

[We are not at war with the armed forces of the United States: Interview with CNC](#)

Autor:

- [Newman, Lucía](#)

CNN: Thank you for being with us, Mr. President.

First, I would like to ask you the following: Cuba will be the host of the next Ibero American summit. What does that mean for your country?

Fidel Castro: Yes, the next summit meeting will take place in Havana. This was previously agreed. Ever since the first summit, in the city of Guadalajara, Mexico, it has always been agreed in advance which the next host country will be and the host after that . It was first Guadalajara, then Madrid, then I think it was Salvador da Bahia, and every other to make up what we could call a list. It is now already known which countries will be the venues in the next three or four years. So, this is nothing new, it began sometime ago. We waited patiently for our turn to come.

Some people tried to interfere, to set obstacles, but they have not succeeded. In fact, it was firmly and categorically ratified that Cuba will host the next summit. It is an honor, a source of satisfaction for our country. Every time Cuba is entrusted with such responsibilities, great pains are taken to organize it the best possible.

The significance of these summits has been proven, especially as more experience is accumulated and new procedures are used to make the best of the time available.

This has been one of the most fruitful summits, from my point of view. I would even go so far as to say the most fruitful, not just because of the personal merits of those who took part in it, or not so much because of that but fundamentally because of the times we are living through, of great uncertainty in the economic field and with a serious international economic and financial crisis. That set the ground for this special summit, whose fundamental theme or central theme was globalization and integration. The summit centered on this point but one might say that 80 percent of it is work focused on the international economic crisis. This then led to a special effort of study and analysis which I find very useful at this time.

It has been a very timely summit where ideas have come up that could help the peoples of Latin America and other Third World countries, developed countries included, to look for ways to hold back the economic crisis which is most urgent and, then, to reverse it. That is why I say that, even when it unfolded while a very difficult situation is developing, this summit centered on the most serious problem now confronting the world, that is, the economic crisis.

CNN: And the summit in Havana?

Fidel Castro: Well, the summit in Havana is going to be very much associated with this one which is taking place at the time the crisis is breaking out. This summit was convened a year ago. Work has been going on for a year. There were financial problems. The crisis in Southeast Asia was developing since before then. It is been 17 months. Serious economic difficulties were cropping up in Japan. But, the problem has terribly sharpened in the last few weeks. We could say that since the month of August, in

the last ten days of August, events have accelerated, beginning with the deep crisis in Russia --something that was coming, that we had been anticipating, because many of these problems had been anticipated.

Russia's crisis was the last straw and it is spreading. It is having an effect all over, in the very stock markets of Europe and in the United States stock markets whose main index in the New York Stock Exchange dropped 512 points in a single day. It is having an immediate effect on South America and it is threatening to break into Brazil which is very important for the whole world, not just for Latin Americans but also for the US stock markets. If that crisis breaks into Brazil, it will inevitably reach the US stock exchanges, with really unforeseeable consequences.

Since it was all very new, very recent, it had a decisive influence on this meeting. However, there are still ahead critical months, decisive months. Nobody can venture or know for sure what the situation will be within a year, when the summit is held in Havana. Events are rapidly following one another. Even in the United States, criteria, points of view and approaches are following one another in quick succession. So, this coming year will be one of confrontation with the crisis while looking for solutions. Therefore, the summit in Havana will center on this issue and the theme will be Ibero America and the serious risks of a global economic crisis.

It is a short but very encompassing phrase. It is not certain if we will still be at the most serious moment of the crisis. We will not know what problems have been solved. But we will know what has happened throughout one year and what will possibly be happening, because this cannot be easily solved, especially while in a process full of surprises and unexpected things. Therefore, the summit in Havana will basically center on this issue.

CNN: Mr. President, in the Ibero American summits in the last few years, there has been a very strong condemnation of the United States' policy toward Cuba, of the economic embargo. But there has also been strong criticism of your political system. I know that you have said that Cuba is the most democratic country in the world, but your Ibero American colleagues say that it is not so, that not only the United States but also your country, you, have to change.

Fidel Castro: Yes, but with all respect for your viewpoint, it seems to me that you are making a categorical affirmation and it has not been expressed that way, not like that.

In every summit, there have been certain political leaders of Latin America, very clearly defined, who have sustained antagonistic positions toward Cuba. They come mainly from those Latin American countries

which have the closest relations with the United States or those most strongly influenced by the United States.

The United States has never been absent from these summits. Its anti-Cuba work it does through certain governments, mainly small Central American governments, very much under its influence which have always been sensitive to U.S. ideas, criteria and pressures. Every one of these summits has been preceded by a battle against the United States heavy pressures on each and every one of them. Therefore, it has not been the case that heads of state, numerous heads of state, or the summits have come out strongly against Cuba; it is quite the opposite.

CNN: I did not say against Cuba. I said that they have said that they would like to see changes in Cuba.

Fidel Castro: No, but you said before, before getting to the bit about changes, that they had taken up strong positions against Cuba and it is exactly the opposite. At every summit, we have had broad support from the majority and most important countries of Latin America. Well, there have always been some. Let us say, for example, the Salvadoran government has always criticized and attacked Cuba in the summits.

At the time of Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua, she was a very careful person, very respectful, very polite; she made some criticism, but always with due respect. On the other hand, Violeta's successor has been characterized by an active, militant attitude against Cuba. All that is widely publicized and a word and a phrase are then granted an importance that they do not have in the summit.

Among those who have criticized us --because we have big ideological differences in our economic conceptions, about an economic policy--has been Menem, a strange case who, on the one hand, has always maintained a friendly even affectionate attitude in all our conversations and, on the other hand, has criticized us publicly. But Menem's criticism has been mainly through the press, not in the summit meetings.

There are two parts to a summit: one open, with the press, and another closed. In those open meetings, with the press in attendance, there has been criticism; also in the closed meetings, but more limited, from some circles; just as there have been several with a very firm attitude in defense of Cuba and the positions of Cuba.

So, actually, the majority has backed Cuba, has supported it and those attacks against Cuba are not reflected in the documents. There are always references, concepts. It must be borne in mind that most of Latin American countries have been ruled by concepts that are very different and, in many cases, opposed to the economic and political principles, ideas and concepts that Cuba defends. Despite that, however, we get along very well.

Personal contacts have been very useful and relations have been growing and improving. In the case of Menem, increasingly friendly relations have been developing and, at this summit, there was not the least incident or declaration, public or within the summit, by Menem with regard to Cuba. As for others who have traditionally been adversaries, there have been changes there too.

The United States has had fewer and fewer points to lean on and, above all, it has had fewer possibilities to counteract Cuba's growing prestige in the international arena and within the summits.

The summits are better and better and we have better relations with all those taking part in the summits. So, we have reached this stage when the summit has not been simply a string of speeches but, rather, presentations, debates, analyses --at times in quite some depth-- about different problems. It is in this sense that I feel this summit has been the best of all, due to its dealing with existing complex, acute problems terribly important for the lives of our countries. And, in all the summits, the blockade has been condemned and in ever clearer and more categorical terms.

