

Master lecture delivered by Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro at the autonomous university of Santo Domingo. August 24, 1998

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Date:

24/08/1998

Dear Rector;

Dear and envied young President of the Dominican students;

Dear friends:

My visit had necessarily to be short, not because any time or limit was set to me, but due to the many activities we have at this moment, especially in this second half of the year, when most of us have not even had a minute of rest and oftentimes very few hours of sleep. That is why we had to set a limit, and also be prudent: nobody should overstay his welcome.

Therefore, I really had only two days left of my visit to the Dominican Republic, the three previous days I attended the CARICOM multilateral meeting, or rather CARICOM's meeting with the Dominican Republic, to which we had the honor of being invited and, along with this, make an official visit. How many things could I do in those two days? I could not even do the minimum I had originally planned, including a possible visit to Montecristi, and comply with official functions, visit some individuals and meet with the people of Baní.

Before arriving in the Dominican Republic, we had been reading press dispatches that reported the enormous efforts by the countless Dominican organizations, solidarity groups, students who had graduated in Cuba and a great number of friendly groups, everyone asking for a meeting which was absolutely impossible. That is how the idea came up to hold this meeting that all those organizations could attend. But meetings of this nature are always a bit more complicated, because it is not the same to speak to one single organization for hours - this does not mean that I am going to speak for hours here (Laughter) - that to get them all together.

While I was writing that dedication - which came as a surprise to me, for everyone forgot to tell me that I had to write something here (Laughter) - from the moment I sat down, some people started asking for one thing and others for another, and someone said, "Make it a political statement", and if being political is not always easy, being a revolutionary is still more difficult. So, under what was actually your inspiration, I had to write a few words for this institution, where dedications began to be written over 50 years ago, and I, for one, am satisfied. It has a bit of everything: it is a little bit political and a little bit revolutionary.

I would be happy if you felt that my writing in that historical book is not absolutely useless. The great diversity of personalities and organizations present here made it difficult to just say a few words. However, they all had something in common: a feeling of friendship.

All of you together have set the country in motion. The international cables, I usually read them, referred constantly to the many mobilizations, the signs and slogans in connection with our visit, which

gradually created an international climate seldom reported by the international news agencies. I can say that the cables I have read here in Santo Domingo give an objective, friendly information which reflects that climate you have created of an enormous value for this visit, in every respect. That includes matters related to security, since many of you claimed a willingness to actively participate in, and take upon yourselves the task of, watching over our delegation's safety. Also, the major political significance that your expressions of solidarity in the days prior to our visit are having right now, when they are badly needed.

We have found solidarity, great solidarity in different places that we have visited. What we had never found was such a great expression of solidarity and such an efficient way of showing it, at such a timely moment for our country, and in such a mixed up world as we are living in. I simply could not leave without meeting with you (Prolonged applause).

I was wondering what I should say to you. There are many topics, an endless number of topics. I could speak about Cuba but we speak about Cuba every day, and when we do not, others do it for us and against us (Laughter and applause). I could perhaps then, in a few words, say that Cuba is still there and it will continue to be there (Applause).

Every now and then they publish that Castro is no longer there, or that Castro's days are numbered. They are such fools and such idiots (Laughter) that they do not realize that is the least important (Applause). What would be the worth of a revolution if it depended on Castro or on any single man? (Applause.) Poor idiots who for so long have applied that concept and believed in it!

From the very beginning, in their infinite plans to eliminate leaders of the Cuban Revolution, I was awarded the honor of being the first on their list (Laughter). I once jokingly said that I had the undesirable record, or the inglorious record - well, perhaps it is glorious; but it would be best to call it the undesirable or strange record - of being the main target of assassination attempts among all the personalities and politicians that ever existed, at least in this century and perhaps in many others. They believed in the idea that the end of Castro would be the end of everything else. They keep asking about Castro's health, or disseminating news, almost weekly or every two weeks, of his demise, or predicting diseases, or calculating his age (Laughter).

It is said a lady should never be asked about her age. We politicians might be considered some sort of ladies (Laughter and applause) who do not like to be reminded of our age. It is not out of vanity, no. It is simply upsetting not to be able to continue fighting and annoying them for a much longer period of time (Applause).

But these are matters of personal liking that have nothing to do with the philosophy of life, politics and history. That is why I said that, of all the predictions, that was least important.

They have little time to turn back the pages of history and recall the past. The march of history is adamant. We have had so many setbacks since last century? So many leaders were dead! However, that did not stop our country's history of struggles.

I concede that at a certain time, certain people can play a certain role. However, I hold this as a relative truth. Actually, I believe the role that any man has played at any time has always depended on circumstances that had nothing to do with the man himself.

If Bolivar had been born in 1650 or 1700 no one would know the name Bolivar. Only a century later, and when new ideas keep emerging as a result of serious problems that have been accumulating for a long time, the big changes and their protagonists are possible. If it had not been for the historical process that preceded the French Revolution, who would have ever heard of Danton, Robespierre, Mirabeau and all those individuals with an intense but short life because, according to in Saturn's legend, the revolution devoured its own children. There was an abbot who became famous because when someone asked him what he had done during the revolution, he answered, "Stay alive"

(Laughter).

It is that men who play a role, depend completely on events that have nothing to do with their personal ability that can only show under certain circumstances. That is what happened with the forefathers of our independence and all personalities throughout history. Previous conditions are required for which no man take credit.

Martí, when was he born? At the right moment, the right day, the right hour, the right minute, the right second; had he been born a century before, perhaps Marti's name would have never been heard of. That is also the case with Máximo Gómez, to whom we paid a well-deserved tribute, but still short of the enormous tribute he deserves.

The association of historical events with specific people has long been rooted in the propaganda and even in the conception of reactionaries, imperialists and enemies of the Revolution. Thus they speak about Castro's Revolution, they personalize it: Castro did this, Castro did that. The person who least believes that, and I am being completely honest, the one who has never believed that, really, that's me. I think that I am one of those who have never felt that way. It's a matter of life perception and of watching history in a philosophic way. People are a different thing. One day we said this phrase: Men die, but the people is immortal (Applause).

We do not mind their predictions, their concerns. Presently, when all their plans have failed, when all their lies and wishful thinking have been ridiculed, they are trying to figure out what lies ahead for Cuba as the laws of biology take their toll. We are not worried about what will happen in Cuba, because we shelter no doubts about what will happen in Cuba. What we are asking ourselves, and it is what these wishful thinkers should be asking themselves, is what will happen in the world.

Cuba's modest work will live on with the revolutionary spirit that made it possible. But the history of our country, just like your history, your future, will depend on the future of the world. Even the future of the United States will very much depend on that other future.

In strictly national terms, I can simply say that our country has resisted, when everyone, everywhere, was predicting the opposite. After the collapse of the socialist bloc and the demise of the USSR, where we had our markets and our main supplies of fuel, raw material, etc. those trade relations we had managed to establish on equitable bases were lost overnight. They had enabled us to confront the U.S. blockade for many years, and not only confront it, but advance in many fields, some of which you have mentioned here.

The demise of the socialist camp had them dreaming that the demise of the Cuban Revolution was a matter of days, of weeks at the most. They saw the European socialist countries collapse one after the other and they were expecting to read in the papers the news of Cuba's collapse, which was not a baseless assumption.

They did not need for those countries to collapse, but the collapse of Cuba they needed it. Those countries were a lot more developed, had a lot more resources than we did, still when they renounced socialism the West immediately lifted the blockade and other restrictions, offered them loans, assistance and, above all, recipes, and more recipes; they received the worst poison.

When we saw that and we analyzed the whole process, the fundamental elements and causes and the way things were unfolding, we foresaw the disappearance of the Soviet Union. Two years before it happened, at a 26th of July rally, in Camagüey province, I said something that left everyone there sort of amazed and confused. I said, "And if one day we wake up to find that the Soviet Union has disappeared, we will continue fighting, and we will continue building socialism" (Applause and exclamations).

Yes, that immense, rich and powerful country collapsed and an economy comprehensively built in over

70 years was disjointed. It had been a country where a republic produced certain things while others produced others, they exchanged products and produced many things in cooperation.

Overnight, we lost the market for many million tons of sugar which enjoyed a preferential price, obtained by our Revolution with arguments and reasons, since we had discovered that the prices of products exported by the more developed countries did not stop increasing while those of the products exported by our countries kept falling. If we signed for the volumes and prices of the goods to be exchanged in a five year period, for the imported products we did it on the basis of prices close to those of the world market and the purchasing power of our products, after five years it was a lot less than it had been at the beginning of the five years period.

Meanwhile, the price every machine, every equipment, every product that we imported was higher and the price of our sugar - our main export item - was still that of the world market plus a preferential premium, and the price of other commodities remained the same they had been the first year of the agreement.

Added to this, one day the price of oil surged, it jumped to huge figures. By then, however, we had reached an agreement based on sliding prices. We said that if we were talking proletarian internationalism then the prices of our products, especially sugar, must increase as the prices of your export products increase (Applause).

