

**SPEECH GIVEN BY PRESIDENT FIDEL CASTRO RUZ, FIRST
SECRETARY OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST
PARTY OF CUBA, AT THE MAIN CEREMONY FOR THE 45TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE ATTACKS ON THE MONCADA AND CARLOS
MANUEL DE CÉSPEDES GARRISONS [1]**

Data:

26/07/1998

Comrades who fought at Moncada and revolutionary fighters;

Relatives of the martyrs of that action and so many other actions throughout our revolutionary struggle;

Invited delegations;

Guests in general;

Comrades;

Residents of Santiago de Cuba;

Compatriots:

This is the way I like these ceremonies to be held, with everyone in a seat of their own. (APPLAUSE)
Given the heat of recent years, growing heat, it's better like this, at this time of day, so I can converse calmly with all of you; reflect on the subjects about which I would like to talk today: historical themes, patriotic themes and ideological themes.

I've brought some papers, but don't get frightened; I'm not going to read them. (LAUGHTER) I need them for reasons of precision and so that each thing can be better understood.

Santiago de Cuba has received more than the flag, which is the honor of having been chosen as the site to commemorate this 45th anniversary of the July 26 attack on the Moncada Garrison, and although it is true that Santiago de Cuba has been outstanding throughout the Revolution, before it was chosen every five years to host this ceremony, in its own right, out of tradition. But that tradition changed when the principle was established that a city had to earn the right to host the July 26 celebration.

They were working constantly for that recognition and got very close to it in the last few years; but this year, which was the 45th anniversary, they won it through their own efforts, courage and merits. (APPLAUSE)

On this 45th anniversary, history rewarded Santiago de Cuba with other anniversaries, so that here we are commemorating three important anniversaries with distinctive characteristics, one of them very negative and the others very positive. But even regarding the one we consider negative, our people have demonstrated their capacity to confront those circumstances, a setback turned into a victory.

I'm referring, first of all, to the fact that this year, almost precisely this month, we are commemorating the centennial of the U.S. intervention in Cuba; at the same time, the 45th anniversary of the attack on the Moncada Garrison, a setback turned into a great victory; and the 40th anniversary of the battles which were decisive for the triumph of the Revolution, a great victory without any setbacks at all.

(THE CLOCK IN THE PLAZA STRIKES, FOLLOWED BY LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE) Does it strike every half hour or every 15 minutes? (LAUGHTER. HE IS TOLD THAT IT HAS A LONG RING ON THE HOUR AND A SHORT RING ON THE HALF HOUR) Well, that's good because it helps me, it reminds me of the time. (LAUGHTER)

On January 25, 1898, the battleship Maine entered Havana harbor. On February 15, it was blown up.

On April 19, the U.S. Congress adopted the joint resolution declaring that the people of Cuba were and by right should be free and independent. That was a deceptive resolution which apparently responded to the great sympathy for our people within the heart of U.S. society. It coincided with long years of fighting and with the impact of Weyler's concentration policy, which was a holocaust for our people and which resulted in the loss of the lives of hundreds of thousands of our compatriots from the countryside, mostly women, old people and children, who were unable to get to the territory held by the Liberation Army and were obliged to move into the cities.

Undoubtedly there was some sympathy on the part of the people of the United States, but there were also powerful expansionist and imperialist interests. It turned into the first imperialist war in contemporary history, which is how Lenin described it, and Martí had foreseen it earlier when he wrote, a few hours before his death, that everything he had done and would do was to prevent, through Cuba's independence, the United States from extending over the peoples of the Americas, and that it had to be done in silence. He saw the future with such clarity!

Martí didn't want intervention; Maceo didn't want intervention, and one time he said categorically to a group of young people that if there were a U.S. intervention in Cuba, that would be the only time he would be willing to fight alongside the Spaniards.

But that resolution was received by Cuban patriots as recognition of our people's struggle and merits, and the people of the United States received it in the same way. The idea that the Cuban people were and by right should be free and independent was a just idea, an unquestionable principle. Up until that moment, the United States' efforts throughout the 30 years of struggle had been concentrated on preventing the arrival of arms, munitions and reinforcements to our people.

In the war which began in 1895, all the armaments accumulated by the Cuban Revolutionary Party through many years of hard work and sacrifice were lost in a few days. The revolutionary leaders had to arrive under very difficult conditions: Antonio and José Maceo, Flor Crombet and others, dispersed over there in the Baracoa area, survived by a miracle. Not very far from there, Martí had to arrive in Playitas in a small boat with Máximo Gómez and a small group of men, because although their arms had been confiscated in the United States, the subjective conditions among the people were ready. A number of years had passed since 1878, since the Zanjón Pact, and the Cuban people were prepared to start the independence struggle again, but Martí wanted a quick war so that it would be as bloodless as possible and so as not to allow any opportunity for foreign intervention.

I said that the U.S. Congress' joint resolution was issued on April 19. When I read that date, I thought, what occurred on April 19? Just look at the coincidences: the sentiment of that joint resolution was fulfilled twice, the second time being January 1, 1959, which was 61 years later! That occurred here in Santiago de Cuba, when for the first time our people were really and truly free and independent. (APPLAUSE) But even more curious is the fact that on April 19, 1961, exactly 63 years later, our people, already fighting under the banners of socialism, defeated the imperialist mercenary forces in less than 72 hours, (APPLAUSE) despite the fact that three miles away there were aircraft carriers and warships that were much more powerful, modern and sophisticated than those which blockaded the port of

Santiago de Cuba on May 27, 1989. That day, with their blood, sweat and heroism, our people reaffirmed, once again and forever, that they were a free and sovereign people. (APPLAUSE)

Following the historical chronology, on April 25, war was declared. On May 19, Spanish Admiral Cervera's squadron, composed of six warships, penetrated Santiago de Cuba Bay, which you all know so well. Eight days later the U.S. squadron appeared and blockaded the port. This powerful squadron had double the number of ships, the firepower and the armor of the Spanish squadron.

On June 22, the first landing of U.S. soldiers took place on the outskirts of this city, to the east, in a place known as Daiquirí, which had previously been liberated by the province's patriotic forces. Days later there was another landing at Siboney, a second landing at Daiquirí, and the start of land operations.

On July 1 - you see, July - the most violent land battles broke out northeast of this city, over there in Viso, in which a Spanish military chief, General Vara del Rey, died valiantly. On that same day there was a fierce battle on San Juan Hill - so close to the place where we are gathered today - and the Cuban troops made a decisive contribution to both battles, since they did not limit themselves to participating in the battles, but also prevented the arrival of reinforcements from other parts of Oriente, from Bayamo, Holguín, Guantánamo. Only one group of reinforcements arrived, marching very quickly and with great determination from Manzanillo.

The Cuban troops prevented the arrival of the main Spanish reinforcements and harassed the garrison in Santiago from various directions. U.S. history doesn't talk about that. There were thousands of Cuban patriots who participated in those actions, and they suffered numerous losses, but they never received recognition in U.S. history books. At the most, there may have been some disparaging mention in the memoirs of some U.S. military leaders who participated.

Nor is it mentioned that, still during the colonial period, thousands of Cubans had gone from the western part of the island, along with Spaniards and French, to participate in the U.S. war of independence a century before. There were Cubans, born here, who participated in that conflict. That is never mentioned in U.S. history books either, that Cubans, at one time or another, at one time fighting for independence and at another fighting in what many of our compatriots considered an action of solidarity and friendship, fought alongside the U.S. soldiers against the Spaniards. The great deceptions had not yet emerged.

On July 3, Cervera's squadron received the order to move out, and in a truly heroic action which must be recognized, they followed the order and moved out of the harbor, one ship at a time, because only one ship could navigate through that exit at a time, faced by a squadron in formation which attacked and destroyed each ship, one by one, as it emerged from the harbor. On that occasion, the Spanish sailors really displayed extraordinary bravery and heroism.

I'm also reminded of the final episode in our struggle in regard to Santiago de Cuba. We didn't have any squadron, but two of the three frigates that the Batista government possessed were in the harbor, quite modern frigates with good firepower, but we blockaded them and, curiously, we didn't do it from the sea; we did it from the heights of La Socapa to the west of the mouth of the bay. We installed eight .30-caliber machine guns, and we calculated that the frigates couldn't pass through there without their decks being bombarded.

When the war ended, out of curiosity we inspected one of the frigates and we saw that our calculations were correct. Their decks and cabins had very little protection; they weren't designed to withstand machine gunfire at close-range. The frigates would not have been able to get out of Santiago de Cuba harbor.

Through that narrow mouth the Spanish ships left one by one in 1898 and were easily destroyed. Hundreds of Spanish sailors died, one U.S. sailor died and several more were wounded. The Spanish ships' firepower was not equal to that of the U.S. ships, and they couldn't perforate the armor of those

warships, those battleships. That was the history of that battle, July 3.

On July 10, the city of Santiago de Cuba was bombarded by the U.S. squadron.

On July 17 - look how close we are to the date - negotiations took place between the U.S. and Spanish troops, without the participation of any representative of the Cuban forces; an armistice was called and the city surrendered that day. U.S. troops penetrated the city and did not allow Cuban patriots to enter. This is one of the saddest episodes in our history, since those soldiers who had fought for 30 years, beginning on October 10, 1868, were not permitted to enter the city. The U.S. flag was raised over the Government Palace and the Morro Fortress. Totally indignant and faced with that insufferable humiliation, General Calixto García, who had cooperated so loyally with the troops who were supposedly his allies, wrote to Máximo Gómez and renounced his post as head of the Cuban troops in Oriente. What day? July 17.

What occurred on the other anniversary I was talking about, that of the decisive battles in our liberation war? Over there in El Jigüe, on July 17, 1958, faced with the offensive carried out by thousands and thousands of Batista's soldiers, another decisive battle took place against a surrounded battalion at a spot known as El Jigüe. Those battles lasted 10 days and July 17 was its most critical moment.

In other words, exactly 60 years after the Cuban soldiers were prohibited from entering Santiago de Cuba, a battle went on which would change the course of the offensive and, once that offensive was defeated, it would signify a turn in our war against Batista's army. It was really a vindication, on the exact date, 60 years later, in this same month of July. The battle ended on July 21 and from that time on, our troops engaged in a counteroffensive which put Batista's army on the run, with its numerous battalions, supported by tanks, planes, artillery, when the rebels had only rifles and mines. The course of history began to change and made possible, a few months later, that January 1, 1959, in Santiago de Cuba.

On December 10, 1898, the Paris Peace Treaty was signed, and the Cuban government-in-arms was not allowed to participate. The agreement was between the United States and Spain, and the Republic-in-Arms was absent, it was not allowed to participate in those negotiations and that agreement. Then we were occupied for four years by the U.S. army. It's good to remind those with short memories about these things; it's good to remind the neo-annexationists about history. During that period they disarmed the Liberation Army, dissolved Martí's party and installed a pseudo-republic through the Platt Amendment, which gave the United States the constitutional right to interfere in Cuba's internal affairs. So there was no more Cuban Revolutionary Party, there was no more Liberation Army, and as long as that Constitutional Assembly was going on, a U.S. senator got the idea of proposing that amendment in the U.S. Congress and it was approved, by virtue of which the pseudo-republic was born (THE CLOCK STRIKES) - and I have spent over a half hour on this history. (LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE) They took control of the country's basic wealth, an army like the one in Texas was established, and our country was at the mercy of the U.S. government's interests.

But our people never stopped struggling throughout those years. Very harsh, draconian economic treaties were imposed; they were subjected to several direct and indirect interventions; they maintained the occupation of a piece of our national territory, which is still utilized as a naval base; it's been for 100 years too, and they maintain it by force. That's how this century began for our country and that was the conclusion of the struggles in which entire generations of Cubans sacrificed their lives.

Our people continued their struggle valiantly and in a revolutionary manner for decades, going through hard times, difficult processes, until the March 10, 1952, coup d'état. That event was what generated the need to defeat that government by means of arms, the event that engendered the action which we are commemorating here 45 years later.

It was a long road. Perhaps with the experience we have today, we revolutionaries would have taken a path that was a little more sure, and have achieved victory in less time; I've thought about that. I've

thought that maybe, instead of the ambitious plan of taking over that fort, if we could have started in the Sierra Maestra we might have accelerated the process of toppling Batista. That, of course, is based on experience, and certainly the mountains were not excluded as a possibility at that time.

Our initial plan was to take that garrison, occupy the arms and mobilize the people of Santiago de Cuba. What we counted on most were the people of Santiago de Cuba, (APPLAUSE) given their history and traditions. But before making the decision to carry out the attack on that fortress, we had been willing to cooperate with all forces that proclaimed themselves as being anti-Batista. We felt that uniting everyone was indispensable, and as long as unity existed, we devoted ourselves to recruiting, organizing and preparing men and women for that united action. But that unity we hoped for never really emerged, and would never emerge.

So by that time we had about 1200 men, pretty well organized and pretty well trained, as much as was possible under those circumstances, and without enough arms for those men. At best, we had one and a half weapons for every 10 men, and they weren't exactly war weapons, but rather weapons that could be purchased in gun shops. At the gun shop in Santiago de Cuba, which was near the boulevard, and through Renato Guitart, we bought several .22 rifles and some shotguns; they weren't weapons of war, but neither were they inoffensive weapons. A semi-automatic shotgun is a weapon that could be considered as good as a hand-held Thompson machine gun, because it can shoot nine heavy shots with a single cartridge. They are not inoffensive weapons, and neither are .22 rifles in the hands of good shooters, and we had taught our fighters how to shoot well. Those weapons served the objective we sought, but there were very few of them. There were a total of 150 or 160 weapons for those 1200 men, and what we did was to make a selection of the most steadfast, best disciplined, best prepared cells, to whom we could give the weapons.

