Speech delivered by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz during the funeral rites honoring the victims from the explosion of La Coubre Vessel, held in Colon cemetery on the 5th day of March 1960 **[1]**

Date:

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Comrades:

There are moments of great importance in the history of nations; there are extraordinary minutes, such as this tragic and bitter moment we are going through today.

Foremost, so that we are not thought of as carried away by emotion, so that it can be clearly seen that there is a people capable of standing with our head held high, with courage, a nation that knows to calmly analyze situations without resorting to lies or pretexts or base on absurd suppositions, but on obvious truths, the first thing we have to do to analyze the facts.

Yesterday afternoon, when we were all devoted to work – workers, State employees, Government officials, members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, students –, I mean, devoted to the most decent task a people can undertake, devoted to work in order to carry out the bigger jobs we have ahead, a huge explosion made our capital shudder.

Motivated by that instinct of getting inside the root of the problems, the comrades and I who were working at that time got immediately worried about a serious situation that may be occurring in the power plants, or in San Ambrosio police station, or in a vessel that had entered the capital port with ammunition and explosives very early that morning. And as a sort of premonition, we imagined that something serious had happened; that that explosion, no matter the place it had occurred, had had to cause catastrophic consequences and lots of victims, as it had indeed unfortunately happened.

About the subsequent event, everyone knows perfectly those next minutes of profound sorrow and anguish – though not fear – we lived in the city. In the first place, what was the reaction of the people? The people were not terrified by the explosion; they went to the place of the explosion. The people were not overwhelmed by fear, but by courage and, even though they did not know what had happened, they went there and found workers, the militia, solders and other members of the public force, all of them offering whatever help was in their power.

Events could not be more tragic: the vessel was anchored in the wharf, its cargo was being unloaded at the time of the explosion and half of it virtually disappeared, sweeping the workers and soldiers who were carrying out that operation.

People would wonder what the reason of that explosion was. Was it an accident? It is possible for those lacking of experience or knowledge on explosives to think of it as an accident. Explosives are known to explode and it is possible to imagine they can easily explode. However, that is not the case. It is not actually easy for explosives to explode; for them to explode they must be set off.

Then, what had happened? The other answer was that it might have been sabotage, but how and where can this happen? Can sabotage be carried out in the presence of many people? Can sabotage be carried out in the presence of rebel soldiers and dock workers, at high noon? If it was sabotage, how could this sabotage be carried out? And in the first place, why sabotage and not an accident?

What was the vessel carrying? That vessel was carrying bullets and also anti-tank and anti-personnel FAL rifle grenades. Bullets were already on the dock, there were no more bullets left in the ship. They had been carried in the hold of the stern, in the last division of the hold, that is, at the bottom of the hold, and workers had taken them out. There was an upper compartment that was the icebox of that hold, one of them had been turned in into the compartment holding the rifle grenades. The explosion did not occur while the bullets were being unloaded; the explosion occurred while the 30 tons of rifle grenades boxes were being uploaded.

If there was no fire on that ship – because an explosion can be caused by a fire on board –, if there was no fire on that ship, could the explosion occur because one the boxes fell off, for example? In the first place, it was unlikely a box would be dropped because the dock workers knew what they were carrying, and it wasn't the first time they handled that type of cargo. For years, explosives and supplies have been handled in the port of Havana, and we do not remember any explosion. The workers had had years of experience with this type of cargo and knew how to handle it and took precautions, such as placing a mesh on the board to avoid the possibility of a box falling; they were especially careful because they knew it was ammunition to defend the revolution. Moreover, it was not the first time they had done so, since on previous occasions they had even done it voluntarily for free, without charging a penny, as a contribution to the defense of the country.

That is to say, those workers knew what they were carrying. It was unlikely a box would fall, but even if that slim possibility had occurred, even if one box had been dropped, does this mean that a box of grenades explodes when dropped, that it can explode if it falls? And all the less when they come from one of the best factories in the world manufacturing weapons and equipment that men have to manipulate in combat, and therefore they have to be covered with the greatest security, therefore it is practically impossible for them to explode when loaded, handled or preparing for shooting. As far as I recall, during all the war the worst that could happen was that a grenade did not explode when hitting the target, but we never knew of a grenade exploding in the rifle, since that grenade, when being propelled, receives the impact of the propelling charge, which is a strong impact, an impact that receives already without the safety catch, an impact the grenade receives already without the safety catch, and yet it does not explode. The worst that can happen is that, because it is defective, a grenade does not explode when hitting the target. We have never known of a grenade exploding at the end of a rifle barrel.

Then, what chance is there of grenades exploding when a box of them is dropped? Do grenades come without their safety catch? Are grenades loose inside the boxes? Are they transported without safety for the people who manipulate, load and upload them? Because it is necessary to calculate how many times these boxes are handled from the factory to the holds. Could it be considered logical in some sense that, even if unlikely events happened – the very unlikely event such as the fall of a box – an explosion could happen, that is, an explosion by accident? We can assure you that it is totally impossible!