Paragraph 8 of the Final Declaration is categorical when it reads: "Just as we affirmed at the beginning of this Declaration, international coexistence demands respect for the principles and rules of international law, for the United Nations Charter and for the national sovereignty of States. That is why in the Ibero American countries we strongly reject the extraterritorial application of national laws and covert operations that infringe the laws and statutes of third countries, as well as unilateral coercive proceedings that hinder cooperation between States. In this context, we urge once again the Government of the United States of America to put an end to the application of the Helms-Burton Act, in accordance with the corresponding United Nations General Assembly Resolutions to this effect."

The latest of those resolutions was precisely the one passed by 157 votes against 2. In other words, these two things combined: the General Assembly vote and this categorical, clear and precise paragraph supporting Cuba and condemning the Helms-Burton Act, the blockade, unilateral actions and also actions conducive to subvert order in our country.

That's how it is: not a single word against us, neither here nor in the other summits. There are general declarations which are then subjected to certain interpretations. We have signed them, because we have no contradictions regarding the points raised; different points of view, yes, and different

interpretations.

CNN: On democracy, pluralism...

Fidel Castro: Different conceptions on these points. There is one about which a lot is said, one that they use a lot and you must understand that opinions are sometimes influenced. You might have read some of these things. But one of those mentioned a lot is point 2 of the famous Viña del Mar Declaration, which reads: "We reaffirm our commitment to democracy, the rule of law and political pluralism." It does not say "multi-party system"; it says "political pluralism". As we understand it, that is precisely what we are trying to apply within the ranks of our own organizations and our Party.

All our mass organizations meet periodically, they hold their congresses, speak up with absolute freedom and set out their points of view there. The same within the Party. The way delegates to Congress are elected allows everyone of them the possibility of expounding their opinions and, however critical they might be, they are listened to. What they bring up is circulated and, in many instances, those viewpoints are approved and supported by the Congress. It is there, not simply in a multiplicity of parties, that we see the active participation of the people and true political pluralism.

As for respect for human rights and basic freedoms, we have never accepted the infamous lies disseminated against our country over the years. We have categorically stated that Cuba has the cleanest record in this regard, since, for example, there has never been a vanished person in our country; there has never been a political murder; there has never been torture.

We have said it many times because we have educated ourselves in that principle, in that history, ever since we were fighting in the revolutionary war in the mountains, against a bloody regime that murdered and tortured thousands of people.

The conscience of the Cuban revolutionaries was built on that idea and that consciousness, that idea has been maintained through almost 40 years, which is a source of pride for our country. There are not death squads there. There has never been in Cuba a single case of a vanished person, such a common event all over Latin America, in countries like El Salvador and Guatemala --just to mention two from Central America-- in Chile and Argentina, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands. In Argentina, they talk of 30,000 vanished people; in Guatemala, a 100,000 vanished and 50,000 dead as a result of repression.

The report by the recently murdered bishop made reference to 50,000 vanished and 100,000 victims. The news we had had through all these years, was the reverse: 100,000 vanished people and 50,000 victims at the hands of cadres trained in American schools because around 60,000 officers specialized in repression, in fighting against the revolutionary and progressive forces, have been trained in the United States. Recently it was published; you know how things are in your country that, after a certain number of years, sometimes many years, they publish things like the booklets used as instruction manuals in the academies where all those officers were trained. None of that has ever happened in our country.

It is unfair, Lucia, and our people know it. People complain about other things, talk about other things, because we have problems and difficulties. But no one will ever be able to attribute to us --and nobody has been able to attribute to us-- any of those brutal violations committed everywhere although doing so became sort of an exercise in the Human Rights Commission, where this human rights issue was politicized, up to the latest battle waged at the Geneva Commission.

The United States became stronger within those commissions when the socialist camp disappeared and many of those countries then went over to the United States' positions. But, still the struggle continued and, in the end, Cuba on its own won the support of most Commission members to reject the U.S. resolution condemning Cuba.

We are proud of our untarnished history in this issue whose best witness is the people. You know our

people, how they speak, how they act, and that kind of operations you only find in pamphlets unscrupulously written against our country. But we are very well aware of the history and the line pursued by the Revolution in that connection. So, Cuba can show the cleanest page in those rights.

Let them look for a political murder in our country. There are courts and there are laws. There are laws that, at times, have been severe, especially in the first years, when the subversive, violent and terrorist activities were greater. They then began changing. Terrorism is still practiced, as you know, but the methods have changed, the ways in which they try to subvert and to weaken and destroy the Cuban Revolution. That is why we can say this, yes, we can certainly say it.

In other countries there are street children; children who are persecuted, children who are murdered. The procedures generally used in the other countries of Latin America are terrible and you know them well. That does not happen in Cuba, Lucia.

In that same paragraph and further on, we find the reaffirmation of the commitment to "... the rule of international law and the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and, especially, the principles of sovereignty, non-intervention and legal equality of States, as well as the right of each people to build their political system and their institutions freely and in peace, stability and justice." That is the fundamental part of this paragraph, where you find a very categorical reassertion of our countries' sovereign right to build their political systems and their institutions freely and in peace, stability and justice. That is also reaffirmed in a subsequent paragraph where it says that political cooperation demands "... unconditional respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, self-determination and independence of each country. It demands that the national traditions rooted in each of our societies are respected and that a free choice be possible of the means, instruments and mechanisms considered most fitting by each nation."

That is the real content of the famous Viña del Mar Declaration, so often cited as a document that we have signed and not observed.

In these meetings, we work for a consensus of ideas, not to impose our viewpoint. We review issues and analyze them. All this has been conducive to growing and beneficial relations between Cuba and the rest of the Latin American countries.

CNN: Mr. President, you were talking about human rights and also about your laws, the courts, about law in general. The Pope, the Prime Minister of Canada and many others, in the past year, have requested the release of four opponents of your government who, for a long time, have asked for another kind of government, another kind of politics in Cuba, and these four people are going to be judged shortly. The charge is sedition. Why?

Fidel Castro: I can explain to you the methods used against the Revolution to try to weaken it, to try to bind it hand and foot and leave it helpless. It is an old method that has been used for almost 40 years, since the United States started its blockade, subversion and political war. They have their methods and their systems. They use all their influence and, throughout these 40 years, they have never failed to choose certain people or groups of people they are most interested in who are precisely those most closely linked to their campaigns against Cuba, their subversion plans and their plans to defame the Revolution, actually their counter-revolutionary plans. And one case has followed the other over the years: when one case is over, for one reason or another, because they have served their sentences or because they have been released, they immediately look for a replacement.