How far up did the price of sugar climb then? It was between 25 and 30 cents a pound. Theirs, which was beet sugar, cost even more and with that we were able to pay for the oil and other products. But, it was mainly with sugar that we could pay for the oil whose price had increased 12 to 14 times. After the oil prices boom, less than a barrel of oil could be bought with what could buy a ton of oil before the Revolution's triumph.

Imagine what it means for a country to loose such fair and reasonable trade relations, plus the market. All the machinery, or the vast majority of the tractors, trucks and equipment we had, originated there. It is true they used up a lot of fuel more than other from the West, but that was not a big problem because the ships with the fuel followed right behind the equipment. And when there was a hurricane or a pest - like those introduced in our country that more than once damaging sugarcane or other crops - the agreed products never failed to reach our country. The agreements were rigorously observed as if protected by a guarantee clause.

We received credits. And, mark my words: with 1 hectare of well-cultivated cane, we could buy up to 30 tons of rice. It was an excellent exchange, because they had some rice surpluses and they sold it at the international price. Our export prices basically fluctuated in conjunction with the oil prices, and with a 10 tons of sugar yield from 1 hectare of sugarcane, we could buy up to 30 tons of rice, wheat or other important foods.

That revenue enabled the country to advance its economic and social development program.

There is much talk outside our country about our education system, health care and even sports. Yes, that is true but there is no talk about the tens of thousands of kilometers of highways that have been built. No one speaks about the many dams built all over the country and that, from 35 million cubic meters of water capacity we started out with, we now have over 10 billion. We were applying the most advanced technical programs in sugarcane and rice cultivation because not all the rice came from the Soviet Union, a significant part we produced ourselves and we were planning to grow all of the rice we needed by using flat terraces, increasing yields, cutting down costs and using water more efficiently.

It is never said that we mechanized the sugar cane harvest, where more than 300,000 workers worked before the Revolution, if only for three or four months a year, and that after the Revolution they found permanent jobs. That cane-cutters work force disappeared. It was replaced, first, by the mechanical cane haulers, and then by the harvesting machines, which cut and hauled the cane and, really raised

productivity.

It is not said that many trades in our country were mechanized: rice was cut with the famous sickle when the Revolution triumphed but later it was all cut with machines. Construction work was manual, it was all mechanized afterwards. Transportation was done with oxen - a good deal of it -, all of it was mechanized. Electric energy reached only 50% of the population, electrification now benefits over 90%. Sugar was hauled on people's back in 250 pound bags, which at a time weighed 300 pounds. No one knows the number of people who later developed back problems. All sugar shipments, millions of tons per year, were mechanized, except for those destined to small countries that do not have facilities to receive bulk sugar, in which case, a certain amount of bags, a minimum amount, had to be hauled manually.

Work was extraordinarily humanized thanks to the Revolution. Electrical energy capacity was multiplied tenfold or more than tenfold while, new mechanical industries were created. We now manufacture our sugarcane harvesting machines. We were even manufacturing bulldozers, although part of the components were imported, but it considerably reduced costs. We were producing forklifts and other equipment, creating jobs and reducing the country hard currency spending. We manufacture the main components for the sugar factories. We were already manufacturing up to 70% of components for the sugar factories, even if we had to import 30% in centrifuges and certain equipment and components that we were not able to produce in our country.

We developed science at a very quick pace, and there is hardly any talk about this. Today we have thousands of scientists, because, aware of that sector's importance, even under the "special period", we have continued to carry out scientific research. At this moment, research is proceeding on candidate vaccines against AIDS, even against cancer. This in addition to great number of new medicines and vaccines, some of them solely made and developed in our country.

I am not going to refer to the number of houses we built. Foremost, we had already achieved a 4 million tons per year in cement production capacity and enough building material to build 100,000 houses per year when, unfortunately, the "special period" set in. We had not been wasting our time.

I must honestly say though, that the abundance of available resources did not help develop our thrifty habits. I cannot deny that there were even some who rode the tractor to go visit a girlfriend. This might be great for romance, but from the economic view point is disastrous (Laughter and applause). Our domestic consumption was then 13 million tons of fuel per year.

That degree of development we had reached became a terrible liability with the collapse of the socialist camp and the USSR, especially that of the USSR which seemed to be unyielding. It had resisted the first intervention after the World War I which had turned the country into a wrecked piece of land. Then, it was again destroyed before twenty years had passed, totally destroyed, sustaining the loss of 20 million people; a country which had defeated Nazism.

Those who read the new histories that are been written should not believe that some small ships arriving through Murmansk in convoys from the West, or some raw material or equipment arriving through Iran, made the difference. It was the hundreds and thousands of factories that during the war, and even before the war, had been transferred to Siberia, many of which began producing in the winter when they still lacked a roof. It was the will of a people that had lived under a certain social regime, regardless of the enormous mistakes that were made, mainly subjective mistakes - we do not need to name them, they are well-known. It was a people that for the first time had been the owner of all the riches, peasants who became owners of the land and workers who became owners of the factories, because there had been a social change and that people had developed a great capacity for struggle and a great selflessness.

When every other country in Europe surrendered to the first shots, the USSR - despite huge political errors committed before that war, and huge military errors, such as having the defense forces totally

demobilized while three million troops and tens of thousands of tanks were being concentrated next to their border doing the incredible, that is, launching a surprise attack that destroyed thousands of aircraft on the ground the first day, thousands of aircraft, thus opening the way to the rapid advance of the armored divisions, when the troops were not even mobilized; those were serious mistakes by the leaders, very serious mistakes, which were paid for dearly - the USSR was the only country which resisted, on and on. The other countries, as soon as their lines were broken by a few divisions, sat down to negotiate in all different places. But that is another story.

Thus, it seemed impossible that that country, which despite so much destruction had attained nuclear parity in a short period of 20 to 25 years and that could not be conquered by Hitler with his millions of soldiers, could be destroyed by the West without firing a single shot, conquered without firing a single shot. We could foresee what was going to happen and, unfortunately, it did.

I said that the recipes were the worst. As a result of those recipes Russia's GDP - not the USSR's any more but Russia's - has been dropping yearly to 45% of what it produced in 1989, before the USSR's dissolution and the beginning of the capitalist construction. The Russian Federation produced between 400 and 500 million tons of oil per year, all the gas they wanted to meet their demand and export a considerable volume to the West, steel, raw materials, which Cuba would have to do without. They kept the factories of spare parts for trucks, machinery, all kinds of equipment, which Cuba was left without.

Our production, which dropped to 65%, began to recover despite lacking all those things. Today we are up to around 76%, it is not 45%, and we are making progress although it will take some time before we can make a comeback. Ours is a blockaded country, a doubly blockaded country: the old blockade tightened and the new unexpected blockade which left us with the fuel-wasting equipment but without the oil tankers coming from the Soviet Union, nor the food that used to arrive, nor the prices for our sugar, not even the markets for that sugar. We were left without something as vital as fuel, when over 90% of the country had been electrified. If electrification had only been 50% it would have been less difficult. All the achievements of more than 30 years became an additional liability in those circumstances. When people get used to certain services like electricity, considered essential, there is no going back. You can serve it by quotas, do other things - you have gone through this - blackouts and similar things which had ceased to exist in our country a long time ago.

A significant merchant fleet had been created in the country, also a high seas fishing fleet and for transportation. Practically all manual work had been mechanized. The hard physical work that our workers used to do no longer existed.

How could the country be saved under such circumstances? Those in the North tightened the screws when they perceived these objective realities. A building resting on two pillars had lost one. The other pillar, however, was the people, our people's consciousness (Applause), its ability to struggle, to resist, its heroism.

Our Revolution was not an imported product. It was a product created by our people. Ninety percent of the weapons we won the war with had been seized from the enemy (Applause). Nobody supplied us with weapons, and only now and then we got a few (From the audience they say, "Cuba, dignity of America!") (Applause). It was a genuine revolution, an authentic revolution, our people's revolution, it wasn't exported to us or waged for us. We did not even have any relations with the USSR, not because we were prejudiced, rather because we took into account the international situation with the cold war.

We tried to purchase the first weapons from a country in Western Europe, Belgium. They were weapons to defend ourselves by using our experience in guerrilla warfare, since it would not have been possible to resist an American attack with conventional methods. The first ship arrived and there were no problems but when the second ship arrived and it was being unloaded by hundreds of workers and soldiers, there was a terrible explosion. Then, when people surged to rescue the victims, there was another explosion: more than 100 people died, hundreds were injured.

Those were the first weapons we bought in the West, in order not to give a pretext to the gentlemen in the North. Some cannons were bought in Italy with their corresponding ammunition. Pressure began and the cannons arrived but hardly with any ammunition. As we had gotten only a small amount of ammunition, the deliveries were cut off while the threat of aggression was over us from the very moment we enacted the land reform law.