Notice what our tactics were: we didn't recruit anyone in Santiago de Cuba, except for one; we recruited people from Havana, from the city and the surrounding countryside, and people from Pinar del Río.

In the capital there were many people who considered themselves revolutionaries; they were looking for people, trying to organize themselves. Really, there was a moment when we had more than all the other organizations put together. There were some people who belonged to four or five different organizations, they were counted five times, and the members of our group numbered 1200, in the flesh.

We didn't want to do recruitment work in Santiago de Cuba, once we decided to carry out the plans on our own initiative and once we had selected the ideal site, which was the former province of Oriente and the city of Santiago de Cuba. We didn't want to give ourselves away.

We had someone from Santiago, and later a second one, who was Abel [Santamaría], a very capable comrade whom we trusted completely, since he had come to Santiago de Cuba as the movement's second-in-command, to carry out tasks that were indispensable in the preparations to receive the arms and the men. All the work of mobilization and transporting weapons and men was done in Havana. Actually the little flags on our cars, given that our comrades weren't very well known, belonged to the famous 4th of September Movement. When a policeman saw a little 4th of September flag, he'd say, "Ah, very good, there go the General's people!" It was easier. I was a little better known and I took the precaution of not using one of those little flags, because if I did that it would have brought me under great suspicion.

But I must say that in the last few days, in a matter of days, we transported the weapons by various means. Melba [Hernández] could tell that story, as could Yeyé [Haydée Santamaría], the female comrades who carried an enormous suitcase. (APPLAUSE) At one point, a chivalrous Batista soldier even helped the women carry those suitcases, which were pretty heavy. The men were transported in 24 hours.

We were going to recruit the Santiago residents afterwards en masse, the entire population, knowing

not only their history but also the fact that at the time of the March 10 coup d'état, they were the only residents in the country that rose up and were ready to come to this garrison, (APPLAUSE) who hesitated to support the coup, until the moment when they backed the March 10 traitors. I said that we didn't have to convince the people of Santiago de Cuba because they were already convinced, (APPLAUSE) and that when we took the fortress and had 1500 to 2000 weapons, they would join en masse.

When we first entered the Moncada there was initial confusion, because we were rather astute: instead of wearing civilian clothes, we found real uniforms from that army, and ones with the rank of sergeant to distinguish ourselves and confuse the enemy. We could recognize each other best from our shoes, which weren't boots; the caps and everything else were military, and we had done some tailoring to complete the uniforms. We were going to sow great confusion before they realized what was happening, and before the other units realized we were going to simulate an uprising of sergeants. It was very similar to what Mr. Batista had done in 1933. That was in the first moment, while we occupied everything here - they were sleeping, as we were able to confirm when those in the first car occupied a barracks. They were all placed face down.

I DON'T HAVE THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT THAT ALL THE PEOPLE OF SANTIAGO DE CUBA WOULD HAVE JOINED THAT STRUGGLE

I tell you sincerely that if it would have been possible to consider other variants that were safer, if we were to do it all over again, 45 years later I think that that was the plan that should have been used, (APPLAUSE) that was the plan: to take over the main post and with the other cars take the general staff, the other barracks and everyone face down; take the Palace of Justice, the dominant building; take the roofs of the building at the rear, which was the civilian hospital; and the regiment would have been taken prisoner.

It was perfectly possible, I don't have the slightest doubt, just as I don't have the slightest doubt that all the people of Santiago de Cuba would have joined that struggle. We were going to take the arms out of that garrison quickly, in case of an air attack, and we were going to locate them in various buildings in the city, and organize defenses for the counterattack. By telephone we were going to fool a lot of people by getting some of those sergeants who would be our prisoners to talk with the squadron chiefs and the other sergeants in the province, in order to subordinate them or at least gain some time.

Our defense against the counterattack and the reason we tried to occupy Bayamo and the Bayamo garrison came out of the need to establish an advance defense force on the bridge over the Cauto River on the Central Highway. Those men attacked the Bayamo Garrison to accomplish that mission.

So we don't have any doubt about the selection of that area, that population, that objective, to occupy weapons. We said to the comrades: Well, our arms are well protected and well greased in the garrisons. We don't have money to buy them, but why should we buy them if they're there waiting for us? With a few arms, we can occupy the ones that regiment has.

And another idea: once we had identified ourselves as the ones who were going to take the garrison, we would proclaim on the radio the revolutionary program that we proposed, and we would call for a general strike all over the country.

But if we couldn't stop the counterattack, if we weren't able to paralyze the country - and that wouldn't have been possible, because the level of hatred against the dictatorship was very high - then we would have fallen back to the mountains with thousands of weapons. That would not have failed. We had to start the struggle all over again with less than 10 weapons after the setback at Alegría de Pío in 1956. And with those few arms and some that we accumulated later on, in 25 months the war was won over armed forces with 80,000 men and weapons supplied by the United States; with U.S. advisers; with airplanes which were quite effective for attacking guerrillas; with tanks, artillery, communications and many other things that we did not have.

So the war was won, fundamentally, with the people and thanks to our trust in the people, the certainty that we felt about the people.

It won't be easy to repeat a history like the one we have lived through in these 45 years.

We really did it all quite quickly. We had to go through imprisonment and exile; we had to go through the dispersion of our expedition members, those who landed on the Granma.

There was another curious figure: five years, five months and five days. A gambler would have gone with the number "5," wouldn't they? (LAUGHTER) I recall that in those times people bet on the lottery and things like that: five, five and five. [Juan] Almeida says "nun, nun and nun." (LAUGHTER) I guess five is "nun." Is that right, Almeida? "Nun" means five [in the numbers game]? Five years, five months and five days after that attack, the Revolution triumphed and we were in Santiago de Cuba, and this garrison was in our hands, with all its weapons and all the weapons of the province.

There were 17,000 besieged soldiers in the former province of Oriente. The island was divided into two parts with Che's forces attacking Santa Clara and Camilo supporting with his column. (APPLAUSE) The island was divided into two parts and there were 17,000 besieged soldiers, approximately - according to my calculations, it would have to be confirmed more carefully, but that's an approximate calculation - I'm not going to use the calculations made in those days - while there were not much more than 3000 of us. There were shotguns, revolvers, everything; although, I repeat, these are figures that only the historians can confirm. But I tell you that at the time of the great offensive, the last one against Batista, we had less than 300 men, maybe only 200.

Since they concentrated the attack against Front No. 1 - Radio Rebelde was already a fundamental institution, and there were hospitals, mine factories and everything there - it was necessary to find reinforcements: Almeida, who was close to Santiago de Cuba; Guillermo [García]; Che; the school of recruits where we had hundreds of young people who - without weapons, because we didn't have any for them - were training under almost daily bombardment; and we even sent for Camilo, who was fighting in the lowlands, to take part in that offensive. Given the great distance and the important role they were playing in the revolutionary strategy, the only troops that weren't mobilized to the Sierra Maestra were the troops of the 2nd Front, led by Comrade Raúl. (APPLAUSE)

We were barely 300 men in all. The battle lasted 70 days; for 35 days they advanced and for 35 days we advanced.

When the offensive ended, there were 900 of us. We took hundreds of prisoners and captured over 500 weapons, and with 900 men with weapons of war we took the country, we marched to the center of the island. We had the powerful 2nd Front - we marched across the rest of Oriente province - and we sent two powerful columns with excellent soldiers and extraordinary leaders to march to western Cuba: Che, with 140 men, as I recall; and Camilo with 90 men, who wrote one of our country's most glorious pages of military history. (APPLAUSE) They had to cross those 400 kilometers of lowlands without guides in many cases, after a hurricane, because when they left there was a hurricane and they had to cross the Cauto River when it was overflowing, march through those swamps and rice paddies, against an enemy with planes, tanks, artillery, constant reconnaissance.... And under those conditions those two columns arrived in the center of the country.

While they were arriving, the columns we had sent to the current eastern provinces had become consolidated. One was sent to Camagüey, but we had acquired so many weapons in such a short time that we did not have sufficient cadres. Several very promising ones had died during the offensive, and a leader from Camagüey without much experience and with a small column disobeyed an order, used trucks and was caught in an ambush which caused considerable damage to that column. When Che and Camilo arrived in Las Villas, the counteroffensive began.

I recall that we left La Plata with a platoon of 30 men and 1000 unarmed recruits. We had learned the art of capturing weapons from Batista's army, something we had not known how to do at the beginning, and in 40 days those 1000 recruits were armed and we had extra weapons. In Palma Soriano alone, we occupied 350 weapons.

With Almeida's front, various columns and the 2nd Front combined, we prepared the attack on the city. We knew exactly what we had to do, how many days it would last. We were going to apply in El Caney, in Boniato, at the airport and on Quintero Hill practically the same formula as in El Jigüe, but within the city: surround the battalions, and fight the reinforcements. The difference was that in El Jigüe we began the battle with 120 men and in Santiago de Cuba we were going to start with 1200 men: 300 for each battalion. Never before had we had so many people to confront those battalions, whose morale was pretty low by then.

Pardon my incursion into history, with the details I have given, to explain, in general terms, the concepts and the events that made possible the staggering, or we could say thundering victory of the Rebel Army. (APPLAUSE)

The head of the enemy's troops in Oriente met with me on December 28. A helicopter arrived to the place we had agreed upon and he told us, "Well, we've lost the war. How do we end it?" And I proposed to him that the Santiago de Cuba troops rise up. "Join the Revolution, maybe in that way some men can be saved." Because we had met some members of that army who weren't killers, who weren't henchmen, even some academy officers, the best example of whom was Comrade Quevedo, who is now a general of our Revolutionary Armed Forces (APPLAUSE) and who was the head of that battalion which fought hard against us in El Jigüe. We could have saved a number of officers with certain qualities. The head of the enemy troops agreed, but insisted on going to Havana. I said, "Oh, you insist? You shouldn't go, but if you insist...." He said he had a brother in Matanzas, the head of a regiment, and that there was no problem.

I set up three conditions: "First, we don't want a coup d'état in the capital. Second, we don't want any contact with the American embassy. Third, we don't want anyone to help Batista escape." Those were the three conditions we imposed. He said, "No problem." I said, "If he escapes because we don't capture him, then he escapes. But I don't want anyone helping him escape." We explained this at the beginning of the Revolution, but I see a lot of new people here and that's why I'm repeating it. The man went to Havana, we waited for him. The city's troops were supposed to rise up on December 31; the second-in-command was also in agreement. The 29th came, then the 30th, and there was no news. Strange messages began to arrive, asking for patience, saying that everything was going well. I warned them that we were going to attack the city. I'm not going to go on and on. The fact is that the man contacted the embassy, carried out a coup d'état in the capital and saw Batista off at the runway. Three things absolutely contrary to what we had planned: a leap into the void.

From Palma Soriano the order went out to all the columns to keep advancing. We told Che and Camilo, "Keep going on to Havana, Che to La Cabaña, Camilo to Columbia." I knew that at that moment the demoralized troops were not going to offer much resistance. We ordered all the columns to keep advancing, with no cease-fire anywhere, we warned Santiago de Cuba and pointed out that the troops were moving toward the city. Starting that day, before 72 hours were up we had disarmed the whole army. Our comrades in the Movement and other revolutionary organizations took over the police stations and controlled the capital.

When we arrived in Havana, on the first day the police stations were taken, the city had taken them over. In Santiago de Cuba, we already had 100 weapons inside for the attack we had planned; we had brought them in through the bay. The enemy soldiers controlled some buildings, and aside from the four battalions which day after day we were surrounding and carrying out battles against reinforcements, on the fifth day we had an uprising in the city, for which we had sent arms.

The frigates could not escape. In the end they cooperated with us, and that's how we got to that happy

day, January 1, 1959, with a revolutionary victory. (APPLAUSE)

So, as we said to the residents of Santiago de Cuba from Palma Soriano, "This time the Liberation Army did enter Santiago de Cuba!" (APPLAUSE) Barely 61 years had passed since that affront, that humiliation when our military leaders and fighters in the war of independence were not allowed to enter the city.

There was total order in the city. What pretexts would our neighbors to the North use? That the Cubans were surely going to take revenge and create disorder. Total and absolute order in the city of Santiago de Cuba, not a single case of revenge, not a single case of looting, because we told the people, "No one should take revenge, because there will be justice, those guilty of committing crimes will be punished." And our city gave extraordinary proof that it was an educated people, a people with a consciousness, and they were just getting started; we could say that they were on the first page of revolutionary learning. Those people, who still included a lot of illiterates and semi-illiterates, who lacked political savvy, who had been deceived from the time they were in school, who had heard thousands of false stories about the history of Cuba - among other things that we owed our independence to the United States - those people were capable of writing glorious pages.

Once the Revolution triumphed, what came next? The fulfillment of the Moncada Program. What came next? The true Revolution.

For the first time in Cuba's history, the promises made to the people were going to be put to the test, because for 60 years they made promises and more promises and they were never kept. The moment came to apply that program we had fought so hard for.

