&height=600>

Links

[1] <http://www.fidelcastro.cu/en/discursos/speech-representatives-brazils-national-students-union-belo-horizonte-brazil>