The Bay of Pigs invasion was not conceived in the United States because we had proclaimed the socialist nature of Revolution. It was conceived immediately after we passed the Land Reform Law in May 1959. Since there were large American estates comprising tens of thousands of hectares each, and some of them even up to 200,000 hectares, one single transnational company, the war to the end was immediately decided. The Revolution had to be destroyed. What is this about letting land reforms hurt the interests of American companies? Have not these guys learned the Guatemala lesson?

Today we know very well the cost of that lesson: over 100,000 people vanished, around 150,000 dead, mostly as a result of repression, especially the vanished and many of the dead. One hundred and fifty thousand lives was the toll of that expedition against Jacobo Arbenz. We knew that story well. We were trying to get weapons for the people because we knew the recipe. They were the ones who could not tell the difference between the situation in Guatemala and in Cuba, where there had been a victorious revolution against forces organized, supplied and trained by the United States, 80,000 troops, finally defeated with just 3,000 weapons, 25 months after the Granma landing.

They did not realize that the people were in command. There is the historic experience of what the people can do and you know it because if there has been a country in this hemisphere with a difficult and hazardous history it is this fraternal Dominican country (Applause).

You have even gone through the experience of fighting against 40,000 American troops landing in your own territory (Applause), and you were not defeated. They could not defeat the people and the military who took sides with the people, whose most outstanding figure whom I mentioned in the decoration ceremony, we will always remember, the figure of Francisco Caamaño (Prolonged applause). They could not crush you. They had to negotiate, to find a way out, one way or another, through an inevitable compromise. There were some Latin American countries who even joined the aggression, some joined that invasion of the Dominican Republic. First, there was the invasion and then the sanctioning of the invasion by the very famous OAS. It is not possible to forget that.

So aggressions against Cuba began due to a land reform law. Of course, for every measure the United States took, Cuba responded with a countermeasure: Suspension of the sugar quota, nationalization of certain companies (Applause); total suspension, total nationalization (Applause). Many landlords and very rich Cubans, believed it would be a matter of days, because people have their beliefs, right? (Laughter), and the belief then was that it was impossible: "A revolution right next to the United States? Oh, forget it!" Many of them practically took a vacation waiting for our neighbors to do away with us. The big mansions were left empty. What did we do? Bring one hundred thousand scholarship students into the vacationists' houses! (Laughter and applause.) We did not take anybody's house, not at all! They went on vacations, and since their vacations were extended indefinitely... (Applause). The houses are there, preserved and kept at the service of the nation.

Now the Helms-Burton Act says that the owners of those houses are Americans, therefore, the law applies also to those properties and other vacationists' properties. It is incredible, for the first time in history they receive the category of citizens and the benefit of the law. Even Clinton himself once said that it was madness, and he should know about madness (Laughter and exclamations of "Fidel! Fidel!"). Of course, I do not mean to offend him because I do not want to side with the far right in that country. I think I have made myself clear about that when I say how I feel. I do not mean to offend him but that is what he said.

What the Helms-Burton Act was claiming before they lift the blockade, would cost Cuba 100 billion dollars. Listen, only if we had the machine they have in the U.S. treasury to print their green bills! It is

preposterous, a law of an extraterritorial scope to prevent investment in Cuba. Then we look at the US in amazement and say: Hey, who are the main advocates of socialism in Cuba today? The United States is (Applause), so much so that it would not want people to invest. As for us, every time we can we invest something: a piece of socialism.

Where does the irrationality, or the inconsistency of presenting or doing everything possible to prevent investment in our country, lead to? How could our country get the resources under such circumstance? I repeat, how could our country get the resources under such circumstance? Just like the vast majority of the Third World countries which are not swimming in a sea of oil, which need technology, and capital. We are not an exception to that rule.

Before the special period, before the USSR collapsed, we realized that some sectors of the economy could not develop with the only support of the socialist camp, because they did not have the technology for it. Actually, eight or nine years before the collapse of the socialist camp we had made the decision to create joint ventures in some sectors as a complement to the socialist development of our country. We had been meditating, delving deep into the problem, rationalizing it.

They are trying to suffocate us at all costs when everything they have tried and all their plans have failed. But they wanted to take advantage of the special moment. Their other calculations, their other plans had failed, including the mercenary invasion, which lasted less than 72 hours, because we knew we could not permit the consolidation of a beachhead. They had a government ready on an airplane. Using an easy mechanism, they were going to land on an airstrip built by the Revolution in an inhospitable marshy place.

The Revolution had built, in the first months, three paved roads leading in that direction. They were on marshy land where we had to dump tons and tons of rock per meter to build a firm foundation. Even a tourist zone was being developed there, and an airstrip. That was the place they chose, easy to defend, since to take it back we would have to go through tens of kilometers of mud, along those paved roads that could be easily blocked.

A big surprise, a new underestimation that was punished. The American squadron was only three miles away, with aircraft carriers and all, but they did not have enough time, because attacking all the time, our forces, still not very experienced in the use of certain weapons, defeated the mercenary expedition in approximately 68 hours (Applause). The government stayed waiting in Miami. They are still waiting! (Applause).

A dirty war like they waged in Nicaragua. They managed to organize bandits in every province and mainly in the area of the Escambray Mountains, which was the zone they were preparing for their projected invasion. But, we cleaned up the Escambray Mountains and reduced their forces to a minimum.

There was a time when they had around 1,000 counterrevolutionaries there, air supplied. Although some of the weapons fell into our hands because we had also organized "our bandits" or had infiltrated theirs, or had formed our own counterrevolutionary organizations. Anyway, the infiltrated revolutionaries ended up being the heads of the organizations (Laughter and applause). That was when we had to tell them: "Listen, do not overdo it". They were rendering different services and all, they were really outstanding.

The forces which defended the Revolution learned the ability to fight those bandits. Do you know why? Because they never used physical violence, I am pleased to say that here today, they never used it. We did not use it in war times and we have never used it in peace times. We did not use it in the first years that were the most difficult and we have never used it during the time of the Revolution, no matter what they say, no matter how much they lie and how much they slander. Cuba and our people know very well how things are over there and what our ethical rules are. We will never resort to such procedures. Those who use torture to seek information never learn anything.

Since our forces followed that rule they developed that ability, especially to infiltrate the enemy groups. There was a moment when the CIA and their enthusiastic followers had organized 300 counterrevolutionary organizations, some of them better-known, more important. Thus, it was a long battle.

After that, pirate attacks, plans for direct invasion of Cuba. This is known today thanks to certain documents. What we denounced then, the plans that the government ordered the Pentagon to elaborate, to fabricate a pretext for a direct invasion against Cuba. This was after Girón.

All that set the ground for the USSR-Cuba agreement to deploy strategic missiles in our country. This is a lengthy subject which I recently talked about with CNN, a major American TV network, in a program where I was asked many questions and, with the support of documents, I answered them all: What was the origin of the conflict? What happened? Finally, it was proven; it was true that they were preparing a direct invasion. That was the origin of the October [Missile] Crisis, an event I do not want to dwell on right now, it is not my objective.

After the crisis, again pirate attacks, sabotages throughout all these years, assassination plans, and now not only those which were institutionally organized but also those organized by the groups that were trained, very well trained, and let loose to carry out assassination attempts and personal actions, covering up U.S. responsibility.

All those groups are made up by the same people who blew up the plane over Barbados, who participated in the dirty war against Nicaragua supplying weapons mainly from El Salvador and Honduras, weapons obtained through the scandalous connection called Iran-Gate which ended up in Central America. It is these same groups that carry out those apparently independent assassination attempts, but there is proof that they were tolerated for many years.

There is no doubt that the terrorist actions in our capital aimed at sabotaging tourism and suffocating our country's economy even more were known and tolerated. It was absolutely impossible to carry them out without those whose duty it was to prevent them knowing about them, since they were organized from the United States with Central American mercenaries. It would have been impossible, we have recent proof of that. A system of terrorism against Cuba was deliberately created in which everyone was responsible but no one was guilty. In other words, the most devilish mechanisms of dispersing responsibility were created, pursuing the same policy of harassment to try to annihilate our Revolution.

We have lots of information about this, but I do not want to talk about this subject now. I did not really intend to. I just wanted to talk about things in Cuba the way I have been doing. I simply want to emphasize that the main thing is our people. The question is, how is it possible that in such difficult conditions, of which I have been giving you some facts, our people has been able to resist?

It is in this context that we appraise those feelings of support and solidarity that so generously and extraordinarily you have been showing us in the last few days. And you cannot imagine how much this helps us. The same way the Caribbean people helped us in Jamaica when they greeted us with mass rallies where we spoke Spanish to English-speaking crowds. Such awareness they showed and such knowledge! Such a demonstration of their understanding of Cuba's policy of solidarity with Africa, and of our struggle against apartheid and against its army, one of the most sophisticated and technically advanced, which was in possession of seven nuclear weapons when we were fighting against them, at the Angolans' side, in Cuito Cuanavale and close to the Namibian border. They could not take up this challenge and were forced to negotiate. Such these negotiations put an end to colonialism in Namibia and stepped up the demise of apartheid.