This has successively and invariably been the case. Through their really powerful diplomatic apparatus they talk to all their friends and to those visiting Cuba and they give them a list. It is very customary for every Western visitor to come with a small list. That does not happen in other countries. It happens with us. Every once in a while there is a list and another list and yet another list. We know the trick. We know the procedures and we know the means of pressure.

It has also been a principle of the Revolution to be steadfast in defense of its interests, in defense of the country and in our determination not to give in to this kind of pressure and tricks that they use to try to impose something on us, to try to disarm us and to nullify our means of defense. Because we have been living, and that nobody can ignore, at a political, ideological and economic war with the United States; a war of subversion and destabilization conducted by the United States, the most powerful country that has ever existed in history and the only great power today or the only great superpower against which we have had to defend ourselves hard, against its measures, its influence. That is why they repeat those cases one after the other but those same methods and procedures to put pressure always smash against the resistance of the Cuban people.

The Revolution has a great history of generosity, even if unknown. There were times when 300 counter-revolutionary organizations operated in our country carrying out terrorism, sabotage. And there was Girón [also known as the Bay of Pigs] where thousands of counter-revolutionary were made prisoners, thousands. It was the Revolution that, through different plans, started setting them free.

The best example is the approximately 1,200 mercenaries who took part in the Playa Girón invasion. By the way, later, in the course of time, I have talked with some of them who no longer think the same, they see that as something in the past. But how long did we keep in prison those captured from that complete expedition? Had it been the other way round --Americans trained in Cuba to invade the United States-- they would still be in prison, sentenced to life imprisonment in that country. In our country they were prisoners for barely over a year.

We sent them back. We asked for compensation, as a formula, not because it was essential. We said, what can we do with these "heroes" here? It is better to send them in a boat to the United States. We actually demanded compensation, because the sentence was years in prison or compensation for damages. Then, they negotiated the delivery of an amount of baby food and medicine, and was how the members of that expedition were released. As you see, it has been the Revolution that has released thousands of people.

The Revolution that has even expedited their departure for the United States, of course, with their American visa because, as they had been at the service of that country's interests, they felt entitled to the visa. Just like all those who tried to leave illegally felt, and still do, that they deserve the application of that principle whereby upon arrival in the United States coasts every Cuban has the automatic right to residence.

When the latest migration agreement was negotiated it included those who are captured at sea while trying to make it to the United States illegally, but those who reach the shore are still subject to the old rule not applied to any citizen of any other country in the world. That is why the U.S. coastguards have difficulties when they discover these people close to the coast, or when they run aground but they are still not ashore and they are captured 100 meters, 200 meters from the coast. It is really tough for the coastguards and it has also given rise to certain lawsuits on whether they were ashore or not. That encourages illegal departures and alien smuggling too.

One of the new ways they operate, and we have been providing information on that, is alien smuggling. There are adventurers in the United States who for 6, 8 or 10 thousand dollars purchase a very fast two-engine boat and arrive at any place on the island, which is very long so it is impossible to have a guard for every 100 meters of coastline. Through the trips which are facilitated, telephone calls, codes, they come to an agreement on a place in the coast where they come and collect the people: organized alien smuggling, a truly dirty operation condemned in the accords and by the international laws. This is one of the ways in which certain illegal migration takes place today.

There are two ways: those who are smuggled through and those who get to the coast by their own means. If they are captured and sent back to Cuba, absolutely nothing happens to them. There is no punishment. There is the guarantee that they will have absolutely no trouble, and this is strictly observed. Any person can try eight times to get to the United States coast and the most that can

happen is that he is picked up and sent home, under a guarantee that is in a certain way systematically monitored by the United States Interests Section. But an individual can try as many times as he wants to do it, until he gets to the coast and then that automatic-residence rule is applied.

If they had done that with other countries or with Latin America, it would be hard to calculate the tens of millions of Latin Americans who would be living in the United States.

CNN: Mr. President, in the past year we have seen some signs of a thaw in relations between Cuba and the United States. President Clinton has even said that he would be interested in improving relations between both countries if certain conditions changed. He qualified this, of course. But, in any case, with this political crisis that President Clinton has right now, do you think there will be any possibility of a change in his policy toward your country before the next electoral campaign in the United States? Or has this already been lost?

Fidel Castro: Look, Clinton is unquestionably an intelligent man, a competent man, an educated man. When I say this, some cables start saying that I am flattering President Clinton, paying him compliments. Actually, it is just my way to frankly express my views on different personalities.

The person that I have sincerely most praised has not been President of the United States for sometime and that was (James) Carter whom I have acknowledged to be an ethical man, based on his religious conceptions. During the cold war, he made efforts to improve relations with Cuba. Even after the 200 miles issue, an agreement on fishing was signed by the two countries.

Traditionally we fished 13 or 14 miles off the United States coast, in accordance with international law. Then came the 200 miles agreement. Bilateral agreements were signed between a lot of countries, and one between Cuba and the United States. However, real conditions were such later that it became impossible to implement that agreement, a lot of red tape. The same agreement we signed with Canada and it is being observed and so it has been for many years now.

It was thanks to Carter's position that the United States Interests Section was opened in Cuba. It was thanks to Carter's position that some contacts were made in those days; indirect contacts and some exchanges made that way. In other words, they were very keen on the aim of improving relations.

At that time, there was the situation in Angola, the situation in Ethiopia --well, mainly the situation in Angola until there was a peace agreement in the region-- the so-called subversion of Latin America, our relations with the Soviet Union. Generally, they always talked about such and such conditions, some of which could not possibly be accepted. Abandoning Angola to the aggression and the voracity of apartheid and the apartheid army was the type of dishonorable compromise that we could never accept. It is not that he ever requested that, but those things were always raised.

They also said that the links between Cuba and the Soviet Union had to be severed. They talked about matters concerning Cuba's solidarity with the revolutionary movement in Latin America. Those were all unilateral and really complicated demands which clashed with our sense of honor. It is not that Carter put any demands that way, but that was what the doctrine centered on.

On the other hand, the United States had traditionally been helping armed counter-revolutionary movements against certain governments in many places. The United States practiced systematic subversion. It was responsible for organizing and promoting the coup d'état in Chile, for the overthrow of Allende. The documents have been published. They have been declassified, I did not make them up. Every detail is set out there: the expenditure and the way they acted to overthrow Allende from the very moment he won the Chilean presidency in an election, a very democratic election, in the traditional way. From the moment that he won, Allende's overthrow was ordered. Nixon ordered it. And the same policy was followed elsewhere. They had previously overthrown Arbenz, in Guatemala, through a dirty war in 1954, and they also practiced this kind of war against Cuba.

Has subversion not been used for a long time? Even the right to physically eliminate the leaders of other countries was for many years the official policy, and this issue is talked about from time to time. Articles and debates have been published about this.

The United States, a pervasive presence everywhere --with military facilities throughout the world, a naval base in Cuba, military bases everywhere, and its support for the most repressive governments that have ever existed-- armed to the teeth the most repressive governments.

