

SECOND EPISTLE

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Dear fellow Cubans:

Two new infamies by the US government —that of including Cuba on another of those high-handed lists drawn up by the self proclaimed masters of the world and introduced in a State Department report published on June 14 accusing our country of involvement in the trafficking of persons to which they have added the disgusting slander that we promote sexual tourism and the announcement on the 16th of additional, cruel blockade measures to asphyxiate the economy that is our people's life support—oblige me to send a second message to the president of the United States.

Mr. Bush:

I must be calm but sincere. I have absolutely no intent to insult you or to launch personal attacks. But, it is cynical to include Cuba in a list of countries involved in the illegal trafficking of persons. And what is even more outrageous and abhorrent in this arrogant report that the State Department feels obliged to issue every year is the claim that Cuba promotes sex tourism, even with children.

You are in a position to be informed that Cuba has signed two immigration agreements with the United States in the interest of family reunification. The US Administration failed to honor the first of these signed in 1984. Ten years later, instead of the 20,000 visas promised, only about 1,000, that is, 5 percent were issued every year. Following the immigration crisis that broke out in 1994, our country signed with the US government a new agreement which was expanded the following year and is still in force. In spite of this, and although its provisions have been basically met as regards the number of visas, they have not been met as regards the fundamental, inescapable obligation to avoid all encouragement to illegal emigration.

With no justification whatsoever, the murderous Cuban Adjustment Act is still in place, implacable, and indeed, new incentives were added to it. This absurd and immoral Act has cost an incalculable number of lives, including the lives of many Cuban children. And it was as a result of this same law that the loathsome traffic in emigrants emerged using speedboats that come from Florida to points anywhere on our coastline. Cuba punishes these acts severely, whereas US administrations, for very well known political reasons connected with the state of Florida, have just crossed their arms.

No country in the world has given as much physical and moral protection, as much health and education to its children as Cuba has. You should know that a higher proportion of children die in their first year of life in the United States than in Cuba. One hundred percent of children and adolescents in our country, including those afflicted by some kind of physical or mental disability, attend the appropriate schools and study.

How can you claim to not know that, while in the United States there are, on average, 30 students to a classroom in Cuba the ratio is less than 20 and our educational results are better than those in any developed country?

Our healthcare services have raised the life expectancy of each child from about 60 years in 1959,

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according to estimates, to 76.13 years today.

In spite of the US blockade and the collapse of the socialist bloc, unemployment in Cuba is only 2.3 percent, which is several times lower than in your own country, the richest and most industrialized in the world.

You should be ashamed of trying to economically asphyxiate the Cuban people, which blockaded and subjected to more than four decades of economic warfare, armed aggressions and terrorist actions, has achieved such feats. You can show us nothing like this in your own country.

You are trying to strangle our economy and are threatening war against a country that has shown itself capable of having 20,000 doctors currently offering their services in 64 countries of the Third World. Your administration, in spite of possessing the resources of the richest power on earth, has not sent a single doctor to the most distant corners of these countries, as Cuba does.

On your conscience, and on those of the leaders of the world's richest states, lies the genocide which is implicit in the death, every year, of more than 10 million children and tens of millions more people who could be saved. These deaths are the result of a vast assortment of pillage and robbery practiced against Third World countries through the unjust and no longer sustainable world economic order that the rich countries have imposed to the detriment of 80 percent of this planet's population.

Someone should let you know about these problems and these facts, instead of constantly spreading intrigues and lies.

As for Cuba, you allow yourself to be driven by the fanatical belief that your re-election in November depends on the support of a mob of well-known old terrorist émigrés and their descendents, a large section of whom were Batista's embezzlers and war criminals who sought refuge in the United States with their booty on their backs and their crimes unpunished. Others have grown rich through many years of service in acts of terrorism and aggressions that have cost our people much blood. These groups are increasingly discredited and their influence diminishes. Everyone remembers what happened in Florida, where they committed all kinds of electoral frauds -in which they are truly experts-- still you carried the state by only 518 votes. I do not wish to humiliate you by digging up this sordid and unpleasant subject. I will rather limit myself to telling you, with all sincerity, that the mistakes into which your commitments to this mob lead you may decisively backfire in the next elections.