Today, many in the West speak of apartheid: it's great that it disappeared! They speak of that apartheid of which many of them were accomplices, the same apartheid they never blockaded, the same apartheid which wrote some of the most shameful, revolting and humiliating pages in modern history.

They speak about it, but they never mention the Cuban fighters involved in that struggle, the Cuban fighters who died in those battles. They never mention a Caribbean country which sent up to 55,000 volunteer fighters at the most decisive and critical moments of that war (Applause).

The African people does know and it does not forget. The people of South Africa and their African leaders do know it, and do not forget it. Others now go to Africa - to countries we contributed to liberate from the colonial yoke and defended from apartheid with our blood - to invest millions and billions. Cuba has not gone there, and will not go there, to invest a single penny (Applause). We invested what we had to invest, what is worth much more than money, much more than all the transnationals put together: our sweat, our blood and our lives! (Applause and exclamations of: "Long live revolutionary Cuba") Such is the country they want to destroy.

During the final stage of that battle I'm talking about, since part of our forces were stationed elsewhere, 40,000 Cuban troops and 30,000 Angolans were involved with all their gear, the tanks, the antiaircraft means - 1,000 antiaircraft pieces - against a country that could have used any of the seven nuclear weapons it had. In this august center I ask myself, did the Americans know it or not that South Africa had seven nuclear weapons?

They, who know everything or almost everything, at least in matters of espionage. They, who invest more than 27 billion dollars per year just in the Central Intelligence Agency, plus what they invest in the National Intelligence System that no one knows how much it is. It could be between 30 and 40 billions that they invest in the intelligence system, the same that recently claimed to know that chemical weapons were being produced in a medicine factory and, one by one, the whereabouts of each member of the groups which they said were responsible for actions that are, of course, murderous and damnable, as were those terrorist actions in the capitals of Tanzania and Kenya. They say they know all that.

I am using this argument to ask myself if they really did not know that South Africa had seven nuclear weapons. If they did not know, how could South Africa obtain those weapons? But, the fact remains that the Cubans were there fighting. They would have perhaps rejoiced if the racists had used any of those weapons against the Cuban troops!

Of course, we had taken all measures in case that happened. Our tactic, was to arrange our forces in groups no larger than 1,000 heavily armed men. Every measure was taken while they advanced in order to reduce to a minimum the risk of such a weapon being used against them in case the enemy had been able to break our antiaircraft barriers and managed to obtain an air supremacy which was already ours, thanks to our pilots who would fly very low, almost 1,000 kilometers an hour speed at an altitude of 40 or 50 meters.

Our combatants managed to gain air supremacy. They had the necessary weapons to counteract an attack of that nature. But those who know everything, did not know it. We are absolutely convinced that they did know it but that did not help them prevent the defeat of the powerful apartheid army.

Not only the African people, other peoples, the Caribbean peoples, did they not prove it? Yesterday, I spoke about the airport in Grenada that has proven to be vital for the quick economic development that island is having. They had excellent conditions for tourism, but they did not have an airport. The Cuban designers worked it out, it was almost built over the sea. We recently had the opportunity to see it.

It was almost complete when the well known invasion took place. There, with great fanfare to humiliate us, the gentleman who ordered the invasion also landed. Not much time had passed, just a few years, and the Grenadians received us there, recently (Applause). They received our delegation with extraordinary affection. In that same airport, they have placed a plaque dedicated upon our arrival, to the memory of the builders who worked at that airport, some of who died when that unjustifiable, treacherous attack was launched against Grenada.

One must have faith in history. One must have faith in the peoples. That encourages us in this fight, and teaches us. Do not think those are simply signs that can be erased, or simple slogans or words blown away by the wind. No, they are like hurricanes that can fell the biggest obstacles. They are like hurricanes in the conscience of the American people. They are like hurricanes of universal conscience. They are like lie-sweeping hurricanes. Because the peoples who act like that and the peoples that under a deluge of lies and slanders dare to support a country like Cuba, they make an impression. This shows in the way international agencies present it and, curiously enough, in the way certain U.S. television networks have broadcast the message.

They realize that their efforts are pointless, that time passes and their campaigns are weaker instead of stronger; time passes and the peoples' consciousness grow; time passes and the peoples come closer together; time passes and the peoples with modest resources available to them are organizing themselves, to act, to speak up and to make others listen.

What I am saying here is what all Cubans feel. It is also a proof that we are aware of the great value of your solidarity, as an effective means of defense, of protection even - as you yourselves said - against insane plans. I have not wanted to address the mad plans. I have a lot of information about all that but I did not want to say a single word that because I did not want that type of denunciation to affect in any way the mood or the positive atmosphere in the functions and the international meetings that were going to be held here. We are aware of disdainful ideas expressed about the Dominican people, the Dominican authorities and the Dominican security forces by the authors of such plans.

I feel the obligation of expressing here, very honestly and frankly, as I always do, that the authorities and the security forces have done an excellent job concerning the measures that made impossible the wild, crazy plans of those who spent many years learning to kill and to set up bombs (Applause). It is my duty to also express my acknowledgment to them today.

All these factors combined. The attitude of the population carries a strong weight, puts a strong pressure. Although the unscrupulous elements, so common in terrorist groups, do not care much about that.

That is why the combination of all these factors: the public opinion, the tremendous moral pressure of the people, the concrete organizational measures taken, have eliminated the hopes of those who underestimated the country. I think that in their statements - I have some of them here - and in what they said, they were really hurting the country's honor, and not only the honor of the Dominican people but the honor of the authorities, the honor of the forces in charge of preserving security. Only their underestimation could make them believe that this was the perfect time and place to do it.

Why? Why should they underestimate the Dominicans' honor, dignity and responsibility? For this became a sort of battle in which they were intent on proving that it was so, that they could carry out their plans while the people and the authorities were intent on proving that the Dominican Republic deserved respect and was capable of preventing such an outrage to its sovereignty and prestige. A vandalic act of the kind would have brought great harm to the country, to its tourism, to the nation's international prestige, a very important thing that had to be defended as an unassailable trench (Applause). All have acted in unison to accomplish that mission, and all together have succeeded (Applause).

(Someone from the audience yells out something.)

I would have preferred to be born in the 21st Century (Laughter and applause). This one is very interesting; but I'll tell you a few things later. (Someone from the audience says: "You have helped us a lot!") No, you have helped us! (Applause.) I wish we could really have helped you. This is a people that I really love, that I really admire, to whom I am grateful. The first thing we read is the history of Cuba and we know about the participation of this fraternal people in our independence struggle. We know of Marti's deep affection for this country. We know that the Montecristi Manifesto was written here. And,

we know and cannot forget that Gómez and Maceo set off from here for that epic war of 1895. And, it is not only what they did but the example they set for us, the ideas they left us as a legacy.

I was trying to show yesterday what Martí's most intimate thought were, his ideas on the world, his ideas on Latin American. And he expressed them little by little, especially as the beginning of the war got nearer, and he expressed them more and more clearly.

Although he said that it had had to be done in silence, he could no longer keep silent. Anyone can follow his writings and see what he said one day and what he said another, and how he referred to the mighty power that was emerging without naming it, when he expressed his anguish and his determination to prevent this hemisphere from being devoured by that power. Until finally, the day before his death, 24 hours before his death, he writes it, he names that power: "All that I have done till now, and will continue to do, has been to prevent through Cuba's independence that the United States expands and falls with that additional force over our American nations" (Applause).

He was very clear and final the day before his death when he spoke from his heart on what he felt deep inside, and said this phrase: "It has had to be done in silence^{1/4}" He was so intelligent, he understood that if he revealed such ideas before the time was ripe, it would be impossible to realize them. He was organizing the expedition, buying weapons; but at that moment he says it clearly.

He knew that it was basic then to organize the fight for independence, to organize the forces, coordinate them all, provide them with weapons and begin the struggle for a short war, as bloodless as possible. That he proclaimed in the Montecristi Manifesto, although as he wrote it the ships with almost all of the weapons had already been seized. He set out with his bare chest full of his ideas. He set out full of faith in his people. He set out full of faith in those heroic warriors, especially in that extraordinary commander who was Máximo Gómez.

Yesterday, I wanted to expose the ideas those men fought for, the ideas for which they sacrificed so much, the broad scope of their cause. And how sad when an amendment was imposed, after dismissing the soldiers of the Liberation Army and liquidating, in the context of a Constitutive Assembly, the party created by Martí.

An amendment, not even a law, something they usually do. It was something they attached to a law, an appendix which gave them the right to intervene in Cuba's internal affairs. It was a right they printed in the Constitution of our alleged sovereign republic, plus a naval base in one of the country's best harbors. That military base is still there and nothing has been said about when it will be returned.

Since madness cannot last forever, and imperialism will not last forever either, not a single drop of blood will be shed for that base.

It has always been clear to us that blood need not be shed for a piece of territory that sooner or later will be returned to the homeland or to mankind (Applause). In any event, if a drop of blood is shed, it should be shed for the good of mankind and for the planet off which the human family must live. And, it will live one day under principles which will not be ruthless exploitation and selfishness, which will not be inequality and injustice; they will be brotherhood, true brotherhood, fraternity and justice among all human beings on this planet. That is really worth any sacrifice.