The United States never blockaded the Argentinean military government at the time so many people were vanished or the government that committed genocide then in Guatemala. In many other places they were simply allies.

Unilateral conditions were demanded from us, without reciprocity. Well, it was not easy to follow that path but life, history, events continued to evolve. We discharged our duty in Angola, we contributed to peace, we helped to apply Resolution 435 on Namibia's independence. Cuba was the only country that, distant from the African continent, sent combatants to fight against the apartheid army; the only country that, together with Namibians and Angolans, shed its blood fighting against the most loathsome regime that humanity has known in latter years.

Nobody talks about this now. In the United States, that is never talked about, but they remember it in Africa. They remember it in South Africa. In other words, it accelerated the process because the triumph of the South African people over apartheid was bound to happen, sooner or later..

That war came to an end. An agreement was reached. Representatives of the United States and other countries took part in that agreement. We delivered on our promise of honorably withdrawing our troops.

One day, we also withdrew our troops from Ethiopia, when our mission in that country had been accomplished, that is, the struggle against foreign invasion and the conquest of the Ogaden.

Those problems were left behind. The attitude of Latin America toward Cuba started changing and, as a result of this, Cuba's attitude toward Latin America changed too. Conditions for peace were created over the years, without us betraying any principle or giving up anything. Even the USSR disappeared. That is, all those issues that had been used as a pretext for not improving relations disappeared. But, after those pretexts disappeared there was always a new surge of demands and conditions.

We have always said that we are willing to have discussions on equal footing, based on mutual respect and reciprocity between the two countries. What we will never accept are unilateral conditions or demands. That is why we have resisted for such a long time, and we will continue to resist.

We do not accept conditions that imply giving up fundamental principles of our sovereignty. That is what puts off any improvement. But ideas change, times change.

I understand that Clinton is a man who differs from other leaders in his way of thinking. There are some who are hawks and others who are more in favor of peace and dialogue, who have a clear understanding of the realities of this world.

There are many in the United States --their number keeps growing-- who think that the blockade is obsolete, that it is absurd but the blockade cannot be used to impose conditions on us. We cannot exchange blockade for blockade since that we do not have the United States blockaded. On the contrary, we have always been willing to trade with the United States. We have always been willing to cooperate with the United States in the struggle against drugs, always. We have been willing to cooperate with the United States, as we are cooperating now, against illegal migration to that country, a matter of great concern to them.

There are other fields where cooperation can be established between the two countries. For example, we are willing to assist in the struggle against terrorist activities that might affect Cuba or the United States.

The United States takes a potential risk with the hundreds of extremist, fundamentalist organizations, many of which are armed within the United States itself. Some of the procedures used against Cuba could be used over there because some of them are well developed, sophisticated. We have indicated as much to them, we have made it known to them, we have related our experiences to them, the terrorist methods that are used against our country. This is a contribution that might help them to defend themselves, because I consider it a very vulnerable country to such attacks.

Cuba helped to solve the problem of plane hijacking, which was not created by Cuba but against Cuba and later became a pest that afflicted the whole world.

We were the ones that, precisely in the Carter years, made the decision to stop it. We had made it public and repeatedly announced it that we would not limit ourselves to present in court and sentence hijackers, that we intended to send back the next person who hijacked a plane from the United States and brought it to Cuba. As from that moment, there were no more plane hijackings.

We sent back two culprits. They were Cubans who lived in the U.S., and who said they wanted to return to their country. It was hard but the formula was implemented. It seemed to be the best thing to do and, as I told you, there had been previous warnings against that. They were sentenced to 40 years in jail but we have never able to hear from them. We tried to have their families visit them but we never got an answer. They were really hard on these people and, still today, nobody knows where those two Cubans are. There is no reciprocity.

Likewise, there are prisoners in the United States: Puerto Rican prisoners, people jailed for directly political reasons, and others imprisoned for political reasons disguised as other causes. But we do not send emissaries from all over the world to the United States to have somebody released, nor do we send them anywhere.

Every country has people arrested and sentenced for fighting against the state, or for trying to change the state, or people who have resorted to violence. In Europe, there are people imprisoned for that. In Latin America and many other places, there are people imprisoned for those reasons. However, the campaign is always concentrated against Cuba, a harassed and blockaded country, the United States' main campaign, using the method I have just indicated.

Cuba cannot be a country under constant and different pressures. We are willing to accept suggestions and pleas for clemency made in a different spirit but not to collaborate with those organized and perfectly structured campaigns that work according to a plan. That we always resist, all kinds of pressure. But we have released many people without pressure.

On the occasion of the Pope's visit, we released a lot more people than those in the Pope's list. They were not all there, but a lot more than those who made up the whole list --prisoners for counter-revolutionary crimes, as we call them, or common offenders because they said to be interested in the humanitarian aspect of the matter and not the type of crime committed-- people who it seemed reasonable to release for reason of age or other causes.

We had already been implementing that policy so the Pope's request was quickly responded although it had not been raised before. We had been discussing the Pope's visit for a year and it was when he was already here that the subject came up.

We wanted to show the Pope a special deference, particularly aware of the fact that he was not acting on anybody's behalf, although a lot of people sent in names, so much so that many names were repeated in that list made at the last minute and over a 100 of those people had already been released.

That is the truth. But the Pope had acted on his own account, consistent with his traditional humanitarian policy and his policy of pleading for clemency every time he has the chance to do so.

I was trying to tell you, at the beginning, that Clinton is an intelligent, educated man, capable of understanding --as an increasing number of Americans do-- that the blockade policy is absurd, that it discredits the United States, isolating it and creating problems. I think that, if it had been in his hands, he would have tried to improve relations.

Of course, before becoming President, during his presidential campaign, he made what I consider a mistake when he committed to a law, the Torricelli Act, concocted by those in the anti-Cuban Mafia that lobbies Congress. It was before he was elected, that is how it happened; like Kennedy who, before and after being elected, committed himself to a legacy received from the previous Administration which was the Bay of Pigs invasion. Clinton was thus committed but, later, when he was already in office, he came to know reality a little better.

My opinion is that, if it had been within his reach, he would have done something. But, in Congress, there was a lot of pressure from the Mafia, which had a lot of money and covered campaign expenses through the famous Foundation which --turned out to be a terrorist foundation, as facts have completely proven-- covered campaign expenses and lobbied hard in Congress jeopardizing and fighting any initiative on Cuba.

Clinton has been characterized by his excessive sensitivity to pressure. When he wanted to appoint Baeza -- a black man of Cuban origin-- to a position in charge of Latin American policy the Mafia was opposed and it carried out campaigns; the administration quickly backed down.

There have been numerous cases where Clinton has wanted to do something, like appointing a diplomat and, if the extreme-right groups have not liked it, they have sabotaged it. Clinton's measures are sabotaged.