I hope you will forgive me and I will try, really, not to go on too long. I've made this sort of introduction, and the clock is about to strike again. I think someone must have stopped the clock; they've done me a bad favor by doing that. (LAUGHTER)

I want to express some ideas here, so that this 45th anniversary serves as a source of reflection and meditation. I have to read some things; I don't have any choice, and I'll be as brief as possible, while adding some arguments that are indispensable.

WHEN THE REVOLUTION TRIUMPHED, THE TIME HAD COME TO CARRY OUT OUR PROGRAM

When the Revolution triumphed, the time had come to carry out our program. At the trial stemming from the attack on the Moncada Garrison, I said - and I'm going to read you some essential parts:

"In terms of struggle, when we talk about the people we're talking about the 600,000 Cubans without work, who want to earn their daily bread honestly...the 500,000 farm laborers who live in miserable shacks, who work four months of the year and starve the rest, sharing their misery with their children...the 400,000 industrial workers and laborers whose retirement funds have been embezzled, whose benefits are taken away, whose homes are wretched quarters...the 100,000 small farmers who live and die working land that is not theirs...the 30,000 teachers and instructors who are so devoted, dedicated and so necessary to the better destiny of future generations...the 20,000 small businessmen weighed down by debts, ruined by the crisis and harangued by the plague of grafting and venal officials; the 10,000 young professional people: doctors, engineers, lawyers, veterinarians, school teachers, dentists, pharmacists, journalists, painters, sculptors, etc., who finish school with their degrees anxious to work and full of hope, only to find themselves at a dead end, all doors closed to them, and where no ear hears their clamor or supplication...."

As you can see, here there is absolutely no mention of bankers, owners of latifundia, landlords, powerful merchants, industrialists, oligarchs, bourgeoisie or exploiters of any kind.

I challenge those who say false things about the Revolution's initial program to find in the Moncada Program, or in History Will Absolve Me, a single promise to those gentlemen who were plundering and

exploiting this country.

We were talking about the people then, which is the same today, 45 years later, with incredible precision and definition.

History Will Absolve Me continues: "The problem of the land, the problem of industrialization, the problem of housing, the problem of unemployment, the problem of education and the problem of the people's health: these are the six problems we would take immediate steps to solve...."

Further on: "A revolutionary government backed by the people and with the respect of the nation, after cleansing the different institutions of all venal and corrupt officials, would proceed immediately to the country's industrialization, mobilizing all inactive capital, currently estimated at about 1.5 billion pesos, through the National Bank and the Agricultural and Industrial Development Bank, and submitting the mammoth task to experts and men of absolute competence totally removed from all political machinations, for study, direction, planning and realization."

This was 45 years ago and we were talking about estimates of money held in the banks. It was a way of saying, "No, that money's not leaving the country; that money has to be invested here."

"After settling the 100,000 small farmers as owners on the land which they previously rented, a revolutionary government would immediately proceed to settle the land problem. First, as set forth in the Constitution, it would establish the maximum amount of land to be held by each type of agricultural enterprise and would acquire the excess acreage by expropriation, recovery of lands stolen from the state, improvement of swampland, planting of large nurseries and reserving of zones for reforestation. Secondly, it would distribute the remaining land among peasant families with priority given to the larger ones, and would promote agricultural cooperatives" - look how early there was talk of agricultural cooperatives - "for communal use of expensive equipment, cold storage plants and unified technical, professional guidelines in farming and cattle raising. Finally, it would provide resources, equipment, protection and useful knowledge to the peasants.

"A revolutionary government would solve the housing problem by cutting all rents by half, by providing tax exemptions on homes inhabited by the owners; by tripling taxes on rented homes; by tearing down hovels and replacing them with modern apartment buildings; and by financing housing all over the island on a scale heretofore unheard of, with the criterion that, just as each rural family should possess its own tract of land, each city family should own its own home or apartment. There is plenty of building material and more than enough manpower to make a decent home for every Cuban. But if we continue to wait for the golden calf, a thousand years will have gone by and the problem will remain the same."

Do you know what the golden calf means? It's a biblical phrase, because I too learned some of those phrases. The golden calf is capitalism, and that's what I wanted to say, and I said it. In a word, it is the famous market economy. If we keep waiting for miracles from the golden calf, a thousand years will pass and the problem will be the same.

"On the other hand, today possibilities of taking electricity to the most isolated areas on the island are greater than ever. The use of nuclear energy in this field is now a reality and will greatly reduce the cost of producing electricity." That was long before oil prices hit the roof, and yet we were already talking about nuclear energy.

Actually, at the time the special period started we were about to finish the first nuclear reactor of the four projected in Cienfuegos, and plans were being made for a second nuclear power plant in northeastern Cuba, work was going on in that direction. But despite the fact that we weren't able to finish that plant - what everyone knows happened happened - and we had to stick with just the thermoelectric plants we had already built, that electricity program was still fulfilled, we could say, since today approximately 95% of the population has access to electrical services. With or without power cuts, for the well-known reasons, but 95% has access to electrical services, (APPLAUSE) even without a

nuclear reactor. And we are struggling to use new sources of energy, such as natural gas - as we explained during the National Assembly sessions - and we are attempting to modernize, looking for other formulas, some economic associations, to assure our electricity capacities in the coming years, not just for the population's needs, but also for the country's industrial development, its social, tourism and other development.

We said then:

"With these three projects and reforms, the problem of unemployment would automatically disappear and the task of improving public health and fighting disease would become much less difficult.

"Finally, a revolutionary government would undertake the integral reform of the educational system, bringing it into line with the projects just mentioned with the idea of educating those generations which will have the privilege of living in a happier land. Do not forget the words of the Apostle [José Martí]: 'A grave mistake is being made in Latin America: in countries that live almost completely from the produce of the land, men are being educated exclusively for urban life and are not trained for farm life.' 'The happiest country is the one which has best educated its sons, both in the instruction of thought and the direction of their feelings.' 'An educated people will always be strong and free.'"

One can talk to an educated people the way I am talking to you here today. (APPLAUSE)

Today we can't speak of 10,000 professionals who have graduated from universities; today there are over 500,000, (APPLAUSE) 50 times the figure mentioned there. Today we can't speak of 30,000 teachers and instructors; there are over 250,000. (APPLAUSE) We can't talk of 5000 doctors, which was the estimate at that time, and many of them didn't have work; today there are over 60,000. (APPLAUSE) We can't speak of millions of citizens who pay rent, because 85% of the population - this is the highest figure in the world - own their homes. (APPLAUSE) As for electricity, I already mentioned the percentage that have access to it, whether it be through a small hydroelectric dam or a generator or power lines. There are rural areas in our mountains where there are no power cuts, because they have small hydroelectric dams there, and we're building more and we'll continue to build all we need, taking advantage of any resource.

At that time, what mountain in our country had a hydroelectric dam? Which one?

Despite the enormous difficulties of the special period, with a teacher for every 42 inhabitants, Cuba - which in those times had 30% illiteracy and 50-60% semi-illiteracy, because being in second or third grade doesn't mean you're literate - has the highest index of teachers and instructors in the whole world. (APPLAUSE) It gives me satisfaction to be able to say this on this 45th anniversary. And we achieved that quite a while ago; now we have to improve it, so that we can be even better educated, as Martí would say, more cultured and more prepared in the direction of our feelings.

I repeat: "The happiest country is the one which has best educated its sons, both in the instruction of thought and the direction of their feelings." "An educated people will always be strong and free." Thank you, Martí, mastermind of the attack on the Moncada Garrison, who inculcated us with these ideas! (APPLAUSE) An illiterate people cannot be strong or free, and we see that everywhere. We can say today, 45 years after that noble effort, "We did what you asked, our teacher!"

Seventy-four percent of the elementary school teachers are certified or are studying to get their university certificates, and 94.6% of the secondary teachers are university graduates.

Ninety-eight percent of the population up to age five is part of the Educate Your Child program: 17% in day-care centers, a total of 151,145; 70% through informal channels and the rest in kindergarten, 117,754. A total of 96% of the boys and girls who are five years old are in kindergarten. School enrollment among the population between the ages of six and 16 was 94.2% at the close of 1997, and it is increasing constantly since the 1994-95 school year, when it was 91.5%. Furthermore, 88.8% of

preschool and elementary school students attend all-day classes.

Enrollment in boarding schools run by the Ministry of Education was 277,900 students in the 1997-98 school year. Semi-boarding students totaled 657,800 in activities administered by the provinces, amid shortages, limitations and needs of which we are well aware.

Educational services are provided in the mountains to 152,700 students - in the mountains! - where there are 2400 schools with 12,600 teachers and instructors, one for every 11 students, of whom 2600 belong to contingents, detachments and mountain brigades. In the territory covered by the Turquino Plan, over 95% of the population through age five is enrolled in some educational facility.

Special education - something that did not exist before the Revolution in our country and wasn't even mentioned at the time of the Moncada attack - now consists of 425 institutions and over 13,500 educators.

The dropout rate had gradually gone down since the 1991-92 school year, and is now down to 1%.

Continuation of studies in junior high schools for those who graduate from sixth grade has recovered gradually since the 1993-94 school year, to a current 99.8%.

As for the continuation of studies for junior high graduates, the deterioration experienced in the first years of the special period has been reversed, and in the 1997-98 school year it was 98.2%.

There is no illiteracy, of course. The Revolution did away with it in less than one year, which is also a unique case in the history of education in any country in the world. Naturally, then came the follow-up courses to eradicate semi-illiteracy.

The network of institutions in higher education is composed of 15 universities affiliated with the Ministry of Higher Education; 15 higher pedagogical schools, five higher institutes of medical sciences and nine independent medical schools, eight military training centers, the Communist Party of Cuba's higher school and another five institutes affiliated with an equal number of agencies, for a total of 57 institutions of higher learning. Fifty-seven! Total enrollment, 126,000, broken down into 73,148 day students and 15,698 correspondence students. That's higher education, which I couldn't fail to mention. (APPLAUSE)

Essential health statistics: infant mortality has been reduced to 7.2 per 1000 live births in 1997. You know that, but it's good to recall it today and to think about how high infant mortality was at the time we were trying to take over this fortress.

Maternal mortality is 2.2 per 10,000 live births. Low birth weight, 6%; in 1997 it was 7.3%. A total of 98.8% of the children under two years of age are protected against 10 diseases. No other country has a program protecting children which is quite the same, despite our difficulties. Over 80% of the general mortality is due to non-transmissible chronic illnesses and this index continues to go down.

All the indicators for transmissible diseases, except AIDS, have really been brought down to a minimum. In that battle, our country could be considered some kind of Olympic champion. In addition to those already eliminated, the indicator for tetanus in adults has been reduced to the lowest in history - before, many adults and children died of tetanus. The same low indicators exist for congenital syphilis, meningococcal disease, viral and bacterial meningitis, and typhoid fever. There are no reported cases of German measles or mumps.

The total number of institutions devoted to health care, on both the national and local levels, is as follows: 280 hospitals; 442 polyclinics; 168 dental clinics; 33 medical schools and institutes; 26 blood banks, where every blood donation is tested and no one has to pay to receive blood, which is the result of the population's solidarity; 219 maternity homes; 196 homes for the aged, and it's a shame that

there aren't enough of these.

Of the total number of hospitals, 83 are general hospitals, 31 are clinical-surgical hospitals, 26 are children's hospitals, 18 are gynecological-obstetrical hospitals, 16 are mother and child hospitals, 64 are rural hospitals, 42 are specialized.

Total number of beds: 80,528, for an index of 7.3 per 1000 inhabitants; of them the immense majority, 66,263, are for medical care.

There are 89 intensive care units: 53 for adults and 36 for children.

Human resources devoted to health care: 338,983 persons working in this country in this sector.

Total number of doctors: 63,384. We are also in first place in this respect among all the countries of the world, developed and not developed.

We had talked about our industrialization program.

Electricity generation capacities have increased tenfold; when the Revolution triumphed there were a little over 300,000 kilowatts and now there are about three million. The problems we have with fuel today, that's a different thing, along with backlogs in maintenance, but the capacities are there, they're recovering, they're getting bigger, and they are 10 times greater than what the Revolution encountered in 1959.

Production of steel, machinery, construction materials, foodstuffs, textiles and other things have grown several times over, and today they are facing obstacles of an external nature which we understand all too well, which I'm not going to repeat here. Suffice it to say that we have had to deal with an ever more merciless blockade and the disappearance of the socialist bloc and the USSR.

Roads, highways, dams, canals, irrigation systems, agricultural machinery and construction equipment have reached unprecedented levels.

Remember that I mentioned that in those days retirement funds had been embezzled, but now not a single citizen lacks social security, and the number of people receiving pensions is around one and a half million. In 1977, there was a pensioner for every 2.4 workers. In 1998 over 1.7 billion pesos will be invested in this sector. In the middle of the special period, this spending has increased by over 500 million pesos.

This is how the Revolution acts! This is how the promises of the Moncada Program have been kept! (APPLAUSE)

I want to add that I have limited myself to a few statistics and indices, aware as I am and as we all are of the great limitations under which we are working, the need to utilize all our resources much better and the need to improve our human labor, the subjective factors, because we may lack pain pills at some point, but nothing is as soothing as a bit of affection and consideration for the sick. (APPLAUSE)

We could talk about so many things. How our society has eliminated forms of corruption and injustice: inequality, discrimination on the basis of race and gender. Before, millions of our compatriots were hurt so badly every day by those who considered themselves racially superior, and you know that those prejudices were not born in our country; they were brought in from abroad.