But since theoretical interpretation was not enough, we arranged for the relevant tests to be made, and this morning we ordered army officers to take two boxes containing two different types of grenades, load them in an aircraft and launch them from 400 and 600 feet, respectively. And here there are the grenades launched from the aircraft at 400 and 600 feet high, grenades exactly the same as those on that vessel. (He shows the grenades to the public.)

Does it make any sense to suppose that grenades could explode when falling from 400 and 600 feet at eight feet high, taking into consideration all their safety conditions and the containers that are barely damaged with some dent, if any, at that height, plus the speed of the plane? To such an extent, that the

boxes penetrated several feet into the ground as a result of the impact, and the wooden boxes were destroyed without the explosion of a single grenade out of the 50 grenades inside a box. I am sure that this test can be repeated a hundred or a thousand times, and the grenades will not explode, because for the explosives to explode, they must be set off. Many times during war bombs fell without exploding, and they served to supply us with explosives with which we made the mines, and we remember not a single case of accidental explosion by any of those weapons. They always had to be exploded. So it could not have been an accident, not by accident, it had to be intentional. It was necessary to dismiss all possibility of accident to accept the only reasonable explanation: an intentional explosion.

But how could an intentional explosion happen? Could there have been sabotage in the presence of rebel soldiers, veteran rebel soldiers who were watching the uploading? Could there have been sabotage in the presence of the workers who were working there? If all precautionary measures were taken when conducting these operations, how can anyone think that sabotage could be committed in broad daylight in the presence of workers and soldiers? That person would have had to be a worker but it is illogical for us to expect sabotage from a worker. No doubt workers are determined and ardent supporters of our Revolution.

But so as not to go only on theory, let us analyze the possibility of that sabotage. First of all, workers are searched to prevent them from carrying matches or cigarettes. They are searched to prevent them from being imprudent, and they have a delegate who observes the work they are doing. So they are not only searched, but watched out by soldiers and by their own delegates and comrades. Then sabotage in these conditions is practically impossible.

Furthermore, these workers are very well known by their comrades, because they are not so many, they may be around 12 or 18, and in such case they are a small group and know each other very well.

And another even more relevant factor is that the workers there did not know they were going to work on this ship. The vessel arrived in the morning. The first shift was from 11:00 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the persons in charge of it did not work in the compartment where the grenades were, but in a lower compartment in which the bullets were. They worked from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. When workers went to work, arrived the dock and there they were given their shifts without knowing in advance what ship they would work on, because more than 1,000 stevedores rotate on them and they can work in whatever ship.

The second shift of workers gets the tickets at 12:30, to begin working at 1:00. That group of workers, a small group out of more than 1,000, did not know they would unload the explosives. So premeditation, plan, or preparation in those difficult conditions is not reasonable to believe. That is to say that sabotage would have to be done by a fortune teller, a person who knew that on that precise day he would be selected among 1,000 workers to upload explosives. In order to carry out such acts of sabotage, he would have to have everything ready; he would have to evade the register and the vigilance of soldiers and the delegate. These are impossible conditions because it would be like supposing that the group of revolutionary workers, who for a few minutes undertake the task of unloading those weapons which are to be used to defend their interests and rights, might arouse the slightest suspicion. Then, not by questions of moral conviction, but from a careful analysis, a thorough investigation and a detailed conversation with all workers, temporary workers and stevedores, we reached the conclusion that the sabotage could not possibly have been prepared in Cuba. The explosives went off in Cuba, but the mechanism that detonated them was not installed in Cuba; the mechanism that exploded the ship could not by any means have been installed in Cuba.

This is why other possibilities had to be analyzed. Could it have been the workers, the crew of the ship? Very difficult, very unlikely, because we have questioned them one by one, and we were very careful with those whose work was somehow related to the holds, the cargo and the keys, in the first place, those who had keys that day and opened the holds for the unloading to begin perished in the explosion. The ship officers were on board when the explosion occurred and one cannot imagine that anybody would think it is possible to set off 30 tons of dynamite in a ship and escape unharmed. Many of the

crewmembers were saved, but that does not mean that anybody could ensure that anyone could get out alive after setting off 30 tons of explosives in a ship.

Only four out of the 36 members of the crew were absent: three waiters, after they had served the food to the crew, and an oiler who was not on duty. This means that only four people were absent at that moment for absolutely logical reasons, the others were on board, including the two passengers. Then, it was unlikely the operation was perpetrated by any crewmember of the ship.

As we went further in the investigation, we reached the conclusion that the sabotage was perpetrated from far away; that it was not prepared and it could not have been prepared by no means in Cuba; that it was unlikely that it could have been perpetrated by any of the crewmembers; and that, nevertheless, the possibilities increased as we analyzed the ship cargo.