At the time of the rafters situation there were discussion in the search for a solution although we did not create that crisis. For many years, the policy had been to encourage illegal migration and promoting, as a political propaganda tool, the highjacking of boats to migrate to the United States; something tolerated and encouraged against Cuba, not against any other country. We did not create the problem but we decisively helped to solve it.

There was later a period when possibilities opened up for a progressive improvement of relations between the United States and Cuba, despite provocation. We were not interested in an aircraft incident. We repeatedly warned about the risks of an incident and, in days quite close to the incident there were efforts. Well, I do not want to dwell much into that because we abide by the principle of being discreet about matters quietly discussed.

Part of that story is known and we know the rest of the efforts that we made to avoid that incident with aircraft based in the United States involved in actions reaching extremes that could not be tolerated, such as flights over the capital of the Republic which no country in the world would allow.

So, despite our wishes to avoid an incident --of course, that could not be allowed-- conditions were created for an incident. It was really an incident. The mindset was not to permit again those flights over the city. But, since all this happens in a matter of minutes after the 12-mile limit is crossed, the pilots of the planes keep watch directly and through the radar. Now, aware of the aircraft repeated threats to cross, at a given moment when the aircraft had entered Cuban waters --afterward there were arguments about whether they had entered or not, although it was admitted by the United States that some of the planes were within Cuban waters-- they felt that those planes could be over the capital in a matter of minutes. The problem here was the pilots interpretation; they were empowered to prevent flights over the capital and that was when the interception took place.

We had thought that those flights would no longer happen. The instructions to prevent the flights over the city dated from some months before. We had received assurances from the United States that those flights would be prevented so, to tell you the truth, we had practically forgotten about the matter.

The problem took us by surprise. We did not provoke it. Our planes do not fly near the U.S. coasts nor do they go beyond the 12-mile limit or fly over the nearest keys up there, by Key West and its surroundings, precisely where the hurricane hit. We do not do that. Nobody has the right to provoke another country, sending aircraft under the pretext of rescue operations. There were no such rescue pretexts. Actually, it was a matter of promoting illegal migration from the country.

We did not mind their helping. We would not have had any complaint against them helping. But that was not help, that was provocation; breaking into our territorial waters and our airspace had nothing to do with humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid can very well be provided by our ships if we are notified, if we learn about it. The solution, in this case, was to stop the provocation.

We had not invented those measures that promoted illegal migration. On the contrary, we were the ones who adopted and agreed to measures that meant an important contribution to order, to politics and legality within the United States, when the Guantánamo base and even the bases in the Panama Canal were filling up with those leaving. It was then that we went on strike and said that the United States had to look after their own coasts because we would not continue to look after them, so as to be blamed if an incident occurred, which was possible, if they stole a boat here or there, despite the strict orders not to intercept the boats at sea, because a boat is not a steer that can be lassoed and thus stopped. It is always risky.

The instructions were very strict: not to shoot, not to try to intercept, because there were always women and children. Often, parents are irresponsible and take their children with them, and the orders, I can assure you, were very clear in that regard. Of course, since the orders were very strict, anyone who could take away a boat knew about those orders and traveled.

At the time of the incident with the ship that sank, there were no patrol boats there. It was the patrol boats that, on arriving, saved a considerable number of people who were leaving on that boat. The people who had attacked and seized that tugboat, at night, had also cut off the communications and kidnapped some others there. Nobody could then communicate to warn the coastguards boats, of which we do not have many in the special period, nor much gasoline. Those coastguards boats used to come from the USSR. It is already been a while since we received any spare parts. We have to use them and we do quite a bit; they also use up our fuel. But we have a limited number of them. We cannot have all the coastguards boats we would like to have. Besides, the coastguards boats can do anything if a boat shows and their orders are not to intercept it.

The workers of tugboats, on their own account, got into two other tugboats to try to prevent the theft. The tugboat that had been seized was made of wood. In the darkness, one of them made contact with the first boat, a collision against the stern, and that is how the accident took place. It really was an accident.

They even managed to help some people but they were afraid that they themselves might also be kidnapped, since they were few. It was thanks to the fact that, at a given moment, it was possible to inform the coastguards boats from land of what had happened at the tugboat base that they turned up there. They did have the means to save those people from the waves in the darkness of the night. The sea was quite rough that day and the night was dark. These coastguards have ropes, life-saving equipment, life rafts and they were the ones who saved the vast majority of those who were saved. Others had been rescued by those on the tugboats, until they became afraid of being kidnapped themselves.

That is the story prior to the aircraft incident but we were not the ones who created that. It was created by those who, for decades, promoted such violations of Cuban laws and the provocation that gave rise

to that incident, which, of course, removed the possibilities that I think were emerging in favor of a better understanding between the United States and Cuba. We more or less knew that Clinton had arrived at the conclusion --he had said so to certain people from within the United States and also from without-- that it was ridiculous to maintain the blockade against Cuba. But then this incident happened which others provoked, not us.

That cruel law promoted long before by the Mafia had enjoyed a majority support for quite a while. I remember that there were people and legislators in the United States who kept striving to prevent a number of votes in favor of the bill that would make it impossible for the president to veto it. Clinton never spoke about a veto, but many of his friends and a large number of legislators were striving and working to prevent a reckless and perfunctory passage of the bill.

That was going on at the time of the aircraft incident but then the heavy pressure and the scandal played a decisive role. According to the radar information, they had the certainty to be acting within their powers to prevent those flights over the capital. But you know how those technical matters are, some radar show things from an angle, others from a different one. Then come the theories on whether it was at 13 or 14 miles, or if it was at 8 or 10 miles. But those were the causes of the incident and we cannot be blamed at all for the repeated provocation that were constantly taking place.

What happened then? A law which had been very much condemned by Clinton himself, which he had said was absurd and would mean charging Cuba the preposterous figure of 100 billion dollars, something inconceivable, due to the pressures resulting from that incident he signed that law that he had condemned and, what's more, he even gave away pens there, while on Capitol Hill the authors of that monstrous law very happily applauded. Thus a new situation of tension was created.

We do not doubt Clinton's merits or his ability, not even his ability to move in a correct direction, but he is too sensitive to pressure.

The fact is that a relatively favorable climate had been created before that incident, after a solution to the rafters crisis had been reached. There were frequent contacts and exchanges related to the migratory agreement, communications to monitor strict compliance with it and a better climate, a recognition by the U.S. government that Cuba's contribution had been serious, constructive, decisive and efficient. Once the agreement had been reached and they could legally leave for the United States, we explained to the people and persuaded them that with the agreement in place they should not continue to leave the country any other way.

We even allowed them 72 hours to collect the rafts they were building by the seashore. We took steps to stop the transportation of materials that could be used to make those rafts and our measures worked. We had the moral strength to tell them: Why leave illegally if there is an agreement for at least 20,000 people a year to leave legally for family reunification? There is an agreement now. Now, there is no justification. We had taken the measures by consensus, not by force. They were announced, and after three days had passed the materials that had not been withdrawn were confiscated. The main highway intersections were guarded to stop the passage of materials with which they made excellent rafts that sailed quite safely on the Gulf Stream.