We are a racially mixed people, a hybrid people, a mestizo people. Those pretensions of clubs for whites, schools for whites, and things like that....(MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE SAY, "HEAVEN FORBID!") That's it, heaven forbid! And may it always be forbidden, because that was imported with the interventions and with the neocolonization of our country.

Women today constitute over 60% of the country's technical work force. (APPLAUSE) I'd like for someone to tell me about other countries where it's like that, even though we are a poor, blockaded, doubly blockaded country against which economic war has been waged for decades.

What wouldn't we have been able to do if we were left in peace to work, and if we were left to exercise our right to have the political, social and economic system which we choose to have?

We've already lived through that garbage we talked about at the time of that July 26th, 45 years ago, so why do we have to go back to that, and who can make us go back to that? (MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE SAY, "NO ONE!" AND "DOWN WITH IMPERIALISM!") (APPLAUSE)

WHAT COULD OUR COUNTRY HAVE EXPECTED IF THE COUNTERREVOLUTIONARIES HAD WON?

What price have we had to pay? A high price, the price of a blockade and an economic war which has lasted over 35 years, the price of aggression, dirty wars, sabotage, counterrevolutionary bands, mercenary invasions worth appearing in any of the texts at the Party's Níco López School, recalling the number of latifundia owners who took part in that invasion, the number of henchmen from the dictatorship, the number of oligarchs and bourgeoisie. Can you imagine for one second what those counterrevolutionaries would have been like if they had won?

What happened in Guatemala, dear compatriots of Santiago de Cuba and the whole country? What happened when that mercenary invasion triumphed? What happened? That was in 1954, after the attack on the Moncada Garrison, and we were imprisoned. What happened just because they carried out an agrarian reform to help the millions of native people in that country who were evicted from their lands and were living in the most abject misery? One hundred and fifty thousand victims, 150,000 dead, of them over 100,000 disappeared persons.

Who made that counterrevolution? Who supported all those governments that caused the disappearance of so many people? Ah, the greatest defenders of democracy and human rights.

No one knows where the disappeared are and we know the dead are buried underground, the dead who did not disappear. But the world is flooded with words, clichés, lies, demagoguery.

Who made 30,000 people disappear in Argentina? Who supported those who made them disappear? Who was responsible for the 3000 disappearances and murders in Chile? Who was responsible for the tens of thousands of deaths in El Salvador and Nicaragua as a result of the dirty wars and repressive governments?

What would have happened here if that imperialist formula triumphed, with those gentlemen full of hatred who came to retake their lands, their businesses, their houses, their privileges?

A few months ago, a Guatemalan bishop who had published a report with all the facts about the crimes in Guatemala, after the peace negotiations, was brutally killed within 72 hours of having released the report. They're still looking for the culprits; he was killed for publishing a report that was 72 hours old, and that was after the peace agreements were signed and the arrangements for peace had been made.

What could our country have expected if the counterrevolutionaries had won?

How many sons and daughters of our people lost their lives fighting against the bandits in the Escambray mountains and in many other places? They organized groups in all the former provinces of the country, even in Havana province.

Later we came to the brink of a world nuclear war in October 1962. As a consequence of what? Of plans which today are recognized in declassified documents published in the United States, in search of a

pretext to invade the island after the Bay of Pigs defeat. Pirate attacks, terrorist acts which have lasted decades, assassination attempts which have not let up a single instant.

I think I have the dubious distinction of having been the target of more assassination attempts than any other statesman in any country and any period in history. And since they haven't had any luck or success, every once in a while they report that I'm sick or dead.

The other day I was saying to some reporters, "Listen to me, you're going to create a problem for me. The day I die no one's going to believe it." (LAUGHTER) It's been a high price - not for me, you can be sure that I almost have fun with all those news reports and those plans, really - but I tell you, because of the struggle that we have had to wage, and especially against the blockade, the economic war, the attempt to asphyxiate our people, of testing its will, its steadfastness, its heroism every day.

What I'm telling you now can be documented.

A few days ago, in the United States, a well-known newspaper - with whose political line we are not always in agreement, whose articles and focus we do not always share, but which undoubtedly is a newspaper which enjoys great authority within the United States and the world - published information which proved to be sensational.

Our newspapers, which have not participated in this debate, limited themselves to giving an objective summary of the content of that information, and I believe that it is important to reflect a little on this point and for us to become familiar with this information. We're not unaware of this; it's another matter. It's important for public opinion in the United States to be informed about some things, let's make it clear, about some things that have been done against our country, about some crimes which have been committed against our people.

What does The New York Times say about one of the most infamous counterrevolutionary terrorists engendered by the United States? Here again I'm going to limit myself to the essential parts - I'm looking at the clock and I know it's hot, but maybe this material will be of interest to you.

It says - I repeat, these will be the essential points; I underlined it because it's long and I want to quote the text exactly: "Posada was schooled in demolition and guerrilla warfare by the Central Intelligence Agency in the 1960s....

"Posada said the hotel bombings and other operations had been supported by leaders of the Cuban-American National Foundation. Its founder and head, Jorge Mas Canosa, who died last year, was embraced at the White House by presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton.

"A powerful force in both Florida and national elections, and a prodigious campaign donor, Mas played a decisive role in persuading Clinton to change his mind and follow a course of sanctions and isolation against Castro's Cuba." It seems that this Cuba is Castro's; it's not the Cuba with 11 million compatriots. (APPLAUSE)

"'Jorge controlled everything,' Posada said" - Jorge is the first name of this man, Mas Canosa. If they know him a little better they call him Jorgito. (LAUGHTER)

"Over the years, Posada estimated, Mas sent him more than \$200,000...the money arrived with the message, 'This is for the church.'" That's a password; don't think that it was to help any church; it was purely for acts of terrorism.

"It was Cuban exiles like Posada who were recruited by the CIA for the subsequent attempts on Castro's life.

"Jailed for one of the most infamous anti-Cuban attacks, the 1976 bombing of a civilian Cubana airliner,

he eventually escaped from a Venezuelan prison to join the centerpiece of the Reagan White House's anti-Communist crusade in the Western Hemisphere: Lt. Col. Oliver North's clandestine effort to supply arms to Nicaraguan contras....

"Some of what he said about his past can be verified through recently declassified government documents, as well as interviews with former foundation members and U.S. officials." The guy had the urge to talk, a real chatterbox. I want you to know that we know about many, many things he talked about and even more that he didn't talk about.

This is very important: he stated "that U.S. law enforcement authorities maintained an attitude of benign neglect toward him for most of his career, allowing him to remain free and active....

"The exiles' foundation, created in 1981, has sought to portray itself as the responsible voice of the Cuban exile community, dedicated to weakening the Castro regime through politics rather than force. Thanks to that approach and millions in campaign donations, the foundation became one of Washington's most effective lobbying organizations and a principal architect of American policy toward Cuba.

"Any evidence that the foundation or its leaders were dispensing money to Republicans and Democrats while underwriting bombings could weaken the group's claim to legitimacy. That kind of activity could also violate the Logan Act, which makes illegal any 'conspiracy to kill, kidnap, maim or injure persons or damage property in a foreign country.'" It's the law.

"Posada's remarks hinted that the foundation's public advocacy of purely nonviolent opposition to Castro was a carefully crafted fiction. Asked if he functioned as the military wing to the foundation's political wing, much as the Irish Republican Army does to Sinn Fein, he replied, 'It looks like that,' and laughed." I imagine that the Irish Republican Army and Sinn Fein must be deeply offended by this comparison.

This guy cynically responded in that way when they asked him if he is the military wing of that mafia called the Cuban-American National Foundation.

Look:

"In the interviews and in his autobiography, 'The Roads of the Warrior,' Posada said he had received financial support from Mas and Feliciano Foyo, treasurer of the group, as well as Alberto Hernández, who succeeded Mas as chairman....

"When the bombs began exploding last year at Cuban hotels, the Government there," says the newspaper, "asserted that the attacks had been organized and paid for by exiles operating out of Miami, a claim bolstered with the videotape of an operative confessing to carrying out some of the bombings....

"However, he [Posada] told The New York Times that American authorities had made no effort to question him about the case. He attributed that lack of action in part to his longstanding relationship with American law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

"'As you can see,' he said, 'the FBI and the CIA don't bother me, and I am neutral with them. Whenever I can help them, I do.'

"...Initially he spoke of enduring ties with United States intelligence agencies and of close friendship with at least two current FBI officials, including, he said, an important official in the Washington office....

"G. Robert Blakey, chief counsel to the 1978 House Select Committee on Assassinations, said he had reviewed many of the FBI's classified files about anti-Castro Cubans from 1978 and had noted many instances in which the bureau turned a blind eye to possible violations of the law. As he put it, 'When I

read some of those things, and I'm an old Federal prosecutor, I thought, Why isn't someone being indicted for this?" That's what a counsel to the committee says, because there have been committees that have investigated, that have had access to certain documents.

"Posada proudly admitted authorship of the hotel bomb attacks last year.... The bombs were also intended, Posada said, to sow doubts abroad about the stability of the regime, to make Cuba think he had operatives in the military and to encourage internal opposition....

"With a rueful chuckle, Posada described the Italian tourist's death as a freak accident, but he declared that he had a clear conscience, saying 'I sleep like a baby.'

"It's sad that someone is dead, but we can't stop,' he added. 'That Italian was sitting in the wrong place at the wrong time.'" Look how cynical he is.

"The hotel bombings were organized from El Salvador and Guatemala, Posada said....

"Posada said that Mas was also very much aware that he was behind the hotel bombing campaign last year. But the two men had a longstanding agreement, he said, never to discuss the details of many operations that Posada was involved in." It was like that: "This is for the church."

"Asked about the last time he had visited the United States, he answered with a laugh and a question of his own: 'Officially or unofficially?' A State Department official said Posada was reported to have visited Miami in the summer of 1996."

The News York Times article continued:

"GUATEMALA CITY - During the summer of 1997, bomb explosions ripped through some of Havana's most fashionable hotels, restaurants and discotheques, killing a foreign tourist and sowing confusion and nervousness throughout Cuba. It was something shocking and inexplicable...and from one end of the island to the other, people speculated about who might be responsible.

"In his office here in the mountains of Central America, a Cuban-American businessman named Antonio Jorge 'Tony' Álvarez was certain he knew the answer. For nearly a year, he had watched with growing concern as two of his partners -- working with a mysterious gray-haired man who had a Cuban accent and multiple passports -- acquired explosives and detonators, congratulating each other on a job well done every time a bomb went off in Cuba.

"What is more, Álvarez overheard the men talk of assassinating Fidel Castro at a conference of Latin American heads of state to be held in Margarita Island, Venezuela. Alarmed, he went to Guatemalan security officials. When they did not respond, he wrote a letter that eventually found its way into the hands of Venezuelan intelligence agents and FBI officials in the United States.

"Venezuelan authorities reacted energetically to the information, searching for explosives on the island where the meeting was to be held. But in the United States the letter elicited what Álvarez described as a surprisingly indifferent response.... Had the FBI met with Álvarez, agents would have heard a remarkable tale about the anti-Castro underworld.... They would also have heard about the possible links between the plotters in Guatemala and Cuban exiles living in Union City, New Jersey, who Álvarez said were wiring money to the plotters. That allegation raises questions about whether American laws were broken in the Cuban hotel bombings, in which an Italian tourist died and three people were wounded....

"But Álvarez says that the FBI showed a studious lack of curiosity about the bombings. And Posada, who acknowledged in an interview that he had directed the operation, said he had no indication that the FBI was investigating him....

"Posada expressed confidence that the FBI was not examining his operations in Guatemala, because 'the first person they would want to talk to is me, and nobody called.' In addition, he said, no one from the bureau has tried to interview his collaborators. 'I would know,' he said.

"Álvarez, in contrast, has been embittered by his experiences as a whistle-blower and believes that Posada has long provided information to American authorities. 'I think they are all in cahoots, Posada and the FBI,' he said. 'I risked my life and my business, and they did nothing.'"

This is an engineer who had a business. He was seriously concerned and decided to tell what he knew to the authorities, undoubtedly risking his life.

"At the office one day early last year, Álvarez recalled, Posada came by and handed out 'a thick wad of hundred-dollar bills' to his partners. They, in turn, 'were going to an electronics store and buying detonators and small calculators with timers' of the type that could be used with bombs, he said.

"That was suspicious enough, Álvarez said. But his biggest surprise came when he found explosives in an office closet.

"'In a plastic bag,' he recalled, 'they had 23 tubes of stuff made by the Mexican military industry, supposed to be the latest in explosive materials in the world. I saw it.'..."

"Then in August, at the height of the bombing campaign in Cuba, Tony Álvarez said, he intercepted a fax that Posada had sent from El Salvador and signed Solo....

"'If there is no publicity, the job is not useful,' the message read. 'The American newspapers publish nothing that has not been confirmed. I need all the data from the discotheque in order to try to confirm it.'" He was referring to the terrorist act that had been carried out at the Cohiba Hotel's discotheque. "'If there is no publicity, there is no payment....'

"Álvarez said that the fax so alarmed him that he wrote a letter about 'this horrendous matter' and gave it to Guatemalan intelligence.

