

My Birthday



Tomorrow I will be 90 years old. I was born in a place called Birán, in the eastern region of Cuba. That's the name it is known by even though it has never appeared on any map. Because of its good behavior, it was known by close friends and, of course, by a group of political representatives and inspectors involved in any commercial or production activity in the neo-colonialized countries of the world.

On one occasion I accompanied my father to Pinares de Mayarí. I would have been eight or nine years old then. How he enjoyed chatting whenever he left the house in Birán! Over there he was the landowner, where sugar cane, forage and other agricultural crops were being grown. But in Pinares de Mayarí he was not a landowner; he was a tenant farmer just like many of the Spanish who were masters of a continent by virtue of the rights granted by a Papal Bull whose existence was unknown by the countries and human beings of this continent. The knowledge transmitted was to a large extent part of humanity's treasures.

The altitude goes up to approximately 500 meters, with sloping, rocky hills where the vegetation is sparse and sometimes hostile. Trees and rocks get in the way of any traffic; suddenly at a certain altitude an extensive meseta or plateau begins. I calculate that it stretches for approximately 200 square kilometers, with rich deposits of nickel, chrome, magnesium and other minerals that are extremely valuable to the economy. On a daily basis dozens of trucks loaded with huge top-quality pine logs would be driven away from that meseta.

Please notice that I haven't mentioned the gold, platinum, palladium, diamonds, copper, tin and others that have likewise been converted into symbols for the economic values which human society, in its current phase of development, requires.

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A few years before the triumph of the Revolution, my father died. Before that, he had suffered quite a bit.

Of his three sons, the second and the third were absent and far away. Both of them fulfilled their duty in revolutionary activities. I had said that I knew who could replace me if the adversary was successful in their plans to eliminate me. I used to practically laugh about the Machiavellian plans of the presidents of the United States.

On the 27th of January of 1953, after Batista's premeditated coup of 1952, a page was written in the history of our Revolution: university students and youth organizations, together with the people, undertook the first Marcha de las Antorchas [Torchlight March] to commemorate the centenary of José Martí's birth.

I had reached the conviction that there was no organization ready for the fight we were organizing. There was total confusion, from the political parties mobilizing the citizen masses, from the left to the right-wing and the center, disgusted by the cheap politicking which reigned in the country.

When I was 6, a schoolteacher filled with ambitions who taught at Birán's little public school, convinced my family that I should travel to Santiago de Cuba to accompany by older sister who would be attending a very prestigious school run by nuns. Including me was skillful on the part of that teacher of Birán's little school. She was splendidly treated at our home in Birán, having dinner at the family's table, and she convinced them of the need for my presence. All things considered, I was in better health than by brother Ramón who died just a few months ago, and for a long time he was my schoolmate. I don't wish to go on and on, just that those years at that stage were very tough for most of the population.

After three years, I was sent to the Colegio La Salle of Santiago de Cuba where they enrolled me in the first grade. Almost three years went by, and I was never taken to the movies.

And so, my life began. Perhaps, if I have the time, I will write about that. Please excuse me for not having done so until now, it's just that I have some thoughts on what can and should be taught to children. I believe that the lack of education is the greatest harm that can be done to children.

Today the human species faces the greatest danger in all its history. Specialists in these matters are the people that can do the most for the inhabitants of this planet whose numbers reached a billion by the end of 1800 and seven billion by the beginning of 2016. How many will our planet hold in a few more years?

The most brilliant scientists, by now numbering several thousand, are the people who can answer this question and many others of great transcendence.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the demonstrations of respect, the greetings and the gifts which I have received these days; they give me the strength to reciprocate via the ideas I shall transmit to our Party members and to the pertinent organisms.

Modern technological media have allowed us to scan the universe. The great powers such as China and Russia cannot be submitted to the threats of imposing upon them the use of nuclear weapons. They are highly esteemed and intelligent peoples. I think that the speech made by the President of the United States when he visited Japan didn't rise to the occasion: he lacked the words to ask for pardon for the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of people in Hiroshima even though he was aware of the effects of the bomb. The attack on Nagasaki, a city the masters of life selected at random, was just as criminal. That is the reason we must hammer away at the necessity to preserve the peace and so that no power usurps the right to kill millions of human beings.

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