The American people are already bored with the embarrassing influence that these groups exercise over the foreign and domestic policy of such an important country. Your dependence on these groups will end up losing you a lot of votes, and not only in Florida, but all over the country.

When you forbid Americans to travel to Cuba under the threat of brutal repression, you are violating a constitutional principle and a right of which your country's citizens have always been proud. Moreover, it shows political fear.

As Cuba, with no hesitation or fear and with very few exceptions, opened its doors to masses of emigrants so they could visit their country of origin and, recently, authorized them to do so as many times as they wish through the simple procedure of renewing their passports every two years, you implement ruthless and inhuman measures against Cuban families that deeply offend their ancestral culture and traditions. It is indescribably cruel to forbid resident Cubans, nationalized or not, to visit their closest relatives for a period of no less than three years, even if these relatives are at death's door. Quite a few Cuban-Americans are already thinking of encouraging a punishment vote.

For purely electoral reasons, and ignoring the Resolutions passed by almost all members of the United Nations, you have just adopted new, harsher economic measures against the Cuban people that the world public opinion and the immense majority of the US public find disgusting.

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The worst thing about your ridiculous, clumsy anti-Cuban policy is that you and your closest advisors have brazenly proclaimed your goal of forcibly imposing what you call 'political transition' on Cuba, if I die in office, a transition which you do not, of course, hesitate to confess you will try to hasten as much as possible. You are very well aware of what that means in the language of the mob.

However, perhaps the most shameful thing you did was to announce that the first hours will be decisive, since the idea is to go to any lengths, under any circumstances, to prevent a new political and administrative leadership from taking charge of our country. This you would do completely ignoring the Cuban Constitution, the powers of the National Assembly and of our Party's leadership and the powers that the Constitution and the highest institutions of the people have bestowed —as it is the case all over the world— on those whose responsibility it is to assume this task immediately.

Since this you can only do by sending troops to occupy key positions in the country, you are announcing your intention of launching a military intervention of our homeland. This is why, on May 14, I "hailed" you in advance for the role of Caesar you are playing; I took this from the gladiators who were forced to fight to death in the circus of ancient Rome.

Today, I think it is only right to add a few more things.

You should know that your march against Cuba will be anything but easy. Our people will stand up to your economic measures, whatever they may be. Forty five years of heroic struggle against the blockade and economic war, against threats, aggressions, plots to assassinate its leaders, sabotage and terrorism have not weakened but rather strengthened the Revolution.

Forty three years ago the treacherous invasion by the Bay of Pigs was routed in less than 66 hours of relentless combat, against the estimates of brilliant experts.

Some of us leaders of this Revolution went through that singular experience where a handful of men, who at first had only seven rifles, managed, using weapons taken from the enemy in battle, to defeat Batista's armed forces, which were equipped, trained and advised by the United States and which numbered 85,000 troops.

In October 1962, a year and a half after the Bay of Pigs, not a single Cuban fighter batted an eyelash at the thought of the very real threat of a nuclear strike. Not a single inspection of our country was allowed, in spite of what the two superpowers had agreed.

Dozens of years of dirty war sabotage and terrorism, in which many of your current friends from Miami played such an outstanding role, could not bring Cuba to her knees.

The collapse of the European socialist bloc and of the USSR itself, which deprived us of markets, fuel, food and raw materials, added to a blockade made harsher by the Torricelli and Helms-Burton Acts and other measures did not break the Cuban people and what seemed impossible came to pass, we stood firm! This is something that is now in the blood and traditions of patriotic Cubans, who in the last war against Spanish colonialism, clashed with, wore down and virtually defeated 300,000 Spanish soldiers; it is the spirit of fighting against the impossible and winning.