"Álvarez also recalls overhearing plans for an attack on Castro when he was scheduled to visit Guatemala in December 1996 and again at the meeting in Margarita Island in November 1997."

They had invited me to Guatemala and, indeed, I visited Margarita a few months ago, for the Ibero-American Summit.

"Castro attended the meeting without incident in early November, flying in with a protective convoy of three airplanes." You have to use some disinformation once in a while, don't you? To confuse them, since generally we know about all this information, details and plans. "But before his arrival, more than 250 Venezuelan and Cuban agents combed the luxury Isla Bonita Hotel, where the gathering was to be held, and the government expelled the Cuban exiles who had flocked to the island ahead of Castro.

"There was, however, a curious arrest shortly before the summit meeting: Four men in a boat were stopped by the U.S. Coast Guard off Puerto Rico. Almost immediately, the leader of the group, Ángel Alfonso Alemán, of Union City, blurted out that he was on a mission to kill Castro, according to court testimony by federal officers."

This information was public. While we were accusing and denouncing the foundation, and they were denying it, in Puerto Rico they captured a motorboat which belonged to nothing less than one of the top leaders - if not the top leader - of that famous foundation, with two highly sophisticated .50-caliber semi-automatic rifles with telescopic lenses, infrared lights, a range of 1500 to 1600 meters, which can perforate an armored car at 400 meters, which can shoot at a plane on the ground, or during takeoff or landing. They were captured by the Coast Guard, which may have been expecting drug smuggling or

something like that. They captured the boat and the crew and took them to the relevant Puerto Rican authorities, and immediately those guys said what their plans were. And they had left Miami easily, with those rifles and everything needed to use those weapons in Margarita.

"U.S. law enforcement officials" - and this was public knowledge, it hasn't only been reported by The New York Times but also came out in all the dispatches - "quickly determined that the boat was registered to a member of the executive board of the Cuban-American National Foundation. In addition, one of the guns aboard was traced back to the group's president, according to court documents.

"The trail also led to Union City." See how things come together.

The articles continue with background about this character.

"Two years after the Bay of Pigs invasion ended in ignominious failure on the beaches of Cuba, two young exiles [Jorge Mas Canosa and Luis Posada Carriles]" - I've put this in parentheses so that the readers understand, because it refers to them, and not everyone is familiar with these characters - "stood next to each other in the spring sun at Fort Benning, Georgia, training for the next march on Havana.

"It was 1963, a time of feverish American plotting against Fidel Castro's rule. The two men were among the exiles who had survived the bungled operation to overthrow the Cuban leader and had enlisted in the U.S. Army, confident that President Kennedy would soon mount another attack that would banish communism from the hemisphere."

Actually this individual, Posada, never got to the Bay of Pigs. He stayed back on the second wave, and I don't think the other one got there either; that would have to be confirmed. For one reason or another, he never got to the Bay of Pigs.

"'The CIA taught us everything - everything,' Posada said. 'They taught us explosives, how to kill, bomb, trained us in acts of sabotage.'" I'm taking the essential parts, as I said.

"Both men left the Army after it became clear that the United States had no intention of invading Cuba again. They settled in Miami, the epicenter of anti-Castro activity....

"While Mas was making his mark in business, Posada was building close ties to the CIA, which was using Miami as a base for operations against Castro."

ORGANIZED CRIME WAS EAGER TO BANKROLL THE CUBAN OPPOSITION

"It was a dizzying time of conspiracies and plots, some harebrained, some deadly serious. The agency's station in Miami was among its largest, and its officers industriously enticed anti-Castro Cubans to sign on with 'the company.' Miami's organized-crime figures, who had taken in bountiful profits under the Batista government, were eager to bankroll the Cuban opposition, or use the Cubans for their own ends.

"In the interviews, Posada spoke only obliquely about this period and provided even fewer details in his 1994 autobiography, *The Roads of the Warrior*."

Now something else comes into play. It appears that the reporters got into certain archives and examined documents. The newspaper says:

"Now, newly declassified documents furnished for The New York Times by the National Security Archive, a nonprofit research group in Washington, make clear why: For much of that time, the CIA was directing Posada's activities, involving itself even in such minutiae as whether he should buy a boat....

"The documents are part of voluminous files amassed by the 1978 House Select Committee on

Assassinations as part of its investigation into the killing of President Kennedy. Investigators examining whether anti-Castro Cubans had any links to the 1963 assassination were permitted to read and summarize a trove of government cablegrams and documents, all of which remain classified."

Here the article says "newly declassified documents," and says later that they allowed the investigators from the House Committee to read and summarize an innumerable amount of government cablegrams and documents which are still classified. In other words, it seems that this committee had access to documents which have been declassified and other documents which are still classified. But this committee made summaries of those documents, took notes.

And the article says:

"According to those summaries, Posada provided the agency and the FBI with a steady stream of valuable information about Cuban exile activity in Miami. It was the CIA that directed Posada to 'establish a training camp for guerrilla ops against Castro...'

"Interviewed in the late 1970s by investigators from the House assassinations panel, Posada said he had been trained as a CIA operative in the Florida Keys and had quickly become a 'principal agent.' He said his anti-Castro group had 'worked with the company direct' and had had arms, boats and a network of safe houses....

"At the same time" - this information is interesting to reach conclusions - "Posada was deepening his relationship with Mas, who is described in one of the CIA documents as a 'close friend' of his." In other words, the neat and tidy director of the foundation is described as one of the famous terrorist's close friends. "The two were active in the exile group RECE, or Cuban Representation in Exile, and later in a larger umbrella alliance called CORU, or Coordinator of United Revolutionary Organizations, both of which undertook violent actions aimed at toppling the Castro government.

"A series of July 1965 cablegrams" - this is taken from the documents - "asserts that the two men were plotting to attack Soviet and Cuban installations abroad. One document quotes Posada as saying that 'Jorge Mas Canosa of RECE had paid an assassin \$5000 to cover expenses of a demolition operation in Mexico' and that Posada himself was 'planning to place limpet mines on a Cuban or Soviet vessel in the harbor of Veracruz, and had 100 lbs. of C-4 explosives and detonators.'

"Mas, other documents report" - and they know this over there, these are documents in the possession of the U.S. government - "'had in his possession 125 lbs. of Pentol to be placed as charges on the vessels' and had 'proposed to demolitions expert he travel to Spain, Mexico at expense of RECE and place bombs in communist installations in those countries.'" Here the whole terrorist background, not of Posada but of Mas Canosa, is clearly defined.

"Posada's life took a new turn in 1967, when he abruptly left Miami and joined Venezuelan intelligence. This marked the beginning of his years as an operative for a succession of Latin American governments....

"He got his job as chief of operations for Venezuelan intelligence with the help of CIA recommendations and was immediately sent to wipe out the leftist guerrilla movements that Castro was supporting in Venezuela."

"'I persecuted them very, very hard,' he said of the guerrillas, some of whom later abandoned armed struggle and now are important political figures in Venezuela. "Many, many people got killed,'" the guy says.

"Posada also arranged for an old friend from his CIA days, Orlando Bosch, to 'come to Venezuela to make sabotage' against the Castro government. Bosch had earlier been convicted in the United States of a bomb attack on a Polish freighter bound for Cuba and advocated the violent overthrow of Castro....

"Around that time, Posada's relationship with the American authorities was suddenly thrown into crisis by an intelligence report that 'Posada may be involved in smuggling cocaine from Colombia through Venezuela to Miami, also in counterfeit U.S. money in Venezuela.'" They saw that in those papers, a CIA document.

"According to the report, a copy of which is summarized in the House investigators' files, the CIA decided 'not to directly confront Posada with allegation so as not to compromise ongoing investigation.'" It's not clear what investigation this refers to, possibly the investigation which the committee was carrying out.

"Posada was questioned, and 'found guilty only of having the wrong kind of friends,' the synopsis of another report read. Interrogators were convinced by his denial of drug trafficking, the report concluded.

"Even so, by February 1976, the agency's officers decided to break their ties with Posada in what the documents cryptically described as concerns about 'outstanding tax matters.'

"Over the next few months, Posada volunteered information to the agency.... He warned that Bosch and another Cuban exile were plotting against the nephew of Chile's deposed leftist president. In June, Posada was calling the CIA again, 'concerning possible exile plans to blow up a Cubana airliner leaving Panama....'

"Four months later, on Oct. 6, 1976, a Cubana jetliner with 73 people aboard was blown out of the sky shortly after it took off from the Caribbean island of Barbados. The dead included teen-agers from Cuba's national fencing team.

"The following day, the CIA made what its records call 'unsuccessful attempts' to reach Posada.

"The bombing dramatically changed Posada's fortunes. Investigators in Venezuela traced the bomb to the plane's luggage compartment and identified the Venezuelans who checked bags through to Havana but got off the plane in Barbados. The men had worked for Posada, who was arrested and charged with the bombing. Also arrested was Bosch, who had long collaborated with Posada."

It was really the attitude of the people from the Caribbean, those from Barbados and Trinidad, that made the capture of those people possible. Alarcón knows this story very well, because he debated this subject over there in the United Nations at that time.

"A retired CIA official familiar with the case said in a recent interview that 'Bosch and Posada were the primary suspects,' adding, 'There were no other suspects....'

"Posada acknowledged that he might still be in jail in Venezuela had not his friends, led by Mas, come to his rescue." See what strange things exist between these two characters who studied together at Fort Benning. "In a sworn deposition taken in a civil lawsuit, Ricardo Mas, the estranged brother of Jorge Mas, recounted how he had traveled to Panama to obtain the cash used to pay for the escape.

"Ricardo Mas was comptroller of his brother's company, Church & Tower, from 1972 to 1985. He said that at his brother Jorge's instruction he deposited a check in one of the company's Panamanian accounts and returned with cash.

"'He said that he needed me to go down and bring back \$50,000, that it would be used to get Luis Posada Carriles out of jail, that Carriles wanted out, that he might start talking,' Ricardo Mas testified. 'The guy, I guess, was breaking down, they has to get him out of jail....'

"During a changing of the guard at midnight on Aug. 18, 1985, Posada, dressed in a black jacket with a

collar turned up like a priest's, crossed the courtyard of the prison. He carried a Bible, to strengthen the impression that he was a priest, and a satchel containing a small survival kit of food and a lamp....

"After 15 days in Caracas, Venezuela, Posada said, he was taken to Aruba aboard a shrimp boat. From there, a private plane flew him to Costa Rica and then on to El Salvador." You see, you can start putting the facts together.

I'm taking a long time, but not to bother all of you, but so that all of you can have the elements necessary to make a judgment.

"Posada was working for the American government again, this time for a covert operation that had ties to the CIA and the local military attaché, but which was run by the White House."

Have you been able to follow the train of thought so far, or do you have any questions to ask? (LAUGHTER) If you have any questions, later on you can get a copy of the newspaper and read it calmly; we'll try to get it to you, so that you can really know our neighbors to the North, their politics, their tactics, their procedures.

So we have talked about the airplane that exploded over Barbados, one of the harshest blows that our country has suffered, demonstrated in that gathering of a million people in Revolution Square; in the recordings of the last moment when the burning plane was falling and the pilots were describing what was happening to the control tower. Afterwards, a few of the remains were recovered among the waves.

It was so scandalous that the Venezuelan government had no alternative but to open an investigation. As a result of bribes and money, they almost absolved the culprits, two Venezuelans who placed the bombs and the two masterminds who organized the whole thing. Since everything was absolutely proven, the trial was held again and during that time Posada was rescued in the way that is explained in the article. But Bosch stayed in that jail, and in the end the two Venezuelans were convicted and Bosch was acquitted. Bosch had a case pending in the United States for that sabotage of a Polish ship. They received him, they went through the charade of some measures against him, saying that he had to be monitored, and there he is in Miami also participating, in one way or another, in terrorist activities.

It occurred to me, in light of all this information, to dig out the speech I gave in Revolution Square at the funeral of those victims, among whom - the immense majority were Cubans, over 50, I think there were about 57 - was the complete Cuban fencing team, which had won all the gold medals, practically children, with a brilliant future in sports ahead of them. There were also 11 students from Guyana, some visiting Koreans and the rest were Cubans.

There is someone here, if you want I'll point him out, who would have died on that plane, Comrade Carlos Lage. He was in Panama and had to come back quickly and the decision was made to look into the possibility of his taking that plane in Barbados. He had already asked for a seat on the flight when he was told there were two options: via Barbados or via Mexico, saying that he would return faster via Mexico, and so it was decided that he would take that route. You see how the Revolution almost lost such an excellent leader as a result of that criminal adventure we have been talking about. I didn't know anything about that. I didn't know, and the other day while I was looking at all of this information, he says to me, "I was supposed to take that plane." I say, "Tell me about it!" and now I'm telling you.

I'm not going to read the eulogy for the victims or anything like that, but just essential passages, in order to continue the story and come to the pertinent conclusions. What did we say? We said quite a lot. Just like when I talked about History Will Absolve Me, in which I said many things which were the basis of the measures we would take; what was the status of the campesinos; the workers; the poor; the sick - whom I didn't mention today. I simply cited the essential measures which we promised to carry out, and in Revolution Square I analyzed a series of things which today, reading them again, I find interesting. It's been 22 years, and I only want to deal with the things associated with the story that appeared in The New York Times.