The unloading was watched very carefully because the weapons were of the interest of those soldiers and workers. We know our enemies and we take all possible pains. But thousands of miles away and far from knowing our problems, in countries that are not threatened by sabotage, explosions, stirred by revolutionary upheavals, or by the efforts of the counterrevolution, in a country like Belgium, the point of departure, how could an action like this be expected to be as difficult as here, where we are in permanent vigilance to avoid any act of sabotage?

From questioning the ship's officer responsible for the cargo, we found out that the merchandise had been loaded in the presence of this officer, or when he was away, in the presence of another crewmember that he was unable to identify.

Those loading conditions made much more easy and feasible the possibility of introducing some detonator to make the explosives go off. Therefore, we concluded that we should not look for the perpetrator of that sabotage here, but abroad, where conditions were much easier to prepare such an act. This means that there was an indisputable and proven fact: after 20 boxes had been taken out, the explosion occurred at the moment one of the remaining boxes was moved, it means, when that specific box was carried. When workers were to handle some new box – since they already had more than 20 boxes outside –, when they were going to carry some of the remaining boxes, the explosion occurred. That explosion could not have been an accident, that explosion had to be intentional. That is to say, the movement of a particular box activated the mechanism of some detonator, causing the explosion.

We all know, with more or less details, that there are infinite procedures for making such explosive traps that are used a lot in war, that when moving a cap, a pencil or a chair, an explosion occurs, since it is extremely easy for a technician to set up any of those mechanisms between two boxes or under one box, so that moving the box will set it off.

How did the boxes come along the way? The boxes came in compact rows, unable to shift, because boxes are placed very tight one against the other inside the hold or the icebox, so that they cannot move, meaning that they had no spare space to move. Such sabotage could be arranged without worry over an explosion before unloading. That is what happened. Workers had already removed the first boxed and when moving approximately box number 30 the explosion takes place, which could not be by accident, as we have shown. The explosion must have been prepared because those boxes were not in the first rows where any object could be seen, but in the second or third row. Thus, when moving a particular box in one of the rows the explosion occurs.

That is the conclusion we reached, which is not based on emotion or a whim, but on the analysis, the evidence, the research we have done, and even on the experiments we have conducted, in order to first draw the conclusion that we were dealing with sabotage rather than an accident. And I am sure that there is no doubt about it, because what else could it be expected?

Millions of tons of explosives are transported around the world every year and yet we do not hear of ships exploding. In our own country, for many years explosives have been transported and handled but

we know of no explosion of this nature. And let us remember the Maine explosion, whose mysteries have not been perfectly explained by anyone. It even became the cause of a war because the nation to which the ship belonged – although it is supposed that it did not have a chance to investigate, it could not do as we did, to begin immediately with interrogations: talk to workers, crewmembers, everyone, although they did not have the chance to investigate – reached the conclusion that the ship had been blown up by an external mine, and declared war on Spain. Because the United States reached the conclusion that it had been an action perpetrated by Spain's supporters moved by their hostility towards the United States, and based on no evidence or arguments and on mere suppositions, it went so far as to the transcendental act of declaring war on Spain.

We have not had to abuse our imagination that much. We have not had to draw conclusions with such little foundation, because it seems rather unrealistic to imagine Spain, with its difficult situation and hard struggle, blowing up the U.S. battleship. That did not seem logical. Instead, we have more than enough reasons to believe that ours was a case of sabotage and that we know what international forces are encouraging the enemies or our people and our Revolution. We do have reasons to think that there were interests trying to keep us from receiving weapons. We do have reasons to suppose, or think, that those who promoted this sabotage could not be others than those interested in avoiding us from getting such supplies. Because, what would be the interest of the authors of such an act, if not avoiding us from receiving those explosives? And we have to talk about that.

Those interested in us not receiving the explosives are the enemies of our Revolution, those who do not want our country to defend itself; those who do not want our country to be able to defend its sovereignty.

We know the efforts were made to keep us from buying those weapons. U.S. government officials were among the most interested ones in us not receiving those weapons. We can affirm it without this being a secret, because if it is a secret, it would be like those secrets that everyone knows. We are not the only ones to say this. The British Government said and stated that the U.S. Government did not want us to buy planes in Britain. U.S. authorities and spokespersons themselves have expressed their efforts to prevent Cuba from buying weapons. We have been fighting against such pressure. We have been fighting these obstacles.

So, a country, a government, makes use of its own powerful international influence and moves itself in diplomatic circles to prevent a small country from arming itself; a country that needs to defend its territory from its enemies, a nation that needs to defend itself against the criminals who want to return, or against colonizers who want to keep us under slavery and starvation. We must continue fighting the pressure of a powerful and influential government in order to buy weapons.