Since we believe in that future, we might say like Allende: "Rather sooner than later", that world will come (Applause).

That was the intervention. That was the trick they played on our country. Then they bought everything, they took possession of everything. By distorting our history, they began by creating an anti-national attitude. We owed everything to the "generosity" of the United States, they said.

They had showed up after 30 years of heroic struggle by our people, which had sacrificed the life of

hundreds of thousands of its children. It was only after Spain had been defeated, because Spain could not keep up the fight, that they intervened and occupied our island. It can be historically and mathematically demonstrated that Spain could not keep fighting in Cuba. Following the occupation of our island, they occupied the Philippines, and then, our beloved sister, the island of Puerto Rico (Applause).

We are very happy to remember Puerto Rico here. They have just given the world an impressive lesson. What the Puerto Rican people have just done, a hundred years later, will have to be recorded with golden letters in the annals of neo-liberalism.

We are talking about commemorations and, that unanimous movement, that Puerto Rican strike in Spanish... (Applause and exclamations of: "Independence for Puerto Rico!") See how, after 100 years of English, the Puerto Rican people stands up to defend its culture, its language and its patriotic feelings that cannot be destroyed. There is something behind that attitude and that is a feeling of national pride. What were they fighting against? Against what is most fashionable in the world now: the privatization of a telephone company.

Everybody is selling everything everywhere. We also have had to sell part of our telephone system to keep it from becoming a museum piece, and to expand communications and modernize them. This is something for which we do not have any capital. We have had to sell a piece of the enterprise, as part of a carefully analyzed and well calculated plan, due to our need for technology and capital that we cannot easily obtain right now. They have organized a national strike. At an economists meeting, I first heard the news from a Puerto Rican economist about the idea of a general strike and I was really amazed because a unanimous strike has never occurred in any Latin American country.

Everyday an enterprise is auctioned off and, they who live there under the dominion of the neoliberal power par excellence, have opposed the privatization of an enterprise. It is an example, and I would say that it is the best tribute, or the best reminder, the best warning and message that the Puerto Rican people could have conveyed a 100 years after the island's occupation by US troops.

They used more subtle methods in our country. They took hold of all of the economy, the best lands, the factories. They imposed a Constitution and an amendment to it. It must have been a source of deep suffering for Máximo Gómez and others!

Martí, Maceo, Agramonte and hundreds of heroes were already dead. They were spared that anguish, that suffering. They had had faith in their people and its ability to overcome all the obstacles, all the setbacks.

Those who had fallen before were well aware of the stumbling blocks that could appear. More than one of those fighters, like Máximo Gómez, had been through the terrible Zanjón Pact when divisions within the Cuban forces - as Martí said - caused the demoralization that led the army to surrender before the full independence of the country had been attained.

Every time something like this happens, it pleases us to remember those who gave their lives to achieve these objectives.

That is why we dislike and oppose the individualization of merits. We always remember - particularly in my case, for the many years I have had the privilege of participating in this struggle - many comrades who were killed since the very first days of the revolutionary struggle. We also cherish the sacred memory of those who, since last century, have fought and fell so that there might be today an independent country called Cuba (Applause).

I said a long time ago - today, in fact (Laughter) - that the important question is not what will happen in Cuba but, what will happen in the world. I cannot give you a categorical, accurate response, but I can make some categorical affirmations. The so-called new order - every now and then a new order appears

-, this neo-liberal order their trying to impose on the world is not sustainable. To be exact, the neo-liberal globalization is not sustainable (Applause).

This is a major starting point and an encouraging element to us all in this struggle, because the fight is not pointless, the fight is not for a single country.

Today, by force, the struggle of any country, any people, especially the Third World peoples, becomes a struggle for the whole world, a universal struggle. Any contribution to the struggle counts, however modest. Some can do more, some less, depending on certain factors and circumstances.

I was saying, and I have said it in Geneva and in many other places, that something cannot be denied: globalization is inevitable. It is a product of history, of the development of productive forces, as Marx said in his times. Those were times, of course, when many of today's problems were not known and could not be known. He had great foresight. He perceived a law in the development of human society and he devoted much of his life to study this law, and to study capitalism which he knew better than Friedman and better than those in the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and all others.

The man who best knew capitalism was Carl Marx (Applause). Listen to what I am going to say, Isa Conde and the others, I hope you forgive me. Marx knew more about capitalism than he did about socialism, because Marx conceived socialism as a society that would come afterwards. He did not try to describe how a socialist system would be, and even less to say how a socialist Constitution should be. He was well aware it was not his task. His task was to thoroughly study a social system, a historic law. He was absolutely certain that that society would inevitably have to be replaced by another, and not because of anybody's whim, nor because of anybody's wish, but as a real and objective need of human development.

He criticized the utopian socialists. I count myself among those he criticized, and rightly so. Because before I read the first Marxist document, while studying the political economy they taught at the university, which had a broad scope - I had a very punctilious professor who was not a Marxist but who explained the different economic theories and concepts, and he spoke to us about the surplus production crises, the unemployment and all those problems which awakened my interest in the subject and led me to meditate a lot about it - I by myself reached the conclusion that that system was chaotic, absolutely chaotic. That is the reason why I became sort of a utopian communist, an individual who begins to imagine a different, more just society. Of course, I knew about justice and injustice, although I did not grow up as a proletarian. I grew up in my house as the son of a landowner.

Fortunately, I did not grow up in an aristocratic neighborhood. I lived in the countryside, I mean, really in the countryside. All my friends, all the people I knew were the children of farmhands. They were the ones I played with, hung around with. I had not the slightest chance of developing bourgeois or high-class feelings.

I knew nothing about politics, but I could see all those things, the kind of life led by the workers and poor peasants who lived there, in a place where the owner of the land was really a generous man, a Spanish immigrant who had been recruited and taken to fight as a soldier against Cuba's independence. He was dragged away from the Spanish countryside the way other Spanish peasants were. It would not be at all strange if my father had been in the Jucaro-Morón line of fortresses - which I think was one of the places where he was stationed -, on some of the occasions when Máximo Gómez or other Cuban military leaders crossed it. He was 16 or 17 years old at the time.

Once they were asking all the party members - something I consider a bad habit - what their class background was, and when it was my turn to answer I said: "Grandson of poor peasants" (Laughter and applause). My grandparents did not even have enough to feed their children.

After the war, when my father was repatriated to Spain, he emigrated to Cuba and started to work in lands owned by the United Fruit Company. At that time, those people were cutting the mahogany trees

and other precious wood to use as firewood in the sugar mills they were building there. They destroyed the forests and everything. That is another debt they have, at least with me, that they turned my father into a woodcutter of precious wood to use as fuel and to clear the forest.

That was the story. My parents always lived in the countryside, they were semi-illiterate. My father and mother learned how to read and write by themselves, after they were adults. That was one reason my mother, who suffered for it, was so intent on having her children study. Actually, her efforts were greater her children's (Laughter). But, for one reason or another, some of us became more interested.

They did not live in a bourgeois neighborhood. They did not live in Vista Alegre, Santiago de Cuba, the neighborhood of the rich so, I had nowhere to get that mentality. Later, the things I remembered, as I came into contact with political ideas and especially when I began to come into contact with socialist ideas, helped me draw my own conclusions. When I finally got to the first documents, it was almost like pouring oil on the flame. This is how I embraced a political ideology.

Marx talked about the utopian socialists, but he basically studied the elements I mentioned. Others had to do that, because he did not like to play the prophet of socialist construction. This opens up a whole new angle, another field.

Another very important thing: he did not conceive socialism in one single country. Until the end of World War I, none of the Marxist authors and theoreticians conceived the idea of socialism in only one country. They felt it was really impossible, as they were thinking of the development of England, Germany and the United States. Even after the famous October Revolution, they did not conceive socialism in that backward country of Europe, the most backward country of Europe. It was a country with an 80% rural population and a limited intelligentsia, although very knowledgeable in theory and brilliant thinkers who were familiar with all the political ideas of the times.

Socialism emerged after a war that destroyed the few industries they had, some of them important. They tried to build socialism with an emerging, though very militant, working class and the 80% of rural workers. Another option was to surrender but they preferred to attempt to build socialism in that country, a task undertaken when the hopes for revolutions in Germany and other industrialized countries had been lost. That is the historical truth.

I remember reading that at one point Lenin thought of building capitalism under the workers' leadership, a workers government. He said: We have to build capitalism, we have to develop the productive forces. But harassment, aggressions, isolation and the critical situation were such that he had no other choice but to accept the challenge. Marx would have held his head in despair, really.

I am not saying they were wrong. I honestly say that if I had found myself in such a predicament, I would have done just that. It was really more irrational to believe in the possibility that our Revolution would stand after the socialist camp collapsed, the unipolar world emerged and the sworn enemy of our country had become more powerful and stronger than ever, when we could not even count on any help from abroad. Nevertheless, we said: Let's go ahead. This was eight years ago, or so, because the problems began to show before 1990.