I said: "At first, we had doubts as to whether the CIA had directly organized the act of sabotage or had carefully worked it out through its cover organizations made up of Cuban counterrevolutionaries." I stated then: "Now we definitely favor the first idea...."

With the passing of time - I add this - based on the information we were compiling, because we had everything: books, biographies, interviews, people who became friends with those people there in prison; they were revolutionaries, they gained their confidence, and they were told them things, this gentleman stated: "Yes, I blew up the airplane, so what?" So we were compiling lots of information like this and other data as well. A significant part of the information collected was published in book form; for that reason I am saying: the information we were compiling and documents declassified by the United States and other means, reaffirms our conviction that Posada Carriles never broke his links with the CIA. Even allowing his affirmation in The New York Times that those links were temporarily broken in February 1976, Posada himself confessed, according to that newspaper, that he had advised the CIA in June of the plan to blow up the Cubana plane; which is what actually occurred four months later, as I already read out to you from The New York Times report.

We said that even if it was confirmed - not that we accept it! - that the CIA had broken its links with this gentleman, what Posada Carriles confessed by stating that he had advised the CIA in June of the plan to blow up the Cuban aircraft, and what actually occurred four months later, is very important. Were the links maintained or not? Did they break their links with him or not by chance in February of 1976, precisely in that year in which the sabotage of the Cuban aircraft occurred?

He confesses that he kept the CIA informed. What is certain is that whichever of the two theories is taken, and even accepting that the CIA had broken links with Posada Carriles in February, without him ceasing to supply the agency with systematic information, including the plan to blow up the plane, the CIA did absolutely nothing to prevent it, warn about it, or avoid it. Who is lying, the CIA or Posada Carriles? Either the CIA was responsible because, in our opinion, the links were never broken - afterwards I will explain why - or the CIA had broken the links, but Posada Carriles, as is quite logical, kept it informed.

The lives of those 73 persons could have been saved.

What did we go on to say? "The most disgusting thing, in this case, is the use of mercenaries who, for the sake of money, are capable of putting an end, within a matter of seconds, to 73 precious lives of defenseless people with whom they had traveled in the same plane only a few minutes before."

And we added: "Those responsible for these crimes travel everywhere with impunity; they have unlimited financial resources; they use U.S. passports as naturalized citizens of that country or real or false papers from many other countries; and they use the most sophisticated methods of terror and crime.

"Who, if not the CIA," we said then, "under the protection of the conditions of domination and impunity which the imperialists have established in this hemisphere, could do such things?"

And I continued later: "In June, a group of terrorist counterrevolutionary organizations all based in the United States... - made up by and large by people who have been working for the CIA for several years and who were trained by it - held a meeting in Costa Rica to set up," I stress this, "a so-called Commando of United Revolutionary Organizations (CORU)." And I stress it because, from there, from Costa Rica, pirate attacks were made against our country; they had their bases there, it was the site of the foundation of this famous CORU, mentioned in The New York Times article, and for other reasons which can be told in their time.

But look how the famous CORU appears. We had already denounced these maneuvers and these plans.

"In the United States," we said then, "these groups publicly proclaim their crimes and announce that there will be new criminal acts."

In that speech I recounted a list of terrorist acts carried out against Cuba since the U.S. government made its insolent threats:

"-The year, 1976, April 6. Pirate boats from Florida attacked two fishing boats, the Ferro 119 and Ferro 123, causing the death of fisherman Bienvenido Mauriz and heavy damage to the boats.

"-April 22. A bomb was placed in the Cuban embassy in Portugal, causing the death of two comrades and serious injuries to several others; the offices were completely destroyed.

"-July 5. The Cuban mission at the UN was the object of an attack with explosives, resulting in considerable material damage.

"-July 9. A bomb exploded in Jamaica in the cart carrying baggage for a Cubana Airlines minutes before the baggage was to be loaded.

"-July 10. A bomb exploded in the offices of British West Indies Airways in Barbados. That airline represents the interests of Cubana Airlines in Barbados.

"-July 23. Artagnán Díaz Díaz, a National Institute of Fishing technician, was murdered when an attempt was made to kidnap the Cuban consul in Mérida.

"-August 9. Two officials of the Canadian embassy in Argentina were kidnapped; nothing has been heard of them since.

"-August 18. A bomb exploded in the offices of Cubana Airlines in Panama, causing considerable damage.

"-October 6. A Cubana Airlines plane was destroyed in mid-flight with 73 people on board."

And I continued: "As everyone can see, in a period of two months, two extremely serious acts of sabotage against Cuban planes on international flights that were carrying many passengers were organized, and one proved fatal.

"The CIA is behind all these deeds. In nearly every case, the terrorist organizations that are based in the United States, where they act with impunity - especially the five that make up CORU - attributed with responsibility for those deeds." That organization, set up in Costa Rica, took credit for all these terrorist activities.

I said: "In nearly every case, the terrorist organizations..., especially the five that make up the CORU combination, have taken credit."

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS OFFERED NO EXPLANATION OF SUCH DEEDS

And I also stated: "Even when the U.S. Senate investigated and recognized publicly the innumerable plans of the CIA to assassinate leaders of the Cuban Revolution and its utter dedication to that task over a number of years, the U.S. government has offered the Government of Cuba no explanation of such deeds, nor has it offered the slightest apology.

"We suspect that the U.S. government has not given up such practices," we stated 22 years ago. "On October 9, three days after the criminal sabotage of Barbados, a message sent by the CIA to an agent in Havana was intercepted. That message, transmitted from CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, states verbatim, among other things: 'Please report as quickly as possible any information regarding Fidel's

attending first anniversary ceremony of independence of Angola on November 11. In event of his going, try to find out complete itinerary of Fidel's visit to other countries on same trip.'

"Another instruction dated earlier reads:

"What is the official and individual reaction to bomb attacks on Cuban offices abroad?" They're asking their spy or supposed spy here. "What are they going to do to avoid and prevent them? Whom do they suspect as being responsible? Will there be reprisals?"

So we said:

"We trust that the government of the United States will not dare to deny the truth of these instructions from CIA headquarters and many that have been sent repeatedly to the same person in flagrant acts of espionage. We have the code, the figures and all the proof of the authenticity of these communications. In this specific case, right from the start and over a period of 10 years, the supposed agent recruited by the CIA has kept the Cuban government informed in detail of all contact with the same, of the equipment being used and of the instructions received. The CIA supposed that the agent had managed to place one of the latest electronic microtransmitters, handed him for the purpose, in none other than the office of Comrade Osmany Cienfuegos, secretary of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers."

On that occasion we were forced to burn, to incinerate really, an important agent, given the gravity of the case and given the need to justify our suspicions of CIA participation in those terrorist activities and in the planning of personal attempts on my life. We burned an agent, and this can't be done every day or all the time, but we had to say something about that. And now, it's once again useful to recall those events.

I continued in that same speech:

"Hence the certainty with which the CIA presumed it would receive, with due anticipation, the relevant information on any overseas trip by the prime minister of Cuba.

"Those who imagine that the CIA has mended its ways one iota as a result of the denunciations of its hair-raising deeds that have come from the very heart of U.S. society are profoundly mistaken. At the most, its methods will become more subtle and more perfidious.

"Why did the CIA wish to know the exact itinerary of the prime minister's possible trip to Angola and other countries on the occasion of November 11? Why did it wish to know what measures would be taken to avoid and prevent acts of terrorism?"

Imagine, 22 years ago we were saying these same things. In fact, what has The New York Times published now that we didn't denounce? What's new? Yes, 22 years have gone by, and documents have been declassified, investigations were undertaken by U.S. Congressional committees after I made that speech, that's a fact. They contributed data, information that was in their reach; but from a long time ago, 22 years, we had spoken of these subtle methods, or a more careful way of going about things; we denounced it at the time. All that, really, is reflected in the information.

It's possible that that newspaper has more information; but for us, they have one part of the film and we have the other.

Now then, a question:

How can it be explained that, at the recommendation of the United States, Posada Carriles, recruited and trained by the CIA, and who carried out numerous acts of terrorism against Cuba, could go on to become chief of operations of the DISIP (Security Department) in Venezuela, to persecute and

assassinate Venezuelan revolutionaries?

How can it be explained that after organizing the monstrous crime of Barbados, he could escape from prison with money sent by the Cuban-American National Foundation, reaching El Salvador a few weeks later to join Oliver North, that famous colonel and Reagan's aid and, from Ilopango, work on a White House operation to supply the Nicaraguan counterrevolution with arms coming from what later constituted the sensational worldwide scandal known as Iran-contras?

After this, how can it be explained that the CIA broke off its links with Posada Carriles in February 1976, a few months before he blew up the Cubana aircraft in mid-air over Barbados?

How can it be explained that he subsequently reappears organizing attempts on Castro's life for years, and up until very recently, as well as bomb attacks on hotels in Havana? Who is going to believe that of the man who, at the CIA's recommendation, became operations chief of the Venezuelan DISIP, at war with the guerrilla movement; their best man, their most reliable man, whom they captured almost by chance, when those two Venezuelan mercenaries who were working with him were unable to escape due to measures taken by the authorities of Barbados and Trinidad? And then he escapes from prison and, in a matter of days, is once again working on a much more important, secret, sensitive and compromising operation directed from the White House, under the orders of an adjutant colonel or adviser to the president of the United States.

In other words, having escaped from that prison by means of bribes and known methods, Posada Carriles is virtually upgraded to the category of a collaborator of the president of the United States. Were we right or were we not right when we gave the eulogy for the victims of the sabotage in Barbados? And how many more things have yet to be revealed, when they really declassify the documents.

How many years have gone by since Kennedy's death? Thirty-five years approximately, and they haven't declassified those documents. Why haven't they published all of them?

Our points of view: the planned assassinations and terrorist acts were not suspended by the United States after the Senate Committee findings. The Senate set up a committee, discovered, confirmed and denounced a number of attempts against my person, which were made widely public; no more than a part of the planned attacks, those they were able to investigate and prove. Of course, when Cuba denounced them, that had no importance; when a Senate committee denounces them that is considered as an evident truth, admitted, etc.; but time has always proved us right.

How could they carry out those operations without the complicity, tolerance and backing of the U.S. authorities? Everything Posada Carriles did, organizing attempts on my life until very recently, and he's still at it; I'll limit myself to only saying that. How could he organize all those assassination attempts and terrorist acts without the complicity, tolerance and the backing of the U.S. authorities? If you like, I could even limit the affirmation a little more and, instead of the "the", say "U.S. authorities."

Of course, based on all these facts which I have set out for you, in our view the United States was guilty of the sabotage of the Cuban airline over Barbados, which cost the lives of 73 persons. The United States is guilty of the bombs that exploded in the capital's hotels in order to sabotage tourism, to damage our economy. It would seem they weren't satisfied with the cruel and despicable blockade which it is applying against our country. The United States is guilty of the numerous attempts on my life, in this case, or against any other leader of the Revolution, carried out by these gentlemen, this mafia, these mercenary gangsters, actively or by omission in the pay of the Cuban-American National Foundation. And, evidently, in terms of all the facts that we have, it is actively guilty of many of those crimes and terrorist acts committed against our country.

But I want to be frank, I want to be clear, I don't want to make unjust imputations. We do not blame these deeds on the current U.S. administration; we sincerely do not believe Mr. Clinton capable of

ordering attempts on the lives of political leaders and terrorist acts against another country. This can't be reconciled, really, with the idea, with the concept, with the reports, with what can be perceived about him and, over the years, we have learned to understand the leaders of that country. Really, if I believed it, I would say it here, without any problem. I don't believe it.

What do I think? I know Mr. Clinton's virtues and I know his defects; I have followed him closely, as is our duty, via the news, dispatches, actions etc. I must say that Clinton has been miserably deceived, they presented him with a supposedly peaceful and beatific foundation; a terrorist foundation, a terrorist institution, headed by an individual who for years directly practiced terrorism and continued to doing it over the years through that foundation.

That terrorist organization met - as the same article we were referring to here states - with Reagan, with Bush and with Clinton; that foundation supported the political campaigns of a number of representatives and of some senators, with whom it came to constitute the lobby via which it influences U.S. policy. A foundation that has exercised fascist terror among the Miami Cubans; yes, because those living in Miami are far from being 100% counterrevolutionaries, nor do they support that foundation, but it has kept them under a rule of terror. That foundation owns all the radio and television stations and all the positions in the city hall, where they have embezzled funds - another publicly known scandal - and they have a lot of influence: if they don't want somebody to find a job, he or she doesn't get a job.

Visitors from the Cuban community in Miami have visited here, they have met in Havana, and look what measures have been taken against some of them, against professionals, against persons in favor of normalizing relations, who have opposed the blockade: arriving in groups to harass them in their homes, forcing them to give up their jobs, forcing them to give up the clubs, even where they exercise, in a recreational club; they come in a gang and take a car with the family inside and harass them; slandering people, using psychological methods, physical terror and psychological terror in the heart of the community of Cuban origin in the United States.