As for us, the agreements were strictly complied with. That was a moment when there were possibilities again. Then, there was that incident provoked from within the United States by those who ardently opposed any improvement in relations.

Meanwhile, in the elections held between the rafters crisis and the aircraft incident Clinton lost his majority in Congress and, with that loss, the extreme right and the lobbyists acquired new strength which hindered any movement by Clinton. On the other hand, Clinton was interested in certain bipartisan cooperation to implement some laws in his program which he would not sacrifice by antagonizing the Republicans --whose cooperation he needed-- for the sake of improving relations with Cuba. That was a secondary matter for the administration. And, there was also the famous theory that

the Cuban vote in Florida decided the elections.

The majority of the votes controlled by the Cuban-American Mafia have always gone to the Republican candidates. But, since many retired Americans and Latin American citizens as well as people from other places live in Florida, Clinton won the last presidential elections in Florida, despite the fact that such Mafia had been created and organized by the Republicans in Reagan's years and it had always backed the Republicans. It has been losing strength. We know this from the surveys and through many channels. It is steadily losing strength, but the myth exists that it can decide the elections. So, relations with Cuba have become an issue of United States domestic policy, that is a fact.

CNN: What do you think of the bipartisan proposal by Republicans and Democrats in the United States concerning the setting-up of a commission to study the United States policy toward Cuba, very much like the Kissinger Commission that was proposed to study Central America?

Fidel Castro: I learned of that news the same day I had to leave for Oporto. I looked at it quickly, I read it and analyzed it in a few minutes. Then I read some cables and perceived the immediate reaction of those who fiercely oppose to any improvement, who oppose everything. They opposed the resumption of travel, family remittances and so on. They opposed the sale of food and medicine. Well, there has been no agreement on food.

We put to the test the famous official declaration made in the month of May by the United States government on licenses for the sale of medicine. As we have published and as it was said at the United Nations and on other occasions, we immediately ordered the purchase of a number of essential medicines. Three months went by and there was not even a reply. Really, that was a sham. So far, not a single medicine has been sold to us, after they said that it would be allowed.

The announced humanitarian flights have really had every obstacle put in their way. Remittances were limited quite severely to 300 dollars every certain period of time; travels are allowed once in a year and for family or very humanitarian reasons, someone sick. In short, they put a lot of hindrances to family visits. While we were opening doors, they were raising obstacles. In other words, those statements made at a given moment, with a great fanfare, have been very far from fulfilled. There have been a lot of obstacles, of every kind, to the fulfillment of those commitments that were made publicly.

I do not think they have much time to think about it because there then came the domestic problems, the well-known scandal, the war against Clinton; in short, the manner of carrying out investigations, accusations, revelations and all those things that I believe have occupied a great part of Clinton's time. That is, matters related to Cuba were down-staged. Elections are near and there is general confusion.

A political battle really took place around the scandal. It was eminently political. Everybody realized that. I think that Clinton's adversaries made maximum use of, and even abused, the possibilities created by the scandal. They took all the well-known measures. They worked feverishly in that direction. They put Clinton in a rather complicated situation, with everything revolving around the midterm elections in December and the forthcoming general election.

An issue politicized to the maximum, as nothing had ever been politicized in the United States. But the world has noticed and even a large part of the US people has. It is not that they applaud Clinton's behavior or his mistakes but they also take into account Clinton's efforts to improve the economy, certain advantages the American people have enjoyed, certain successes of his administration and above all, in my view, people have been annoyed --from what I read in the polls, which is constantly repeated-- at the way in which they have delighted in tormenting him; at certain forms of deception used, like the video issue. It was agreed that the statement was going to be made on video for the use of the jury; however, it was published along with a detailed book containing all the investigations. It has been a great international scandal.

The TV networks have disseminated all that throughout the whole planet, yet, the international reaction

was strange and perhaps unexpected. At the General Assembly, it was evident what the world thinks about those events and the world sided with Clinton. He was applauded for a really long time at the General Assembly. While only one network --I am not saying which, I do not even remember for sure-- was broadcasting what was happening at the United Nations, the welcome given to Clinton and Clinton's speech, four networks were disseminating the four or five hour-long serial made out of Clinton's deposition.

Well, the world could not even understand that and it did not really support it. The reaction was similar to that of many Americans. The long applause was not for Clinton's speech, it was Clinton they were applauding. Mandela was there. Many Africans whom he had recently visited were there. Practically the majority of the countries wanted to express their opinion and that is how they did it.

But the surveys also showed that, although many thought that Clinton should be censured --some were in favor of the inquiry being carried out; others thought that he should resign-- there was a majority, which even grew the more the scandal grew, the more things were published about Clinton and the more agreements were reached to impeach him, so much so that panic broke out in the very ranks of the Democrats, just before an election. However, more than 60 percent of Americans, including many who thought that there should be such a moral punishment, censure and the like, were against Clinton's impeachment and the removal of Clinton, and that majority is still there.

It is interesting that most of the people still say that they are going to vote for the Democrats and not for the Republicans. But surveys are one thing and votes are quite another and the Republicans have rather efficient organizations, especially forces of the so-called Christian right, which have a mobilizing ability. The key in those elections is not what the potential voters think but rather what happens on election day and who has enough might to mobilize those voters to the polls. Therefore, nobody can predict what's going to happen in those elections, whether Clinton gets draws or if he gets a majority or is left with a minority.

It is also a new phenomenon. You could say there is no experience on that. If Clinton manages to reduce his opponents' advantage in Congress, there is no doubt that this could be considered a victory for the Democrats.

Then we will have to wait and see what happens in the subsequent elections, the presidential elections. All those factors are having an impact on the potential for improving relations between the United States and Cuba. As for us, we are mentally very much prepared. We continue to work and are ready to go on waiting for five more years, ten more years; a lifetime if need be and to continue struggling.

Our struggle has not been in vain, it has not been fruitless. International support for Cuba is visibly growing which shows in the stand taken by different countries. It shows in the way that Africa, for example, unanimously voted against the United States resolution or abstained in the Human Rights Commission. Not a single vote in favor, despite the fact that many of them are really poor countries that receive all kinds of grants and aid. An increasing number voted in favor of the Cuban resolution in the United Nations General Assembly, very few remain to join, and the condemnation of the blockade has continuously increased year after year along with the support for our resolution which obtained this year the amazing figure of 157 votes in favor and 2 against.

There is a more developed awareness. Our relations are improving tremendously with the Caribbean, with Latin America, with Africa. We were received in an official visit to South Africa. We have met with the Caribbean countries. The 71 Lomé Convention members supported Cuba's admission as an observer to that convention and they support Cuba's full membership. Some European countries are also supportive. The Group of 77, with 125 countries, unanimously agreed on Cuba as the venue of a summit meeting in the year 2000. Before that, in 1999, we will host the Ibero American Summit. There are many clear signs of how the prestige and international support for our country are growing.