It is not that we are building socialism. Right now, we are basically defending the sovereignty and independence of our country and the achievements of socialism. If we can build a little bit of socialism we do it, but mainly we want to improve what we have done, to achieve excellence. That the over 60,000 medical doctors we have are better doctors.

Just think that under the special period, we have been able to continue reducing infant mortality rate to 7.2, under the special period (Applause). Our doctors are certainly better.

Our 250,000 to 300,000 teachers are gaining knowledge everyday. We continue to graduate teachers because some of them retire and we have a reserve of them so the rest can study. Thousands of

teachers have the opportunity to study full time receiving their salary, which is modest, given our present economic difficulties. But they are paid their salaries and they can dedicate full time to studying and upgrading. We are improving our teachers excellence. A better selection is made for admission to teachers' schools and colleges and we are training them better. The same we are doing with all of our professionals.

The Revolution has graduated 600,000 university professionals, and we find jobs for all of them. If they want to do a different work, they do some retraining.

After our development lost its momentum and the economy declined, we could not ensure the best possible job to every graduate. But, still the universities were not closed down. A considerable number of students enroll in the universities every year, now more rigorously selected according to their school records, vocation and abilities. However, we are not using all the capacity available in our universities. There are more than 20,000 university professors. Their number has not declined. They are still there, studying and upgrading themselves.

We are using some of the available capacity in our universities for students of certain countries, not in the amount we would really wish. There was a moment when our country, as I said yesterday, had 22,000 scholarship students. It reached that figure unsurpassed by any country, a very high per capita of scholarship students per citizens of the country. Now, for example, we have some plans for students of CARICOM countries who have difficulties to study in their countries. These are very small, geographically isolated countries that cannot have university faculties, and we have offered them all the scholarships they want.

That will not ruin us. They will have the same professors who are already there, so there will not be additional costs on that account. They will use the facilities that already exist, so there will not be any additional costs on that account, either. There will be costs, however, for their accommodation. We do this free of charge but we do recommend the countries to send their students some aid, for their personal expenses, to compensate for the scarcities that even our students suffer in this period we are living through.

So we are improving our quality. Our researchers, who are very young, have more experience and increasingly ambitious programs.

We have downsized the administration as much as possible, and we are trying to achieve efficiency with better controls. Since we have opened our country to entrance and exit by of hundreds of thousands and millions of people, we are running all sorts of risks: security risks when terrorist plans are organized abroad to conspire, scheme, introduce explosives. All this becomes easier, but it is not only that. It is not only things related to security, it is habits and a way of life.

Tipping had ceased to exist in our country. Now, based on the habit established in tourist services in the world and the need of an incentive for the people who work in this sector, additional to their good will, we have accepted it. It would also be impossible not to, it is a habit, everybody tips - more or less generously - upon receiving a service. That is inevitable.

We have had to accept the free circulation of hard currency. It came from abroad through different channels and we could not spend time chasing people who had hard currency. So, we made it legal to have and use hard currency. It helps in a given situation. We never did this before the special period. Of course, those that receive it spend it, they buy certain products, and part of the value is like a sort of aggregated value to help meet the needs for food, medicine, etc., of those who do not have the privilege of a remittance from abroad.

We have had to do many things taking risks we never had before. We have to be a lot more careful, and we have a lot of trained dogs that have to learn two things - our dogs, in the special case of our country, need to have two trades. They have to be experts in detecting drugs and explosives (Applause). Your do

not need dogs to detect explosives, only a small group for a situation like this of an international meeting. You do not have groups running around, very well stimulated and trained, desperate because the Revolution has not collapsed, unsatisfied with a tightened blockade plus an additional blockade when, as I have said more than once, those who were the pillars of our trade collapsed. Desperate with the Revolution's resistance, they intensify their plans. You do not have that problem, practically no other country has it. They want to hurt tourism, they want hurt and discourage foreign investment not to give the country the slightest chance.

That is the reason for all the efforts we need to make, for all the measures that must be taken, since it is not only with dogs that their plans are discovered. If there is anything we have learned, it is how to discover plans. Dogs help, of course. Tourism brings all of these dangers, and foreign investment too, by creating differences. It undoubtedly promotes corruption. There is the habit of a commission of such and such an amount so that a company is given preference over another, all of that. All that forces us to strive for a more efficient organization, for more efficient audits, and auditors to audit the auditors (Laughter and applause).

You cannot imagine what this struggle is like. It is the struggle against all that comes along with the historical social system that has prevailed in the last few centuries. I should avoid generalities because there are many strictly honorable, strictly honest investors who do not get involved in such activities, but some do. You can find all sorts of things.

The country has opened up. It is no longer a country in a glass case. We have put forward the thesis that virtue should be cultivated in contact with vice; if not, virtue is in a pure glass case, totally aseptic, without any pathogenic germs, with a thousand filters that prevent the contaminated air from entering.

This is what I said: Virtue is cultivated in the struggle against vice. If you are pure in the glass case, when the germs appear, you might not have enough antibodies.

Our people have a lot of moral antibodies and a consciousness. But there is always a number of persons who are prone to become ill, ideologically ill. The enemy encourages them, offering its super consumers' society - the US society is not only a consumers' society but a super consumers' society - as a model, as a dream, and advertising it through the media. They themselves proclaim this. They compare incomes in the richest country in the world with those in Third World countries that still need to develop and are not allowed to. They compare their consumption patterns and living standards to those of a country like Cuba which has been rigorously blockaded for almost 40 years, a country that is not even allowed to buy an aspirin.

You have probably heard talk that some measures, recently mentioned, are allegedly going to liberalize the sales of medicines. But to buy medicines - they still have not regulated it and are in no rush to do it - the transactions and the red tape make it almost impossible to buy an aspirin. They have made it look like they are going to liberalize some aspects, but the truth is that until now nothing practical has come of it. Then, they tell the blockaded country: Look at socialism, the people is suffering, that is what the Revolution has led to and they compare it with what the consumers have in the empire.

It is as if they tied somebody's hands and feet and threw him into the water and said: Look at that guy, he cannot swim! Well, we have been able to swim, even with our hands and feet tied, and to say: We have things that you do not have, because there is not a single elderly person sleeping under a bridge and covered with newspapers (Prolonged applause). We do not have a single illiterate (Applause). They do not have many illiterates but they do have mostly functional illiterates. Another type of illiteracy can be terrible, and that is, political illiteracy (Applause).

One often marvels, really, because it is an intelligent people, no doubt, a working people. But, how can a system keep its people ignorant of essential values and issues?

Infant mortality rate in Cuba is lower than in the United States capital (Applause) and survival rates are

the same for the city and the countryside, for blacks, mulattos, dark-skinned and white (Applause). The United States has a different infant mortality rate for the rich and the poor, for the white and the black. It depends on the color, the wealth and all of that. Infant mortality in our country is the same for all (Applause), and the very few maternal deaths are the same in the city and the rural areas. It is the same for everybody, irrespective of income, wealth and the rest.

In our country, 85% of the population own their houses. There is another percentage who lives in houses owned by their work centers. The family doctor lives in a house that is not his or her own, so if he is transferred he leaves it to the doctor taking his or her place. There are also the houses belonging to factories in out of the way places. But, a very high percentage of the population own their houses so they do not pay rent, nor even taxes.

In the United States you have to pay a lot more in taxes than what was paid in Cuba as a rent under capitalism. We have many things in our poor and blockaded country that they do not have, even material things.

Our athletes win a lot of gold medals (Applause) and we do not need to buy athletes from other countries (Applause).

Look at the difficult conditions our peoples have to fight if they have an amateur team. Athletes receive great support in our country, the opportunity to study in sports schools, to obtain a university degree and a modest income. All of a sudden one of these athletes is offered 5 million or 10 million dollars. It is really abusive, immoral that a country should train its athletes for the enjoyment of its people and that a rich foreign country comes along and buys them. Since sport has become increasingly professional and the athletes have become a commodity, you cannot imagine how hard it is for a country to keep up the morale and the patriotic spirit of its athletes so that they do not sell out for millions of dollars (Applause).

We are proud to have athletes who have been offered contracts of up to 40 million dollars to play for five years and they have refused. All those athletes have is a modest apartment, and they might get to have a modest automobile as an incentive, as a prize for his or her effort. One marvels at people who turn down a 40 million dollars offer in a world so alienated by money.

They usually have athletes from all the countries of the world, but when they manage to bribe a Cuban athlete they proclaim it all through the world as a humiliation for Cuba.

More than 800 participated in the latest competitions. When our athletes went to Puerto Rico for the latest Central American Games, they tried to take away our athletes by offering lots of money. They even managed to have tens of them desert, I do not remember the exact number. This time, however, they only managed three and none of them in the best category. Our boxers, who were there, had won almost every gold medal so they want to buy them. They always want to buy our athletes. This is another type of harassment and plunder.