Yes, in the beginning, it was mainly thieves, henchmen who were the first to arrive there, Batista's gang and, afterwards, came the landowners, landlords, many of whom were affected by the revolutionary legislation; but later an evidently economic emigration occurred, a phenomenon repeated throughout the hemisphere. There are who knows how many millions of Mexicans, I believe there are more than 20 million descendants of Mexicans and over 10 million, or 15 million Mexicans born in Mexico; nowadays, those people aren't called exiles, they are called emigrants. There are over one million Dominicans, some of whom have crossed through the Mona Passage toward Puerto Rico and have gone to the United States; these aren't Dominican exiles, they're Dominican emigrants. And that's the case with everybody. If they come from Cuba and have moved for family or economic reasons, they're not emigrants, they're exiles.

Given the abysmal difference and the unjust difference established by the world economic order, from colonialism to date, and which is becoming steadily more established between the rich countries and the countries of the Third World, the pressure on those citizens of the Third World to enter the industrialized countries is tremendous.

Imagine that the United States had done with Mexico or with the rest of Latin America what it did with Cuba; that everyone who arrived there automatically received the right of residence, whether they were lumpen elements, delinquents, prison escapees who had committed crimes, whatever. None of those individuals were ever expelled from there, they had a right. The only country in the world whose citizens could arrive in the United States and do that! Automatic right of residence. Of course, they also had to make some statements against socialism which taught them how to read and write, and which even gave job training and taught them many things. That was the letter of credit to obtain a position, a job or something like that.

If the United States had done that with Latin America, now, almost 40 years after the triumph of the Revolution, over half the citizens of that country would be Latin American and they wouldn't be exiles,

they'd be immigrants.

Of course, while they are proclaiming the free movement of merchandise and capital, they are constantly tightening the knot to restrict the free movement of workers and persons.

They want the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the suspension of customs barriers, the free movement of merchandise and capital; what they don't want in any way is to apply the same principle to workers and human beings.

To avoid that they are building a 3000-kilometer-long wall, one hundred times larger than the Berlin wall, with the most sophisticated electronic mechanisms and exceptional measures. They are forcing immigrants to take to the rivers, where they drown; cross deserts where they die; suffer accidents on highways and thruways, where cars travel at extremely high speeds, trying to escape among the lines of traffic; and every month brings news of the number of Latin American immigrants who die trying to cross the borders. In one year, probably more perish - one would have to make exact calculations - than all those who died during the Berlin Wall's existence; every year!, and every year more perish, losing their lives in one way or another, due to economic pressure.

And why do some people try to leave, in spite of the existence of a migratory agreement between Cuba and the United States? Ah! because the agreement states that those intercepted at sea are returned; but those who slip in and step on U.S. soil - ah!, that's a different law, and they are at war there with the coast guards given that that principle still exists. If an individual leaves, he can try to cross as many times as he likes, because they established those privileges against the Revolution, even though now they're getting scared, full of xenophobia, both in the United States and in Europe, for fear of the migratory pressure of Third World peoples.

Imagine if Chinese citizens had been afforded the same prerogatives as Cuban citizens.

Taking into account the differences in income levels, living standards historically created as a result of colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialist exploitation, millions and tens of millions, perhaps hundreds of millions of people wish to move toward the industrialized countries. Europe's the same.

That has given rise to a growing xenophobia, to a growing fascist, racist spirit. It is the fear of immigrants from the South. The more the population multiplies in the less developed countries, the more that tendency grows.

That's the reason why they are building that famous wall which will go down in history, because the Mexicans and Latin Americans will continue to invent ways of crossing over; but they're not political migrations, they're economic migrations.

There are many Cubans who really left for economic reasons; some of them captivated by the consumer societies. As we have explained, that type of society, that squandering is simply untenable, and the Third World countries are encountering greater resistance to entering those developed countries.

But there in Miami, these groups, the terrorist and fascist mafia has imposed itself by force; and that mafia led Clinton to approve the Torricelli Act, the first one. He hadn't elected him president and he was already being involved in supporting the Torricelli Act; he signed it, the foundation defended it. The article says that it played a decisive role in persuading the president to follow that line.

The provocations that gave rise to the incident of the light aircraft were organized from there, from Miami, despite the fact that we had repeatedly complained and had warned to no avail about those provocations, noting that they were going to give rise to an incident.

The foundation, which by the way has very close relations with the opposition in the current administration - it maintains very good relations and many links with the Republican ultra-right wing -

but also has relations with the Democrats, because it has given campaign funds in Congress to members of one party or the other, playing with the idea of controlling the majority of the votes of the Cuban-origin community there in Miami and, since Florida is an important state in the presidential elections, all those factors have been playing their role there, in favor of the politics of the mafia; but the real fact is that it has deceived Clinton.

The foundation financed and continued to finance over many years terrorist acts against Cuba, the assassination attempts and bombs against our country.

It's a fact that Mr. Mas Canosa was a terrorist long before that foundation was established. It's a fact that Reagan promoted its creation. Let's see how they're going to prove that the imputations are false.

The laws of the United States - as was stated here - punish those activities, and the heads of a terrorist organization which finances personal attacks, finances terrorist acts and pays mercenaries to place bombs in our country have slipped into the White House, there with Clinton.

Let's see how they can deny it. Let's see how they can deny that the boat which was going to be used for the attack during the summit in the island of Margarita - captured by pure chance, having sailed from Miami to Puerto Rico - belongs to the foundation, and that the weapons belong to the foundation. Let's see how they handle that problem.

The foundation people have threatened to sue The New York Times; they won't do so, it's almost certain they won't do so, because the more they go about suing the newspaper, the more they'll get involved. What they have done is to question the newspaper's credibility. A self-respecting newspaper is not going to allow itself to be discredited; an experienced newspaper doesn't make imputations of that gravity if it can't prove them. So let's see if the foundation really files charges against the information in The New York Times and what happens, because it might have more or less precise data but, in essence, the foundation cannot deny any of the imputations made against it. Some concepts still have to be clarified, some minor contradictions.

The attitude adopted by Cuba was not to get involved, nor even to express opinions while the debate was taking place in the United States; simply to report the news and inform the people.

We have a lot of information, we possess a large quantity of facts, and The New York Times account could turn out to be just the tip of the iceberg; but it signifies an embarrassing position for the U.S. government itself, because these people were the promoters of and the driving force behind the Torricelli Act and the Helms-Burton Act, with which this administration has intensified the blockade against Cuba.

We have known the personalities of some of the leaders in that country. Historically, we knew a Roosevelt, who doubtless was a great statesman who defended the interests of his capitalist society and defended the empire's interests. In that epoch there was another very powerful empire, which was the British empire, which dominated India, dominated a major part of the world and obstructed U.S. trade. Roosevelt was distressed about that, there's no doubt he was a brilliant statesman. One can't imagine Franklin Delano Roosevelt preparing terrorist acts, assassinations attempts and things of that sort.

Another president, Jimmy Carter, precisely the man who established the Interests Section in Cuba and of whom it could be seen that he had ethics. He was a defender of the capitalist system, imperialism and all that, but one could perceive in him a man incapable of ordering an assassination, an attack, acts of terrorism and similar things.

In the same way - I take the responsibility and I don't think history will prove me wrong - I think I know from afar the psychology of the current president, his concerns, his virtues and his defects, and I don't consider him as being in the unscrupulous category of a statesman who orders things of this type; but yes, he has unquestionably been deceived, and what I can say is that his prime responsibility was not

having paid attention to the numerous warnings and claims made by Cuba in relation to these activities; because those things have their history, they are things we have been following for a while back, while defending the country against such plans; improving, really, vigilance, security and measures so that they couldn't be carried out.

I WILL FULFILL MY DUTY AS LONG AS I LIVE AND I WILL GLADLY FACE WHATEVER RISKS THERE ARE

All these gangster groups believe they have the right to organize a hunt against me every time I go on a trip. I am more hunted whenever I travel to fulfill some international engagement than any animal in Africa's large prairies. And I'm not going to stop traveling for this reason! Not for this will I stop fulfilling the engagements which I have to attend to. And let it be known! (APPLAUSE)

I remember when I visited Allende in Chile that I was followed by supposed journalists with Venezuelan passports throughout the country. They had Venezuelan TV cameras with automatic guns inside the camera screen and they were only a few feet in front of me in some press interview. But what happened to them? They weren't fanatics. They didn't dare shoot because they knew they would die as well and mercenaries want to live to have their money. The Revolution's enemies have always been mercenaries who want to live to enjoy their reward which they receive in exchange for killing.

They have tried to destroy the economy and wherever one goes, they are always prepared with their plan, immediately organizing it whether it be in Cartagena or Margarita, or at the summit in Portugal; plans for all circumstances. However, it won't stop me. I will fulfill my duty as long as I live and I will gladly face whatever risks there are.

I have spent all my life taking risks - I know it is very important to be morally strong (APPLAUSE) - and started doing so long before the March 10 coup d'état, struggling against and denouncing gangs. Like the tamer in the circus, I have used the whip. That's how you have to treat those enemies, denouncing them again and again.

I can't forget the time when the prison warden threatened to kill me. He was enraged - he looked like a basilisk - by an article which I wrote from prison for Bohemia magazine renouncing conditional amnesty; they wanted to make it conditional. This was during one of those periods when for electoral policy reasons there was no censorship. The article even caused problems for him with Batista. He became irate and it wasn't often that I saw someone so angry. He said frenziedly that he would kill me if I wrote another article like that. And when I returned to my cell, the first thing I did was to write an article denouncing him, his anger and his threats. I send it off to Bohemia, it arrived at the magazine's office but they didn't dare publish it.

I haven't been able to find it. I have tried to locate my article, written there at dawn using one of our special methods, a kind of invisible ink which we used to make with lemon juice. Sometimes I would write on very fine paper and put it inside a match box. I don't remember exactly now but I would send the complete article, quickly and punctually for Bohemia. I denounced that "gentleman" who threatened me with death at dawn. I wanted to see if it was true that he was going to kill me or if it was just another of his outbursts. I was curious. And it's not a matter of courage or considering oneself braver than the others. I believe that the most important thing about people is their dignity, the courage which accompanies dignity. Because there's no courage without dignity, there is no courage without honor and there's no honor without principles. Those of us who defend honor, dignity, principles and a just cause will always have sufficient moral strength to go wherever it is necessary and we'll never lack the necessary spirit to do that. All the rest is really nonsense and absurd.

In a few days time I will travel to Jamaica to visit my Jamaican brothers and sisters who have invited us (APPLAUSE) and insisted that we go to Jamaica. I will arrive on July 29 so that all of you terrorists out there can be prepared. (APPLAUSE)

The August 1 I'll be in Barbados where the brave government of this noble country will unveil a

monument to the victims of that hideous crime of October 6, 1976 (APPLAUSE) and I will have the pleasure to participate in the ceremony.

Two days later I will travel to Grenada. Its brave government, whose prime minister visited us not long ago, has decided to unveil a plaque in honor of the Cuban builders who constructed that airport and showed great work spirit and solidarity. (APPLAUSE)

The modern history of this world is being written in this way.

These countries were the last to achieve their independence after the Cuban Revolution and they conduct themselves with great dignity, with a great sense of honor and are truly Cuba's close friends. They supported us on the issue of our membership of the Lomé Convention and even suggested our participation and that together with them, we fight for our common interests. And the 71 Third World countries which make up the Lomé Convention gave Cuba their unanimous support because Cuba defends their causes and interests. In all the forums, everywhere, in the World Health Organization, in the World Trade Organization, in the United Nations, Cuba pursues a principled policy and on account of this it is supported, admired and respected by these countries.

In a few days time we'll have to travel, we have no other choice. Don't think my daily tasks here displease me. No, travel is a duty for me and when I carry out a duty, I do it with pleasure; when I defend ideas and principles, I feel satisfied. (SHOUTS OF "LONG LIVE THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF")

I will have to go to the summit in Portugal and to the Non-Aligned Movement's summit in South Africa, which I already had the pleasure of visiting when Mandela was inaugurated as president. (APPLAUSE) And I have been invited to the Dominican Republic August 19 and 20. So here's all the news you want. But I have some more news, because we know some things. But I will keep them to myself.

Let's see what the tactics are, how we will disarm those people and make their lives difficult as well as their obsessive, money-oriented mercenary plans. Some of those people are very vainglorious because they've come out in the papers, they're vain, self-sufficient and primitive. They are portrayed as heroes by some U.S. press media - even The New York Times, to a certain extent, is guilty of this - exalting individuals prepared to commit crimes, using phrases and words to swell them up, such as "their war against Castro". It's not the U.S. agents' war against a revolution neither is it a war against a just cause nor against a people. It's a terrorist's personal war against Castro, as they themselves sometimes define it. And to a certain extent this type of language encourages them. The media don't know the psychology of those individuals and this is damaging because it makes them conceited and posing as heroes they decide to talk their heads off.

I wonder why this individual decided to tell his story to The New York Times, say all the things he said. A few hours afterwards they were denying it, everybody started to mobilize. A plane from the foundation took off immediately because, well, the FBI and the CIA can't find him, but the journalists can find him. They know his whereabouts. The article says that he's in Guatemala. And well, the others know because when the article appeared, the earth shook in Miami.

What is everyone in Miami saying? That this is true from beginning to end, that's what they're saying. The foundation ran out in a rush, looked for a hack and TV cameras and sent them at top speed - they knew where to find him - so that he could deny the story he had told the two New York Times journalists. As a matter of fact he said no, that he had never said anything of the kind. But the journalists had all his conversations taped and they have all the necessary material and documents to prove it.