We also see that in the United States there is an increasing number of people who criticize the blockade

and find it absurd and ridiculous. It was only natural then that the news on the bipartisan commission that you mentioned attracted our attention. What I have said, and I have not heard much about it, is that to me it seems really interesting.

I also read a statement by the spokesman in Havana who regarded the establishment of that commission as constructive. It would be a bipartisan commission of experts. It would be, in my opinion, a positive and constructive move and proof of that is how furiously some are opposing that idea.

At the moment, I do not have enough information. That is, I cannot dwell any further on the matter because I lack information. My personal reaction was one of interest. We will see now what happens with the commission and the different reactions to it. The Washington Post has supported it. The New York Times has supported it. The press in general has supported it. But we will examine that when we have the time. These days, we have not had one minute's rest.

CNN: Mr. President, as you know, a short time ago, 10 Cuban-Americans, people of Cuban origin, were arrested in Florida on charges of spying for your government. What can you tell me about that?

Fidel Castro: The first thing that attracted my attention --and so we denounced at the United Nations-- was how amazing it was that the country that does the most spying in the world was making spying charges against the most spied-on country in the world.

The United States not only has a countless number of spies and CIA people devoted full time to that activity and to subversion in its Interests Section in Cuba --something we know perfectly well-- but it also maintains relations with counter-revolutionary elements and small groups with which it cooperates and from which it receives information. It has a whole espionage system apart from the fact that its satellites are capable of spying a cat on the roof of any house in the City of Havana or any building; technical espionage on a colossal scale by means of satellites, radio and every means, intercepting communications and looking for information. It intercepts all Cuban calls. I cannot have a telephone conversation with a Latin American leader or a politician abroad that is not intercepted by the United States. We are subjected to total and ferocious espionage.

So, what I do not understand very well is why they have unleashed this scandal. I think that it is connected in some way with certain events.

I believe that the United States authorities have not really played fairly because in view of all the acts of terrorism carried out by Central American mercenaries, organized and funded from within the United States, certain exchanges of information have taken place between American and Cuban authorities and, really, I am not very sure that the best use has been made of such exchanges about things that we know and that they should know we know through many different ways.

We uphold the thesis that the hiring of mercenaries and the terrorist programs are devised, organized and financed from the United States by the Cuban-American National Foundation. There is evidence of that, and one piece of evidence is that which has given rise to the famous trial in Puerto Rico where, by the way, the main culprit is not being tried --and that is none other than José Hernández, the Foundation chairman, who organized the assassination attempt on the island of Margarita and who is the owner of one of the two .50-caliber semiautomatic rifles with infrared rays and a telescopic sight. They know that but he has not been brought to trial. Yes, others from the Foundation are being tried. But, it attracts our attention that the leader has not been brought to trial. It is very strange that the reaction to the information that we gave the US side was a kind of witch-hunt, the mounting of a big scandal around the issue of the people arrested in Miami.

Information comes to us through different channels. We receive information because there are many friends of Cuba in the United States. There are Americans who are friends of Cuba, there are people from Latin American countries who live in the United States who are friends of the Revolution, who oppose terrorism, who oppose all those things. There are people who spontaneously --because Cuba has

never obtained information in exchange for money nor has it had paid informants or anything of the sort-- in an absolutely spontaneous way have cooperated with our country and have given information to Cuba. There are people, among those who have left the country in different ways, generally the legal ways, who have traveled to the United States. I openly admit that.

But, what is of interest to us in the United States? What information in the United States is of interest to us? Just information on terrorist activities against Cuba; information on plans for sabotage, many of which have been carried out; the introduction of explosives, of weapons from the United States, on which we have plenty of evidence; the introduction of viruses and bacteria from the United States, in other words, bacteriological warfare; and, very much in particular, serious acts of terrorism organized in the United States against our country.

Yes, we have sometimes sent Cuban citizens who have infiltrated counter-revolutionary organizations in order to report back on activities that would harm our homeland and I think we have the right to do that as long as the United States tolerates the organization there of sabotage, armed raids, the machine-gunning of tourist facilities, the introduction of weapons, explosives and, above all, brutal terrorist attacks.

Yes, Cubans have sometimes gone there but to seek exclusively the information we are interested in. I think that the bad faith here lies in the attempt to present the problem as a search for information on the armed forces and on the activities of the United States army. That is the perfidious intention behind this. That is the trap they have wanted to set concerning this issue.

To begin with, I can tell you that we are not at war nor do we feel any animosity toward the U.S. armed forces. On the contrary, there have been some contacts. At the time of the migration accords, contacts and exchanges took place there at the (Guantanamo) base with different officers, respectful and public contacts, in front of the press, the television and other media. And these are even maintained. When there has been a problem, when something has come up, those contacts have been made.

Some prestigious retired US military officers have visited Cuba more than once, legally, with authorization. They have met the leaders of our armed forces. In our country, they have visited the academies. They have also visited military facilities. They have been accorded excellent treatment and we have come to know each other better which I think is useful, positive, constructive since it can turn down prejudices.

Some of those retired military have taken a brave stand and even voiced criticism of the blockade against Cuba. Above all, they have clearly stated that Cuba poses no threat whatsoever to the United States or the security of the United States. They know that very well. That is such a ridiculous story that nobody can believe.

There is more about this: the Pentagon was asked to do an analysis on the matter and it produced quite an objective report. There was an immediate reaction and the report was held back; attempts were made to change the Pentagon's report for purely political reasons. There was a scandal. They were already accusing the Pentagon of lying about Cuba, of hiding reality, to the extent that several weeks passed before they released the report to the public. I do not know if any changes were made or not, but we did read what was published about the introduction to the report interpreting it, distorting it, sowing confusion. In other words, for political reasons, they tried to undermine the report and reduce its objectivity.

It is worth saying here that we are not interested in any information on strategic matters of the United States, nor are we interested in any report on its military forces. We are not at all interested in that because that is of no practical use to us. Why would we want to know, for example, where the United States' strategic missiles are located, whatever installations it has, what protection, what orders, what deployment systems, what operational conceptions? What we know of that is whatever is published and a lot can be learned from what is published about military thinking, about ideas, about the strategy of

projects to develop new weapons. We are not a big power, nor are we a nuclear power or a naval power or an air power. We know only how we should defend ourselves in any circumstance opposite the overwhelming technology of our main adversary.

But I will tell you this. Movements in military facilities very close to our country might interest us, for example, the Guantánamo base. But you do not need to have any spies in the Guantánamo base since it has even become a tourist site. There is an observation post from where everything can be seen through a telescope. We watch them and they watch us.