They are opening schools in Latin America to promote sports prospects, especially for the baseball major leagues. They have calculated that it costs them more to train an athlete in the United States than in Latin America. Well, some go over there, and I know you cannot help being pleased. You are happy, and rightly so, when there is a good pitcher or when a first-class batter hits a home run over there in the major leagues.

For us, sport is a show that almost the whole year round; people want to see their athletes. Some sport competitions last less; for the volley-ball players, for example, the sport show is shorter. But there is a great effort to take them away.

They use every means they can to try to introduce the ideological virus, to divide, to demoralize. And we need to face all these problems with our openness. But I think we are learning to face everything

and also to be more efficient in everything. The day when we again have relatively abundant resources, we will possibly be two or three times more efficient than what we were during times of bonanza, and we will make a better use of our resources.

Our excellence is growing in this struggle. Step by step, despite all the evil laws against us, we are growing. It may be 5%, 3%, 2%, 1.5%, and if some day a very severe drought, a hurricane or any other phenomenon makes us fall back a point, we will not dismay, we will continue striving. I was telling you that we have 76% of what we previously had; someday we will climb back to 100%.

Our battle is not only a battle for survival, it is not just surviving for the sake of surviving, no. It is a battle to take part in the struggle for a better world (Applause), to participate in that struggle along with the world.

It would be quite an accomplishment for them to defeat the Cuban Revolution, because in every UN forum, in the UN headquarters and everywhere else, there is a country present which has been able to resist, a country that has demonstrated that much can be done with few resources, and its voice is always there. What would they not do to shut off Cuba's voice in any forum, in WTO or in WHO!

Cuba is always there calculating how much they squander in this or that, the cost of a medicine against AIDS, the 10,000 dollars per year that must be paid for that cocktail that can save the life of an AIDS patient, and asking them where the Africans are going to get the 300 billion dollars they would need every year to give that same treatment to over 30 million AIDS patients in Africa.

There are many questions to ask them everywhere and in every forum and many things to denounce to help build the awareness we need and that the world needs, to find solutions that, I repeat, will not come because anyone so wishes but because of humanity's need to survive. Because, what is actually under discussion is the survival of a species. It is no longer the survival of a revolution, or an island or a small country. What is being discussed is the survival of the human species.

I think that the idea of that future world is the most important and more noble idea that a revolutionary can harbor.

Revolutionaries have always fought for the future. Máximo Gómez and Martí fought for the future. When Martí died at Dos Ríos he knew he was dying for the future. He was not concerned with seeing the results of all that. It would have been extraordinarily useful to have him longer. It can be said that he died in the prime of youth, when his talent was at its best. They were fighting for the future.

To fight for the future does not mean not to avoid doing everyday what must be done for the present. These two ideas must not be confused.

It is possible for our country, in its capacity as a revolutionary state, to devote a great part of its efforts to that struggle for the future, to that struggle against the neo-liberal globalization that is crushing us all. It is not the struggle against globalization as an inevitable phenomenon, but the struggle for a more humane and fair globalization.

If they asked the Pope, he would answer: for the globalization of solidarity. If they asked me, I would say what I most deeply believe: the only globalization that can save humanity and preserve the human specie, is a socialist globalization (Applause and exclamations of: "Long live revolutionary Cuba!").

Do I say this out of dogmatism? Do I say it out of ideological fundamentalism? No!, not at all. I say it based on a very deep conviction. The world cannot be saved if it persists on the course it is following. In my opinion, there would not be the slightest possibility for the specie to survive; neither would there be a possibility for that globalization and that new order that they are establishing to survive. Because the masses explode, because the peoples explode, because humanity explodes.

Humanity will not put its neck under the executioner's ax; its preservation instinct, its condition of thinking human beings make it impossible.

We, therefore, think that in the field of ideas a big, difficult battle is being waged because when everything is global, solutions will also have to be global. I say again: it is a sacred duty to do all that can be done within each person's reach. Now, the great strategic task or the true solutions are global solutions.

The system is not only unsustainable for reasons of survival; it is not only unsustainable because it is unbearable for the masses. The fact is that it is inescapably moving toward inevitable crises, and the big changes in history - as we all know - are always the result of big crises. This does not mean that we have to wait for the big crisis to start fighting, to do whatever is possible in every corner of the world. We also have to build an awareness about these problems.

We are going to hold a very important meeting. We are going to gather eminent economists of Latin America and the world in January, to discuss the issue of globalization and neo-liberalism. We want to clarify concepts and to have people from the Friedman school, from neo-liberalism and all other schools to speak there. A real debate, that has not taken place anywhere, to clarify and pinpoint concepts.

That meeting will be held in Cuba on the initiative of an organization of Latin American economists. The idea emerged in a meeting we had there to analyze economic issues. We proposed what, in our view, is the most important issue today: neo-liberal globalization, or globalization and neo-liberalism, and let the results be the fruit of discussion, not of one speech after another. A presentation by the scholars and a questions and answers section for all those who want to ask them. A debate. We are planning to have many scholars. There should be at least 40 presentations on the subject and I imagine that hundreds of questions, and a debate.

When we were dealing with the foreign debt, thousands of people took part in discussions at the Convention Center or in a big theater and it was an endless chain of speeches. On this occasion, it will have to be a limited number of presentations, some time for discussions and clarifications, with no more than 600 participants.

There are many schools and many criteria. The only thing I have found all these economists to have in common, again, the only thing I have found all these economists to have in common, including the pundits who advocate neo-liberalism and the neo-liberal globalization, is their uncertainty. Take good note of this word: uncertainty (Laughter and applause). Do not forget that word. There is not a single one of them without uncertainty.

Let me tell you that, without any need for espionage, just by talking with many people in the world who talk with many others, by talking with individuals who have relations, by reading and analyzing every single word they say; by reading and analyzing what brilliant, eminent analysts write, on one side and the other, those in favor of neo-liberal globalization and those against it, the only thing one finds is that terrible thing called uncertainty.

I do not remember it right this minute but I am sure many of you do, What was the sign that according to Dante was written at the entrance of hell? How is it possible that no one here knows it! Someone must know it. (Someone from the audience says something.) Oh! yes: "Abandon all hope!" At the entrance of this world order that they are trying to impose on us, of this globalization they have designed, you can put up these two signs: "Total uncertainty", "Abandon all hope" (Applause).

They are scared. They know that the system is a twin or inseparable sibling of the crises. They have really invented a lot of things, but it is easier to find the cure for cancer or AIDS. We are certain that a cure will be found for these diseases but, for this chaotic, absurd, wild system, or rather, for the consequences of the system, there will be no cure.

The things they make up are incredible. We have seen them these days when the crises began, from the Mexican to the Russian crisis - which is the next to next to last of the next to next to last of the next to next to last. The crisis that began in Mexico and affected some countries of Southeast Asia and then others, and that has Japan in terrible conditions, that has put Russia in a catastrophic situation, and that is tremendously threatening, like a big sword of Damocles pending from a fragile thread, the economies of Brazil, Argentina and the other countries of Latin America and the Third World, including the place where it began, which is Mexico.

The great theoreticians and designers of this world order are afraid of that spreading fire that keeps spreading.

I was saying that there is doubt, uncertainty. The chairman of the International Monetary Fund - I was going to tell you before - has great doubts. The chairman of the United States Federal Reserve, Greenspan... I think you can probably pronounce it better than I, my English gets increasingly worse (Applause), although I understand that we have no other choice but to confiscate it as a communication instrument, since due to man's ambition, according to the Bible, we were condemned to wake up one day each speaking a different language. We will have no other choice, also for historical reasons, than to confiscate that language, without, of course, ever renouncing each of our own languages. Such is life! They want only one language, the rest are a nuisance that jeopardize trade. They have to make translations, and when they do it is terrible.

They say that during Clinton's visit to China, while they were saying that they were speaking to 1.2 billion Chinese, many Chinese were irritated because they could not understand the American translators. They were so conceited that when Clinton spoke in his debate and in his speech at the university, they used translators made in USA (Laughter), and it happens that that is a country where if you speak in the language of Beijing, they do not understand it in Shanghai nor in Canton and other places. The written language is understood in the whole country, but not the spoken language. Just imagine, an American translator translating Clinton's speech into Pekinese and they do not seem to have done a good job! Then, translation is a headache for them. It is better if everybody else speaks English and no other language exists. It is a bother, for the movies, for TV serials, for everything. It costs them more, they earn less. Perhaps Bill Gates is now even inventing a computer that automatically translates from English into hundreds of other languages simultaneously.

As I was saying, they are shaping a world of which they themselves are scared.

I was saying when I tried to pronounce a name, the name of the chairman of the US Federal Reserve System, how is it pronounced? (From the audience, they say Greenspan.) That guy, he is intelligent, he cannot be underestimated.

Greenspan has the same uncertainty, and the fellow from the World Bank has the same uncertainty; Clinton has the same uncertainty and does Rubin, the secretary of the Treasury and all the presidents of regional banks have the same uncertainty, they are full of uncertainty. And many of the analyses - that those who are very well informed convey to us, even what they discuss; because eight or ten people discuss, they have friends that inform the press or other friends and even some of the people concerned want it informed - always end with a phrase: "No one knows what is going to happen."