We can affirm that up to now we had achieved that a government and a European weapons factory, acting independently and firmly, opposed the pressure and sell us weapons. The Belgian weapons factory and the government of that country had opposed to pressures. Not once, but several times, the U.S. consul, a U.S. military attaché in Belgium and a military attaché working at the U.S. embassy in Belgium, had tried to prevent the factory and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from selling us these weapons.

That is to say that officials of the U.S. government had made repeated efforts to prevent our country from buying these weapons, and they cannot deny this reality. And this reality means that they did not want us to acquire those weapons and that one must look for the guilty ones among those interested in preventing us from buying those weapons. We have the right to think that those trying to prevent us from purchasing that equipment by diplomatic means, could do so by other means too.

We are not affirming they have done so, because we do not have conclusive evidence, and if we had them, we would be presenting them to the people and the world. I do say that we have the right to think that those who had not achieved their purposes by certain means, they could have tried by another. We have the right to think that we must look for the criminals among the interested ones. We do have the

right to think that we must look for those responsible for the loss of the Cuban lives yesterday afternoon!

In the first place, what right does any government have to interfere with the efforts of another government in defense of its sovereignty? What right does any government have to assume the tutelage of any part of the world? What right does any government have to prevent Cubans from buying the weapons that all nations acquire to defend their sovereignty and integrity? What nation would we try to prevent from buying weapons? What weapons purchase do we interfere? What obstacles would we place in the way of any nation seeking to

arm itself? Who would think that a government living in peace, whose people live in peace with the other people, maintaining diplomatic and friendly relations – which must be friendly -, has the right to interfere in a way that that nation cannot acquire weapons? All the more if one considers that that country, represented by that government, is buying, in our territory, strategic materials it needs for its defense, without our interference in this acquisition of equipment, without our interference in their efforts to defend itself, without our interference in its affairs.

Why can’t we acquire the means to defend ourselves? Why this interest on preventing us from buying means to defend ourselves? Do they expect our people to fall again under the boots of the bunch of criminals who subjugated us for seven years? Are they instigating the return of the big criminals? Or even worst, are they perhaps planning to seize our land? They do not want our people to have the means to defend themselves. Our country is not a danger to any country. Our country is not and never will be a military danger to any other country. Our country will never be able to develop an offensive power against any other country, because the strength of our Revolution in the world lies not in the military power, but in our tremendous moral force, in our tremendous example for the brotherly nations, for our brethren of the race, enslaved and exploited throughout the Spanish speaking America. Our force will never be based on the military power. We are militarily strong to defend ourselves, but we are not, nor do we ever want to be militarily strong to attack anyone, because we do not aspire to submit or subjugate anyone. We are strong to defend ourselves. To defend one’s nation is another thing: it is a right, one of those rights the people know to defend against whatever power and force.

We would never be strong to attack anyone, not only because we would not have the necessary weapons, men or resources, but because we would not have the right to attack anyone. That is why we would never be strong, even if we had resources and weapons, simply because we would never have the right to do so. And instead, we feel strong enough to defend ourselves. We are sure that we are strong to defend ourselves because we would be defending a right and we would know how to defend it.

So, why shouldn’t we have the necessary means? Simply because they do not want us to defend ourselves, they want us to be defenseless. Why do they want us to be defenseless? Because they want to humble us, to subjugate us, so we do not resist the pressure, so we do not resist the aggressions. And do they have the right to hamper our efforts to acquire the means to defend ourselves against the authorities of a nation that has been unable to prevent its territory from being systematically used to bombard us?

Perhaps tomorrow, the newspapers of that country will say that analyzing these truths and reasons is an insult to the people of the United States. It is worth clarifying that we are not insulting the people of the United States. We never have. What happens is that they say the truths are insults, and they say so to the people in order to portrait our people as the enemy of the United States’ people. The reasons we discuss with the rulers – who are responsible for the policy of that country – are not insults to the people, because, on the contrary, we consider that those who harm the U.S. people are those making such mistakes. Those offending the U.S. people are those making such mistakes. They say that reasoning, calling things by their names and clarifying those truths to the people, are insults, because they want difficult relations between nations, and there are no difficult relations between nations here, because Cuba will never have difficult relations with any other nation of the world.

Nations are good, and they cannot be judged based on their rulers. It would not be fair to judge the Cubans, this magnificent people, based on the rulers the Revolution overthrew. The people are not to blame.

But it seems that the truths cannot even be insinuated in this continent where we, Cubans, have learned to tell the truth, fearless of anyone. And these are the truths: planes enemies of our people, planes piloted by criminal mercenaries depart the United States, and the government of that country, so worried about us buying weapons, has not been able to prevent those flights.