One can see from the article that they researched it in archives, in all those places. And the foundation members are defenseless. They started to panic. Some of them in Miami realized immediately that the plane which had transported the journalist belonged to the foundation. It brought and returned him instantly and they put the material on television and even accused the newspaper of countless things,

that the newspaper was pro-Castro and things of this nature. They were really upset and furious. But they're powerless, they're really powerless and we didn't even say a word. We have some interesting things but we said: This is their conflict and their debate; we will not interfere. We have our own stockpile of information and very interesting things.

This gentleman says, among other things, that he has a group of mercenaries at hand who are walking free. He says that there are two or three who came to carry out the plans and haven't returned. Yes. Why do certain phrases and emphasis on certain things flatter and encourage them? Some articles which appeared in the Miami New Herald newspaper, although critical of certain things, were relatively apologetic. Three days later, the individual was sending another subject here with the intentions of doing what others had done; but one learns quickly with experience although it isn't so easy for them anymore. And furthermore, more than one has fallen into the trap. But if there are two or three and nothing has been published about this, they say "how strange!" No, nothing is strange. We have them here as witnesses. Where they came from, how they left, how they brought the means, do you understand? Who gave them the means and how much were they paid to plant the bombs here. There's nothing strange about it. The relevant legal procedures are being followed; but in this struggle we know the tactics we should use.

I'll only say that we have proof and nothing else, and that they shouldn't be surprised because they're not dealing with imbeciles. This Revolution knows what it has to do and knows how to investigate what it has to investigate without ever resorting to physical violence. It has never used violence against anyone or any of these mercenaries who immediately confess to everything once they are discovered. They are presented with two or three proofs, they quickly become demoralized and start to tell all and cooperate. No one has laid a finger on them nor will they. We even give them the guarantee that no one will harm them here. Afterwards comes the problem of the trials and sanctions because the laws severely punish these acts.

But it's truly regrettable that they go to Central America, full of poverty and misery, to hire mercenaries to carry out terrorist acts. They themselves don't come here, they take sufficient care not to come themselves. Mercenaries can be hired for 5000 dollars and even some for as low as 1500 dollars. See for yourselves: tickets, expenses and 1500 dollars per bomb, to what extent they exploit misery.

Now then, journalists know where the terrorists are. Those who don't have this information are the U.S. authorities. The terrorists have gone, have returned, they're free to do whatever they please and all this can't be done without someone knowing. Let's hope that the U.S. authorities adopt the necessary measures to put an end to these groups' activities which are potentially dangerous.

There's an example and it's the question of flights, the hijacking of planes. This was used by the enemy against the Cuban Revolution to steal planes. Nevertheless, it sowed the seed, the virus which spread like wildfire and which only Cuba could eradicate when, after previously warning them, it returned to the United States some of those who were hijacking planes. We did it on our own, out of a sense of responsibility. There were days when three hijacked planes used to arrive at the airport. It was Cuba which put an end to this invention of theirs.

The United States has a lot of terrorist groups; it has 800 extremist groups, fanatics, racists, of which 400 are armed. Only recently I read that the FBI had captured three citizens who were part of the movement to separate Texas from the United States. They had written a letter threatening to use chemical and biological arms. It was reported that they were transporting anthrax, a dangerous disease, in a van in addition to products containing the AIDS virus which they were going to deploy using small contaminated darts. They even threatened the U.S. attorney general and that President Clinton himself could be attacked with these biological weapons.

There are crazy people all over the world and I believe that the United States has more than its fair share of fanatics, extremists and racists similar to those who planted the bomb in Oklahoma killing 150 people in the process or those who wanted to use nerve gas and explosives in New York's subway.

The U.S. authorities have a big problem, namely how to avoid the spread of these terrorist methods and activities to its own extremist groups. The terrorist extremist elements, who in their time were trained by the CIA and who are paid by the Cuban-American Foundation in their activities against Cuba, have developed certain relatively sophisticated procedures to perpetrate their criminal acts. Even we are opposed to the dissemination of these techniques because once some crazy elements over there know about them, they could become a great problem for the United States themselves and other countries.

The authorities in that country know very well that nowadays the methods used are really dangerous, difficult to discover and that even chemical and biological procedures could be used. They fear that in the future attacks or sabotage of a nuclear nature could be perpetrated because with the problems in some countries, nobody knows what control really exists and if it will exist in the future in relation to the materials needed to construct a nuclear device.

I don't want to say much but I think that many people in the world are certain that money can buy sufficient amounts of nuclear material to make rudimentary devices which require no more than two or three kilograms of enriched uranium or other similar material. Scientific literature has shown how it can be done. In the United States, there are responsible people who are worried that one day extremist groups will decide to carry out chemical, biological and even nuclear attacks. It's a nightmare.

In that country, I repeat, there are 800 groups of this kind - they've published it - about 400 of these groups have the right, according to existing laws, to bear arms. It's one of the agonizing problems of the current U.S. president: how to limit and control the possession of arms. There are powerful organizations who are opposed to such measures. On the other hand, films and TV series are saturated with violence encourage even children to carry arms to school and kill other children. These are serious problems.

I objectively feel that this type of activity denounced by The New York Times neither interests nor suits the United States. The same goes for the perpetrators' justification which we are denouncing this night because they constitute a considerable potential danger for any country and in particular for U.S. society.

I believe that they have a special interest in combating terrorism. And I'll say right here, publicly, that we are prepared to cooperate.

They, out of arrogance, have on various occasions rejected cooperating with Cuba in the fight against drugs, despite the fact that no country in this hemisphere has fought so consistently against the traffic and use of drugs than Cuba. And not because the drug traffickers are trying to set up a drug market here but rather given our country's geographical position, planes or boats have landed or docked on our territory for technical problems or navigation errors. Or because they were launching the drug near our coasts or because as has unfortunately occurred, some crazy people had the idea of getting involved in drugs, believing that it could be something useful.

The worst thing is that some of those who got involved in this crazy racket stupidly believed that they were going to help the country. It goes without saying that when they came into contact with certain amounts of money, corruption and the administration of easy money began. This outbreak was stopped in its tracks. The disloyalty and indiscipline committed against the Revolution were punished in an exemplary manner. What can't be denied is that no other country has combated this problem with more energy and success. Now we are watching with the greatest vigilance what the opening of our borders to tourism, to commercial trade and foreign investment will bring.

U.S. governments have never wanted to cooperate with Cuba in this field. Cuba, however, has been prepared to cooperate in the fight against drug trafficking with every country. We have agreements with Mexico and other countries in the Americas. We have agreements as well with European countries but there exists no such agreement with the United States. They don't want one for reasons of arrogance and pride.

We are also prepared to cooperate with the United States in the fight against terrorism and we believe their risks are greater than ours. They aren't as prepared as we are to confront this problem because they have millions of obstacles, complications and chaotic situations in their own country.

(MUSIC IS HEARD AND HE LOOKS AT HIS WATCH) It's midnight (APPLAUSE), I just have a bit more to go. Is it a sign that the carnival celebrations have already started? (LAUGHTER)

Returning to the theme, I was saying that we are better prepared to face up to these problems. That country is very large and, as I said, as a general rule it is violent; a violence that is often promoted and inspired by the mass media, the cinema, television, children's games and other means.

That country needs internal peace and it really needs more than anyone to control and prevent the risks which lie ahead.

Our cooperation would be useful and we don't have any objection. But if they don't want to, we will continue fighting alone for as long as is necessary because we have the conviction that we're more capable than they are to confront terrorism; we are less vulnerable and we have the overwhelming support of our people, of our mass organizations and of all our compatriots. (APPLAUSE) We are also educated, cultured and organized. Moreover, we have a greater experience and spirit of cooperation and joint work. Nevertheless, I wish to make clear our willingness to cooperate.

In fact, I have expressed here my idea, my opinion with regard to these issues and the current U.S. president's attitude. I don't have to warn him so that they don't say afterwards that "Castro warns U.S. President." I simply say that I perceive a man who is concerned about many of his country's problems, a man with a sense of responsibility and concerns about the future. He even speaks of a personal historical legacy. It's not that I agree for I feel that no one has the right to think of personal historical legacies. As Martí once said, all the world's glory fits into a grain of corn. But taking into account his concerns, it is to be assumed that he understands and perceives realities and truths, that he meditates on and analyses information given to him about Cuba, that he's aware of the responsibility which his country has for the injustices committed against our nation during the course of history. And that he deigns to take into account the words we have pronounced today in the name of a small, but yet courageous, heroic and unyielding people.

OUR WISH TODAY, 45 YEARS LATER, IS THAT OUR PEOPLE STUDY AND GET AN EDUCATION

I'll only say one thing to the new generations: 45 years have passed since the assault on the Moncada. Our country has been struggling for its independence and its rights for more than a century. Maceo, Gómez and other fighters struggled from 1868 until 1898. They suffered the humiliation of not being able to hoist their flag in this heroic city, of not even being able to enter it after 30 years of a self-sacrificing, admirable and heroic struggle. But the day came when those flags were hoisted and their ideas triumphed, ideas which were ever-changing and which never stopped evolving into something better. Every new idea can be a step towards the pinnacle of human progress.

We borrowed ideas from philosophers, thinkers and revolutionaries. Our people has contributed new ideas and will continue to do so.

We're living in an interesting and exceptional world, of which we have talked on other occasions. A world in the throes of globalization which brings with it tremendous problems and enormous challenges. Our main interest is that our people have the knowledge, the culture and, above all, the political and scientific awareness to prepare itself for this world which is enveloping us at a very fast rate.

Our wish today, 45 years afterwards, is that our people study and get an education. We have to look further afield, work out new ideas, set new targets, new principles stemming from the same feelings, eternal love for human dignity and justice which brought us here amidst so many obstacles, struggling

against the most powerful empire in world history which has placed enormous obstacles in our path over which we have triumphed.

We will continue fighting for we have reason enough to feel confident.

In January of next year, we are going to have in Cuba a very important meeting of economists with a public debate of all ideas ranging from capitalism to neoliberalism. The central theme will be globalization and neoliberalism. I believe that it's going to be a very serious debate. We're going to have the opportunity to touch on the most important matters of the present and the future.

We have many contacts with many leaders and personalities from abroad and I can assure you that we're witnessing a growing concern and interest in all these problems whose detailed analysis will help us prepare for this new world which is emerging.

We remind the new generation that our Cuban patriots fought selflessly and heroically for 30 years and yet for 60 years afterwards, our freedom was snatched away to be given to the transnationals, the privileged, the oligarchs, the corrupt and the rich.

Although some people have become rich for reasons which you already know, today we have a country which hasn't been handed over to nor will it ever be handed over to the wealthy, the oligarchs, the bourgeoisie, plunderers or the corrupt. We're aware of the vices which affect us, of the factors which influence us, of the many things we have to fight against and the many things we still have to perfect. But we won't be discouraged, we trust in our ideas and we have confidence in our people.

Our generation has fulfilled its duty after having struggled without respite for 45 years, from that July 26, 1953 onwards, maintaining a steadfast position of principles, with the same ideas that inspired us that day.

They say that with the passing of time, people become conservative and it's partly true. As a rule, young people are disinterested, altruistic and intrepid. But everything depends on ideas. We have had the strength of ideas which we have defended and we think exactly the same today as we used to think then.

We have a little bit more experience and knowledge. We have learned something during these 45 years and we will try to pass it on to the next generation, the new generation who today have important responsibilities. Just as we add 30 years from the past century and 45 from this one to arrive at a figure of 75, we have been fighting for 130 years from 1868 until now. But before our compatriots were fighting to win their independence and sovereignty which they never saw. We had the privilege to see it in reality and we urge the upcoming generations to seize these ideas, to forge their spirit in this struggle, to carry onwards that struggle.

Today there are higher ideals. Before we were fighting for our country; today we're fighting for the world and we're doing so for two reasons. (APPLAUSE) Firstly, we have acquired an awareness of humanity, so beautifully expressed in Martí's phrase, "The homeland is humanity". (APPLAUSE) Secondly, because we have acquired these concepts through Martí's teachings and our political, revolutionary, Marxist, Leninist, socialist education. We have pooled the essence of our thinkers' best ideas with that of foreign thinkers, which has helped to strengthen and develop our present ideals.

We're patriots but we're also internationalists. No people has demonstrated this better than we have. No people was capable of voluntarily sending more than half a million of its sons and daughters to carry out difficult missions in other parts of the world. And what we have sown, nobody will be able to destroy. A tree can fall because it has weak roots but no tree with deep roots can ever be uprooted (APPLAUSE) and we have millions of citizens with deep roots and a people with deep roots. Let our young educated and cultured people know how to acquire it, know how to understand it; know how to take from history; know how to feed from the glory of our nation, its traditions and its values just as children feed from

their mothers' breasts.

Don't let yourselves be confused by anything, don't ever let anyone deceive you. This is our hope, that our country never goes backwards, that this Revolution never goes backwards and that all the dignity and glory which we have acquired can never be destroyed. (APPLAUSE) This is our commitment and our pledge to our glorious and heroic comrades who have given their lives for this cause.

Long live Santiago de Cuba! (SHOUTS OF "LONG LIVE!")

Long live the city which bears with dignity the name of Hero City! (SHOUTS OF "LONG LIVE!")

Long live the cradle of the Revolution! (SHOUTS OF "LONG LIVE!")

With pride we proclaim today and with pride we repeat:

Socialism or death!

Patria o muerte!

Venceremos!

(OVATION)

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