We do not have satellites in the United States and if anything might interest us with regard to any United States facility near Cuba, that would be the troop movements that might precede an act of aggression against Cuba. We are aware that, at the moment, that is not the government's main line, that its main line is to cause attrition, through the Torricelli Act, the Helms-Burton Act, the economic war, the squeezing of the economy, subversion by any possible means. That is where their main hopes rest without ruling out, at a given time, the use of the armed forces. But movements of troops and important units can be determined perfectly well by radio-electronic means. There is no need for satellites, there is no need for spies or for investing time in that or anything like it. That is our policy.

There were other times --times of an intense cold war, times of unceasing threats-- when some military information about the United States could be of interest to us. There was even a nuclear missile crisis, remember that. We could be interested in how many troops were gathering in Florida for the invasion and how many ships, the location of the main units that would be used against our country by sea and by air according to the doctrine and tactics that were well-known and made public by the United States armed forces.

The basic source of our information on any movements of troops that might threaten our country --and this is not related with the truly strategic bases-- is the movement of some troops that might pose a danger. But we do not need to send spies to any US military base for that. There might be people who have information and spontaneously pass it on; that is possible. Cuba, I repeat, has never paid for any information. All the information that we have received has always been from people acting spontaneously and voluntarily.

That is the essence. That is the policy we have pursued. I categorically reject --and I have already explained the reasons to you-- the accusation that we have tried to look for information on the United States armed forces.

It seems to me that is a reaction to the Pentagon report. And the Pentagon itself has not attach too much importance to the denunciation. They have said that they do not see any danger in that. Also, those accusations they have made are ridiculous, really. They are talking about sentences and about getting people, the judges, to agree and we know absolutely nothing about what has happened with respect to the people kept in custody.

We have friends in the United States, lots of them. In this case, a number of people are being accused and, if we had any information on any of them it would not be right for us to make it known publicly because it would be tantamount to denouncing any of those people.

If we knew something, we would say absolutely nothing, whether they are innocent or have some responsibility because, really, if such a existed somebody must have organized it.

I have received news that we have tried to obtain through different channels, even public, and what they say is praise of their private life, their austerity, their honesty. The neighbors stated that they had excellent impressions of several of those people. So, I repeat: if we knew something, it would be disloyal to report it. If anything exists, let those accusing them prove it. They can not count on any cooperation from us for that.

And I will tell you something else: if any of the people in that ring has acted to try to obtain information for Cuba, the information that we are essentially interested in, the only information of interest to us, information on the acts of terrorism organized in the United States against Cuba, we will support them whatever they say and whatever they do. You know that, after they fall in the hands of the prosecutors and the powerful judicial apparatus, by means of all kinds of tricks, promises and pressures, they can be made to declare anything. You know how powerful and strong those mechanisms are.

The Monica Lewinsky case is proof of that. There is no doubt that Monica was subjected to pressure. You do not have to be a fortune-teller to understand people's personalities. The trick used by Linda Tripp is well-known: the recording of telephone calls, the indiscretions of the other woman about issues that, of course, we are not interested and do not meddle with.

We have never launched personal attacks on any United States leader. We have followed everything reported, just like the everyone else. But months before, when it was announced that they had found two of the best lawyers for the other woman whose basic strategy has always consisted of coming to an agreement with the prosecution, I realized that a scheme was being devised and that the chain was going to break at the weakest link.

I do not have the slightest doubt that they made this young woman believe that if she had lied to the jury she deserved a sentence of many years, because lying under oath is considered one of the most serious misdemeanors in the United States.

If they had been able to gather some data against her during their investigation, she was undoubtedly the weakest link, against which they launched a strong attack, and there are many ways of threatening a person, making her see the seriousness of what could happen to her. She is really a young woman with an obviously weak character and they were promising her immunity, all those means that are used to achieve the goals that they achieved in the end.

It is a widely used method in the United States judicial system to arrest people, offer them certain guarantees and privileges if they inform on others or if they tell what is true and even if they tell lies. We do not know what words they can put in the mouths of those people if they have any responsibility.

But, if they are people of good faith --and without this involving any treason but rather a service to their country-- who can save human lives because they oppose criminal acts, acts of terrorism that might be carried out against other nations, it will never be treason to their country of origin or of residence. No such description can be used by the United States which calls itself the enemy of terrorism; a country that drops bombs right and left without even checking the responsibility that might exist or whether that factory is really a factory for the production of chemical products or ingredients, because that has not been demonstrated and there are increasing indications that it was not; a country that carries out an international campaign against such acts and which is highly vulnerable to its own terrorists. I understand it to be quite correct that it makes the greatest efforts to try to prevent it.

On the basis of experiences like the hijacking of planes which was devised against Cuba and later turned against them, because there are crazy, deranged, unbalanced people, fanatics in the world capable of doing such things. They hijacked many planes with a bottle of water, saying that it was gasoline. But, since a pilot quite correctly has to watch over the passengers' safety, he cannot start guessing or checking whether it is water or gasoline. Sometimes, it might be water and, one time out of ten, it might be gasoline and there might be a catastrophe. People who oppose that, who denounce that, who disagree with that are, in my opinion, honorable people. And I am sure that the United States would never use the word traitor to describe any citizen of any country who supplied information on acts of terrorism designed against the United States or against United States embassies or that could claim the lives of US citizens. The United States would never call them traitors! Why describe as a traitor any person supplying information to the country that may be the target of those acts of terrorism?

I want to make it clear, since you asked me, and to reiterate: we are not in the least interested in the

We are not at war with the armed forces of the United States: Interview with CNC

Published on FIDEL Soldier of Ideas (<http://www.fidelcastro.cu>)

strategic matters of the United States armed forces. It would even be ridiculous. It would be of no use. We do not feel any animosity. We even admit that they have taken some steps lately, such as the honest, objective report they issued. Some have visited our country. They do not have any command now, they do not hold any office. We have even given them information on courses and our facilities that cannot be obtained through espionage. We have been quite open about that. It does not do us any harm at all, based on the large amount of information they have via loads of channels. They have also visited some of our facilities, on other occasions. And some of them, military people I mean, visit our country like many other people do.

Even McNamara has been to Cuba to discuss issues related to the October (Missile)Crisis, and he was none other than the Pentagon chief at the time of that crisis, the one who led the blockade, led the troops, led the missiles that were aimed at our country and who discussed what measures to take. Time passes and so we have met people like him.

Essentially, the only information from the United States that we are interested in is that concerning terrorist activities organized and financed there against Cuba. We are not in the least interested in military information about the United States. Any information that we might be interested in, associated with movements of units near our country, at a given moment, is obtained electronically. It is now impossible to move a company, a battalion, a brigade, the necessary forces, those that would be needed to attack our country without us quickly knowing what cannot be learned by spying. That is much less risky and much more economical. This is what I tell you in all honesty.

CNN: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Lugar:

Pôrto Palacio hotel, Portugal

Fecha:

19/10/1998

Source URL: <http://www.fidelcastro.cu/en/entrevistas/we-are-not-war-armed-forces-united-states-interview-cnc?width=600&height=600>