It has been seven years of bloody struggle and immense sacrifice since we achieved the triumph of the people. During those past days any citizen could be tortured or murdered in the streets of the cities or in the countryside. The most atrocious tyranny prevailed in our country. But all that was not an obstacle for ships loaded with bombs and ships loaded with shrapnel came from the United States, which did not explode in the port of Havana. However, we do not murder anyone, we do not torture anyone, and we do not hit a single human being. We have established respect for the human dignity and human sensitivity. Our Revolutionary government is characterized by that atmosphere of security, that feeling of peace, security and respect for the citizen. We do not torture and we do not murder, and yet the weapons that come to defend this regime explode upon reaching the port. On the other hand, the torturers of our people, the executioners of our people, those who ripped the lives of 20,000 compatriots, those who murdered students, peasants, workers, those who murdered men and women, those who murdered professionals, those who murdered any citizen, were directly receiving weapons and supplies that did not explode.

When it is about a just revolutionary regime – a human revolutionary regime, a regime that has striven so hard to defend the interests of the people, the interests of our suffered and exploited people, exploited by the monopolies, exploited by the latifundia, exploited by the privileged ones, a regime that has freed the people from these injustices, a regime most of the people support, a human regime – they fight it. When it is about a criminal and inhuman regime, a regime of monopolies and privileges, they support it. What kind of democracy is that which helps criminals and exploiters? Democracy is the one we have, where human being is appreciated and always will be more than money! Because we will never shed a single drop of blood for money; we will never sacrifice a single drop of human blood for money or selfish interests.

These facts are not isolated. Because who would be surprised that a ship explodes at the port while workers are working? Who would be surprised at a sabotage causing the death of workers? Who would be surprised if only a month ago – if it has been already a month – a U.S. aircraft coming from the U.S. territory with a U.S. bomb and piloted by a U.S. pilot, tried to drop a bomb on a workplace where with more than 200 workers in it? And on that occasion I said: “What would have been the pain of our people today and what would have been the tragedy of our people today if we would be burring dozens of workers instead of these two corpses of mercenaries?” And as if those words were a premonition, we have had to come here to burry some dozens of workers and rebel soldiers.

Who would be surprised that the perpetrators of that sabotage did not worry about the amount of victims they would cause, about the people they would kill? Who would be surprised about it if only a month ago they were going to drop a 100-pound bomb on a factory with over 200 workers in it? Who would be surprised if, when that event occurred, we calmly spoke to the people with proof in our hands, explaining what had happened, showing them the evidence, and even told them to send the technicians so that they verify the strict veracity of everything said. A month has passed and yet no one has been arrested in the United States, not a single person responsible for such acts has been found and no one has been bothered. On the contrary, few days after the incidents the light aircrafts came back and hardly a week later the town in which the Prime Minister of the Revolutionary Government lives was bombed.

What is so strange about the explosion of a ship loaded with workers if they were going to drop a bomb over a sugar factory and they did not worry about bombing an area with children, dropping 100-pound

bombs in that region? What is so strange if yesterday the Bohemia magazine published photographs of the air fleet that peacefully rests in the U.S. airports without being disturbed by anyone? What is so strange if yesterday we received the news that José Eleuterio Pedraza was in Washington? What is so strange about all those things that have been happening? The only difference is that on this occasion the blow has been hard and bloody.

It was logical. Some months ago we had to go to the hospitals full of victims as a result of that incursion whose author still strolls through the U.S. towns and cities without anyone bothering him. What is so strange if a series of acts demonstrate the group of powerful interests conspiring against our Revolution; If only a few days ago large quantities of corn were released to replace Cuban honey in the manufacture of alcohol; If only a few days ago inspectors who observed the cultivation of fruits and vegetables we export to that country were retired; If everyone knows the law by which the sovereignty of our country is being subjected to the threat of not buying our sugar? I mean, if shortly the a law is going to be submitted to the Congress, by virtue of which the President of the Republic reserves the right at any time to remove, reduce or buy the sugar quote, if so considers.

What does that mean? It means that our country has a very weak economic structure. But, why does our country has a weak economic structure? Because that was the structure the foreign masters gave to our economy; a one-crop economy, an economy of latifundia, an economy of an underdeveloped nation, a weak economy as a consequence of the policy implemented by the foreign masters of our economy for 50 years. And now, taking advantage of this dependence, this situation which we are trying to get rid of – that is what economic independence means –, taking advantage of this dependence, they want to adopt systems which try to subjugate our rights and our sovereignty.

It means that if we make laws here, if we take action for the benefit of our people, they arrogate the right to starve our people. It means that, taking advantage of the economic situation they enjoy as a result of the policy of one-crop, latifundia and underdevelopment they applied here, and by threatening us with starvation, they try to restrict the rights of our people to be independent and sovereign.