It is not my intent, Mr. President of the United States, to torment you or upset you with these memories. It is simply my desire to give you an idea of what Cuba is all about, of what a genuine and deep revolutionary process means and of what the people you look down to condescendingly is really like.

Today, Cuba has the most cultured and politically aware population of all the countries in the world. Our people are not fanatics, our people defend ideas. This is not a country of illiterate or semi-illiterate people; it is a country where higher education is being made accessible to the whole population and where courage and patriotism are becoming common traits. Experience and knowledge go hand in hand with its dreams of a society where justice and humanism can prevail, something that you with your

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fundamentalism and your messianic ways will find very hard to understand.

Today, we are not just a handful of men and women determined to win or die. We are millions of women and men with enough weapons and over two hundred thousand well-trained officers and chiefs who know perfectly well how to use them under conditions of modern, sophisticated warfare, and we have a huge mass of combatants who are equally well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of those who are threatening us, despite their enormous military resources and the technological superiority of their weapons.

Under the present circumstances in Cuba, and in case of an invasion of our country if I cease to exist—either from natural causes or others— this will not in any way hurt our capacity to fight and stand firm. Every political and military chief at every level, and every individual soldier, is a potential commander in chief who knows what s/he must do, and in a given situation each person can become his or her own commander in chief.

You will not have even one day, one hour, one minute or one second to prevent the political and military leadership of the country from taking charge immediately for the orders on what should be done have already been given. Every man and woman will be at his or her combat station without wasting a second.

On May 14, in front of one million Cubans who marched past your Interests Section, I told you very clearly what I had to do and would do. That is my job. Today, I reiterate it and I suggest that you and your advisors do not come up with any vicious plan for vengeance against our people. Do not try crazy adventures such as surgical strikes or wars of attrition using sophisticated techniques, because you could lose control of the situation. Undesirable things could happen that are not good for the Cuban people or for the US people. You could shatter the immigration agreement and provoke a mass exodus that we would not be in a position to prevent and you could bring about an all-out war between young American soldiers and the Cuban people. That would be very sad.

Yet, I assure you that you would never win that war. You will not find here a divided people, conflicting ethnic groups nor profound religious differences, nor will there be traitorous generals commanding our troops. You will find a people solidly united by culture, feelings of solidarity and social and human achievements that are unprecedented in history. You will not win glory with military action against Cuba.

Our people will never give up its independence nor will it ever give up its political, social and economic ideals.

Cuba showed full solidarity with the American people after the painful and unjustifiable attack on the Twin towers. That same day we expressed our point of view, which today is being confirmed with almost mathematical precision. War is not the way to put an end to terrorism and violence in the world. That tragic event has been used as a pretext to impose on the planet a policy of terror and force.

Your measures against the Cuban people are an atrocious and inhumane act. Cuba can prove that you want to destroy a country whose medical services have saved and continue to save hundreds of thousands of lives in poor countries of the world, a country that could even save as many lives of poor US citizens, as the three thousands who died in the Twin Towers

You surely know that 44 million people in the United States lack medical insurance and that at some point in a two-year period, 82 million Americans had no insurance and could not afford the astronomical costs of essential healthcare services in your country. A very conservative estimate indicates that many tens of thousands of lives are lost every year in the United States because of this, perhaps thirty or forty times the number that died in the Twin Towers. Someone should calculate this exactly.

In a short five-year period, Cuba is prepared to save the lives of 3,000 American poor. It is perfectly

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possible today to forecast and prevent a heart attack that could be fatal and alleviate illnesses that lead inevitably to death. These three thousand Americans could come to our country accompanied by a relative and receive medical treatment absolutely free of charge.

I wish to ask you a question, Mr. Bush, about ethics and principles. Would you be willing to give those people permission to come to Cuba on a program designed to save a life for every life lost in that horrendous attack on the Twin Towers?

And, if they accepted the offer of those services and decided to come, would they be punished?

Show the world that there is an alternative to arrogance, war, genocide, hatred, egoism, hypocrisy and lies!

On behalf of the Cuban people,

Fidel Castro Ruz

June 21, 2004

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