What does this mean if not an economic Platt Amendment? What does this mean if not to warn that if we take measures against the latifundia, against monopolies – measures for the benefit of our people –, reprisals will be taken against us, because we are a small country with a weak economy? Does it mean that if we make efforts to become a strong economy, to have our own economy, we are threatened with starvation? What is this if not an attempt to undermine the sovereignty of a country, an attempt to restrict the independence of a country? What is this if not that a government arrogates the right to decide on the destinies of another country by means of retaliatory measures? These are not measures that are taken to defend national interests. These are not measures that are taken to defend the interests of the U.S. people. These are not measures that are taken to guarantee the supply. No, these measures, contrary to ours – which are to defend the people, to defend the national interests, not as reprisal –, are retaliatory measures. These are not measures to defend national interests, but retaliatory measures against another country, while our measures are taken to defend the national interests and for the benefit of the people. Because none of the measures we take are aimed at starving the U.S. people. On the contrary, the measures we take restrict the voracious pocket of a few U.S. monopolies, but we do not restrict the means of subsistence or work of the U.S. people. Our measures are against monopolies, against interests, not against the U.S. people. Their measures are not to defend the U.S. people, but measures of reprisal against the Cuban people.

And, of course, it was needed a Revolutionary Government to proclaim that, it was needed a government of the people to proclaim that, it was needed a government fearless to proclaim it, fearless of threats or reprisals; fearless of the military maneuvers. And we could say: What is the purpose of military maneuvers in the Caribbean? What is the purpose of using landing maneuvers against positions occupied by guerrillas? What is the purpose of using maneuvers of troops transported on planes, in offensive operations? Because, as far as we know, the problems of the world are discussed at the summits, as they call it. The problems of the world are understood to be problems of directed projectiles, advanced science and technology, but we have not heard that the problems of the world are

problems of guerrillas, nor have we heard that the problems of the world are problems here in the Caribbean and that there are international difficulties in the Caribbean.

As far as we know the big nations do not think they can solve their military issues with guerrillas. We were the ones who had to use the guerrillas to fight the professional army of tyranny. We had to use such tactics against an army larger and better prepared than ours. But I have not heard that military issues are solved with guerrillas in the world. And when we see Marine Corps, landing maneuvers against guerrillas, we wonder why? Do they plan to land – I wonder myself – or just intimidate? Do they want to frighten us? Do they want to show us that we can be invaded at any time? Landings here are among the things being discussed by some spokesmen as possible.

Who said that anyone can land here? Who said anyone can simply land here? For the time being, among the probable things – it is good to say that a day like today, because in fact we are already quite experienced in terms of patriotism and civism so that those insinuations could be used against us – and among the possible things being discussed, allow me to say that we feel simply amazed when they calmly say they would send here, among the possible things, the Marine Corps, as if we did not count at all. As if the Cubans would just stand by in case of any contingency! As if Cubans would not resist any troops landing here to try to subjugate our people!

And it would be good to say, to say once and for all here, at this time when we come to deposit a considerable number of soldiers, workers and citizens in their tombs – who knows how many times we met them in our workplaces, in public gatherings or military facilities, or we met them in zones of operations; who knows how many times they were applauding and living, as you do now, full of noble hopes the Revolution has aroused in every humble Cuban, at a time when we come on a mournful pilgrimage to deposit their remains in the tombs, quietly and calmly, discharging a painful duty that we know well how to perform in a selfless manner, that we know how to comply knowing that tomorrow we can be others, as they were yesterday and as others were before them; because we, Cubans, have learned to look at death serenely and undisturbed; because Cubans have acquire a real sense of life, which begins by considering it unworthy when not living with freedom, when not living with decorum, when not living with justice, when not living for something great as it happens to Cubans at this moment –, before these dead people who were yesterday as we are today, the victims of who knows what murderous hands, we say that we are not afraid of any troop landings here. We would not delay for a single second in picking up our guns and taking up our positions, without even blinking or hesitating, to face any foreign troops landing in this country. We, I mean the Cuban people, its workers, peasants, students, women, young and old, even its children, will not hesitate to simply occupy their positions the day any foreign troops try to land in our beaches, either by ship, by plane or in parachutes, no matter how they come or how many they are.

And it is good that we say all these without fanfare, as those who are really determined to fulfill what has been promised. If anyone doubted this, yesterday furnished proof to the most skeptical. Whoever had seen the people yesterday, whoever had seen that episode both wonderful and horrific, whoever had seen the crowds advancing towards the fire, how soldiers, workers, policemen, sailors, firemen, the militia, went to that center of danger, how they advanced to that place of death, without hesitating; whoever had seen what Cubans saw yesterday, whoever had seen the soldiers and the people advancing toward danger to rescue the wounded, to rescue the victims in that burning ship, in an area that was on fire, when it was unknown how many more explosions might occur; whoever had seen that waves, swept by the explosions, those who died not in the first explosion, but in the second one; anyone observing the people’s conduct yesterday; whoever had seen the people controlling traffic; anyone observing the people establishing order; whoever had seen the people advancing towards that explosion that left behind like a fungus, reminiscent of the fungus of nuclear explosions; whoever had seen the people advancing towards that fungus without knowing what was actually happening, can be sure that our people are capable of defending themselves, a people capable of advancing against the fungi left by nuclear bombs.

And those were yesterday’s events. They were not an invention of our fantasy, but a reality that

everyone could see. It is a reality we had to pay with dozens of valuable lives, of men who died when trying to save their comrades, who died quietly and calmly to save the lives trapped between the bend wreckage of that ship and among the buildings' ruble, of firemen who were advancing without bothering to extinguishing the fire on buildings full of explosives. Whoever had seen scenes like those of yesterday, anyone who knows a people as dignified, forceful, generous and honest as ours, has the right to know that this is a people that will defend itself against any aggression.

May those who are disturbed in the most elementary common sense and dare to consider as possible any kind of invasion against our soil understand the monstrosity of their mistake, because this will save us many sacrifices. But unfortunately, had this happened, mostly to the dismay of those who attack us, let there be no doubt that here in this land called Cuba, here in the middle of this people called Cuban, they will have to fight against us as long as there is one drop of blood left in our veins. They will have to fight against us as long as there is an atom of life in us. We will never attack anyone and no one will ever need to be afraid of us, but anyone attacking us must know without fearing to be wrong that Cubans today – we are not anymore in the years 1898 or 1899, we are not living at the beginning of the century, or in the 1910s, 1920s or 1930s –, Cubans of this decade, Cubans of this generation, Cubans of this era – we are not better today, we are fortunate to have a better vision for the future, because we had the fortune to receive the example and lesson from the history, the lesson that cost so many sacrifices to our ancestors, the lesson that cost so much humiliation and pain to the past generations, because we have had the fortune of receiving that lesson –, this generation will fight in case of aggression until its last drop of blood, with the rifles we have, with the rifles we buy from those who want to sell them to us, plain and simple, with the bullets and weapons we buy where we seem best and with the weapons we know how to take off from our enemies during fight.

And without worrying about the threats, without worrying about the maneuvers, bearing in mind that one day we were only 12 men and that, comparing our force at the time with the one of the tyranny, our strength was so tiny and so insignificant that no one would have ever believed possible to resist. However, we believed that we were resisting at that moment, as we today believe that we can resist any aggression. We believe not only that we will know how to resist any aggression, but that we will know how to overcome any aggression, and that again we would have no other dilemma than that with which we began the revolutionary struggle: that of freedom or death. Only that freedom now means something else: freedom means homeland. And our dilemma now would be homeland or death.

On a day like today, sorrowful and tragic, painful for the people, painful for the government, painful for the families of the workers, soldiers and the citizens who died, in a moment so important like this, it would be good if we take these things for granted, and that our willingness to resist is not only the willingness to resist militarily. Maybe they think that we have the courage to die, that we have no courage to resist privations, but men have the courage to resist even the hardship they least imagine.

If those men who began the struggle in the mountains had had no courage to resist privations, they would have been defeated. However, that was not the case because they were strong enough to resist privations. Weak men are the ones who do not have the determination to resist privations. Strong men and women are the ones who have the determination to resist privations. If during combat a nation has the courage to make any sacrifice, it should have also the courage to resist any privation. They are also mistaken when thinking that they will defeat us by means of economic reprisals. And at this point one could say that it is better to starve in freedom than to live enslaved in opulence; that it is better to be poor but free, even though the development of our richness might have a high price and imply a long road. Much more when we were poor and enslaved here, but at least now we are poor, but free. Someday we will be free and rich.

No one can buy us with economic advantages, much less when economic benefits were never seen by anyone anywhere, because what everyone here saw was misery, injustice and exploitation. Those are the words that can be used to call the hundreds of thousands of children who have no school, or had no school, and that is what the miserable huts are called, that is what the months of dead time are called, that is what unemployment is called, and that is what the agony in which we live is called. And Cuba,

our people, has done nothing but fight against these evils, has done nothing but strive to overcome those evils, we have done nothing but claim what is ours. We have done nothing but defend our possessions and ourselves. And that is, in the eyes of the international plutocracy, the wrongful act that Cuba has committed: to defend its possessions and its people against exploitation, against colonization. This is why the planes come, that is the reason for the ever-growing audacity of the criminals protected by that plutocracy. That is the reason why – while planes do not explode in other parts of the world, while planes do not launch bombs in other parts of the world –, in our homeland, workers are threatened in their workplaces by 100-pound bombs, or threatened in their workplaces by an apocalyptic explosion.

That is the cause of the hatred of the powerful oligarchy that fight us; that is the reason of the conspiracy against our homeland. We understand it well because it is necessary that we know how to understand our problems. We must know how to understand these truths, and we must proclaim them. Just as it is necessary that those interests and conspirators know what to expect and know that it is not about making plans from abroad on the problems of the country, its solutions, or the counterrevolutionary acts. They must know that in order to make plans on our country, in the first place, they have to count on us, because if they don’t, as if we do not exist, then they will face the consequences.

Today we have come to conclude one of our saddest days, but indeed one of the most firm and symbolic days of our homeland. Who would have guessed only 14 months ago – when we meet rebel soldiers on the streets of Oriente province, amidst the overflowing joy of that people –, that, one day like today, we would have to walk the same streets in the midst of the sadness and pain of that same people, to bury, among a group of workers, a group of those soldiers who passed by here carrying the national liberation banners? Who would have guessed that the perpetrators and accomplices of the murderers of so many thousands and thousands of Cubans would force us once more – and who knows how many times more – to come and weep beside the tombs of other victims, other citizens annihilated by the same criminals and the same allies? But however bitter it may be, it is true. And here we are fulfilling this painful duty, which we will fulfill as many times as necessary. We will fulfill it, one day as part of the procession and another day inside the coffin, if necessary. We will know to fulfill it because behind those who fell there will come others, behind those who fell there are others still standing!

Great has been the loss in these 14 months; dear and unforgettable comrades who are no longer among those who walked behind the coffins; comrades who have disappeared from our ranks while fulfilling their duty. However. The ranks continue to march. The people are still standing, and that is what matters! What an imposing spectacle of a standing people! What a wonderful and impressive spectacle of a standing people! What a spectacle like this one today! Some years ago it would have seemed a dream to watch them march together as they do today. Who could have dreamed some years ago that workers’ militias would be marching side by side with the university brigades, side by side with the soldiers of the Rebel Army, side by side with the navy and the police, side by side with a column of peasants forming their martial and compact ranks wearing their mambí hats and carrying a rifle on their shoulders; guajiros from the mountains who are accompanying us today in this moment of pain, so that no one be unrepresented, so that there, where ministers and citizens stand together, the whole nation stands together showing its generosity, fighting spirit and heroism. Who could have dreamed that one day soldiers and workers would not be enemies; that one day soldiers, workers, students, peasants and the people would not be enemies; that one day intellectuals would walk arm in arm with the soldiers; that one day the thought, the labor force and the guns would march together as it happened today!

They used to march separated, they used to be enemies, the homeland used to be divided into dissimilar interests, dissimilar groups, dissimilar institutions. Today the nation is a single feeling, the nation is a single force, the nation is a single group. Today, peasants and soldiers, students and the police, or the people and the armed forces do not fight between them. Today, we all emerge from the same yearning and aspiration. People and soldiers are identical. They used to fight each other, but today they fight together. They used to walk in different directions, but today the walk together. Today workers and soldiers march together, die together, help one each other, give their lives to save others, as dear brothers.

That is the reason why today I see our homeland stronger than ever, I see our Revolution more solid and invincible than ever, our people more gallant and heroic than ever. Today it is as if that blood, which was the blood of soldiers and workers, the blood of Cuban workers and French workers… French workers died fulfilling their duty while transporting those goods that will serve to defend our sovereignty, which is why we have not forgotten them when it comes to help our own people. When it comes to help the families of the Cubans who died, we have not forgotten those French workers who fell in that act of vandalism perpetrated by the murderous enemy hands. We have not forgotten workers here and from other parts of the world, who yesterday united their blood with the French blood, the same blood of those who cried out for freedom in the first great revolution of the modern history of humankind. The blood of Cuban workers was united to the blood of French workers. That is why we, who see them as brothers, have shown the same generosity when providing help for their families, because they also have wives, mothers and children. To us, a generous people as ours, this meant an act of elementary solidarity that we all feel for all peoples of the world.

As I said, today I see that our nation is more glorious, more heroic, that our people is more admirable, a people worthy of admiration as one admires a column coming back from battle, worthy of identity and solidarity as solders showing their solidarity after a battle.

What matters is not the reduction in the number of soldiers; what matters is the presence of mind of those who are still standing. More than once we experience a reduction in our ranks, in the ranks of our army. We saw painful reductions, as we see today in the ranks of the people, but what matters most is the determination of the people still standing.

And today, as we say farewell to the fallen, to those soldiers and workers, I have no other way to say goodbye, but with the idea which symbolizes this struggle and the essence of our people today: may they rest together in peace! Together, workers and soldiers, together in their graves, as they fought together, as they died together and as we are willing to die together.

And as we say goodbye in the threshold of the cemetery, we make this promise which, more like today’s promise, is a promise of yesterday and always: Cuba will not be intimidated!, Cuba will not recede!, the Revolution will not stop!, the Revolution will continue its unshakable path!

That is our promise, not to those who died, because to die for the homeland is to live, but to the comrades who will always remain in our memories. They will always remain, not in the memory of a man, or men, but in the only memory that can never be erased: the memory in the heart of a people.

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