Of course, they know that something is bound to happen. They were happy a while back. When the first crisis, the Mexican crisis, breaks out they start running all over the places to try to prevent it. They talk about making 50,000 billion dollars available for Mexico. It is a close neighbor, with almost 100 million population. They are building there a wall one hundred times bigger than the Berlin Wall, where more people die each year trying to cross, from thirst, accidents and drowning, than those who died at the Berlin Wall for as long as it lasted. This wall is 3,000 kilometers long... Oh! so that people cannot pass. This is the philosophy of neo-liberal globalization: free transit for capitals and goods but zero transit for workers, zero transit for human beings.

Yes, let the doors be opened to human beings. Some day the doors of the world will have to be opened. When feudalism is gone, when we cease to be exploited serfs of the modern glebe, the roads of the world will have to be opened.

I do not want to scare anybody with this, I am just saying it: Why do they want only capitals and goods to cross and not human beings? I am saying it to pose a moral dilemma. If our countries were developed and they had not been colonies for so long and they had not been so exploited, this transit from one place to another would not be necessary. Because, when you come to think of it, any such transit involves an uprooting.

Nowadays, and for some time, the fear of a massive Mexican migration due to a super crisis, encourages those of the North to find solutions. We feel happy if the Mexicans do not suffer a super crisis. But their proximity and all those other elements are pushing in that direction.

Then the crises in Southeast Asia began. Until then - what a great hypocrisy - the Asian tigers were the model. You could find it in all the books, in all the literature: the Asian tigers, that grow steadily, year after year, 10 years, 15 years, 20 years; it was the end of economic crises; it was possible to grow indefinitely.

But, one day the tigers started losing their claws, hair, skin, everything, and all of this overnight, while they were still the model advised in universities, in economic conferences. They did not tell anyone what was happening there, and they knew it, which is worse. Camdessus, chairman of the International Monetary Fund, tries to justify it now: "Yes, we knew it and we were warning about it."

They knew that the money, the big loans, were distributed among families, that they were distributed among the political clientele, that they were invested in anything, without any concern. Money was pouring into those countries, they invested it in real estate. Hong Kong was full of thousands and thousands of buildings whose value increased. South Korea was full of conglomerates and all sorts of industries in which anyone could invest with all the money they wanted. And the same thing occurred in Thailand, in the Philippines, in Indonesia, and in all of those places.

The International Monetary Fund said: No, we cannot say anything, because if we do we accelerate the crisis. And they keep silent, until one day it becomes evident that the conditions of a high budget deficit, with high deficits in the current account and overvalued currencies, were created. These were ideal conditions for the speculation wolves, who have billions and billions of dollars and who, like the wolves in the arctic forests, fall upon the reindeer lagging behind, they fall upon any country with the proper conditions. Thus came the catastrophe.

Then came the crisis of Japan, the model of models, which developed by saving more than anybody. Because Japan received money from no one. The Japanese save over 35% of their incomes. Americans nowadays save less than 10%. The Americans' specialty and privilege is in investing other people's money. The Japanese invested their own money, they did not want American factories, nor American banks, nor American insurance companies. The Americans kept demanding that they open up.

The crisis of Southeast Asia begins to affect Japan. They manufacture many articles similar to those of other countries in the region and the United States itself, and they begin to devalue the yen. The Americans said: This is our chance, let's demand from the Japanese that they open up to investment in banks, factories and in everything, to increase consumption. The more confusing things appeared, the less the Japanese increased consumption. There came a moment when the yen was quoted at 147 dollars and Washington ran into a panic, because beyond that, the danger was very serious.

Before that, the crisis in Southeast Asia strikes again. The Indonesian government collapses, there is a social explosion, instability sets in creating a situation that is not very secure at the moment. A new stage begins there. The situation in the other countries of Southeast Asia is increasingly acute, the crisis makes a comeback.

At the same time, 11 nuclear tests in India and Pakistan create, for the first time in the history of the nuclear age, the risk of a regional nuclear war. That same month a deep crisis takes place in Russia. All of this in one month. The truth is that Greenspan, Camdessus and Rubin could barely manage to run from one place to another putting out economic and political fires; but above all, the economic fires that threaten to bring about great political cataclysms. All of this takes place in one month.

Then, when the yen plummets to 147 to a dollar, they, who did not want to do anything, prudently undertake intense discussions in Washington. Because it is in Washington where orders are given not only to the US treasury but also to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They are simply orders. The United States has the power of veto. They hold over 15% of the stocks, and with less than 85% no agreement can be reached. Therefore, they had to make decisions.

The United States government, advised by all of those brains - because there is no doubt that it has advisors with great experience who have managed great enterprises from the stock exchange, banks, finances, all of them intelligent people, I concede that to the government advisors who want to perform miracles - decides to spend some billion dollars buying yens. They rushed to buy yens to increase the yen's value, and raised it to 136 per dollar. They knew that if it was further devalued, it would bring about a catastrophe, because this would inevitably lead to the devaluation of the Chinese yuan, which would add to the Southeast Asian catastrophe, and then, to a greater devaluation of the yen.

They knew that the first immediate impact would be felt by Brazil and then by Argentina, Mexico and Latin America. So, they waited to see when the crisis would strike their own stockmarkets. It is a matter of great importance. Horrified at what was going on in Russia, they said: No, this is too much.

At the moment, they have not solved any problem, none of those problems. The crisis is increasingly more serious in Russia. Here, in this university, I will say this which I have not had the opportunity to express at any other place: the greatest catastrophe in history regarding the construction of a socioeconomic regime is the attempt to build capitalism in Russia. It is the greatest catastrophe that has ever happened in socioeconomic experimenting.

They criticize socialism. They speak about the failure of socialism and try to build a new type of socioeconomic regime. But, if you analyze the history of the countries that have attempted it, whatever their difficulties before, you will find that even the USSR, that immense country with an 80% rural population, they ended up being the first in outer space. They produced 630 million tons of oil per year, 700 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year, with steel production around 140 million tons, tens of millions of tons of fertilizer, around 200 million tons of grains, despite being destroyed twice by war, and despite all of their mistakes. China advanced, and other countries advanced, but they were blockaded. But, still conceding the mistakes made in the economic construction of socialism - let alone the political mistakes -, it had a hundred times better results than what they have achieved trying to build capitalism in Russia.

Such disastrous results! Such an untenable situation! A rich country, whose GDP is today 45% of what it was nine years ago, in spite of the immense aid and all the credits it has been granted. I ask myself: What could Cuba not accomplish with only a small part of Russia's oil? What could Cuba not accomplish with only a small part of Russia's natural gas, its steel-production capacity, its immense lumber forests in Siberia, its factories that manufacture the parts that our tractors, trucks and equipment need today?

There has never been a similar failure in history. They received the recipes of capitalism, and what is happening today? The Russian population is decreasing, it decreases in about one million people a year. Infant mortality in Russia must be around four or five times higher than in Cuba. Life expectancy drops astonishingly. Fifty percent of the Gross Domestic Product is controlled by the mafia. From 200 to 500 billion dollars have fled Russia. Much of it has been invested in residences, in houses, 60,000 houses in Spain and countless houses in southern France, in Austria, in Italy, in Cyprus, everywhere, from 200 to 500 billion. Only 50% of taxes are collected. The national budget of what used to be a great power is

now less than the budget of Spain, for example.

Millions of people have not been paid their wages for months. But, according to what has been published, the worst part of it is that the strategic missiles operators in Central Siberia have not been paid for five months. The situation is so serious that a recently elected governor of the region wrote to the Prime Minister asking for jurisdiction over those nuclear missiles bases, since he might provide them clothing and food to and meet the needs of those strategic missiles operators.

Has anything similar to this ever occurred in history? Has anything so potentially dangerous ever occurred like keeping unpaid those operating the strategic nuclear missiles? This is it, the rest you can imagine. It is a great risk, an indication of the danger of disintegration, really.

Can you imagine what the Yugoslavization of a country that has more than 20,000 nuclear weapons might mean? These are real dangers. And what have they been doing? They have been applying the recipes of the International Monetary Fund and the neo-liberal policies to that country.

Not long ago I met a representative of a rich and powerful western country, and I said: What are you going to do about this? Are you people crazy, are you so crazy that you will do nothing to avoid a catastrophe in that country? Look what a real danger, as a result of a crisis, which is the result of the implementation of neoliberal recipes, in an attempt to build capitalism in Russia.

This problem is a source of great concern to all. We want this to be avoided one way or another. The disintegration of that country would be a world catastrophe of unforeseeable consequences.

First, it was a great multi-national State they disintegrated with those same recipes. Let's have everybody invest mainly in the Caspian sea oil - there go the American capitals - and in Russia's natural gas, anywhere. But they have created a very difficult situation, a very serious situation which is part of the ingredients contained in these problems.

It must be said that the crisis in Southeast Asia by itself and the almost 100 billion dollars they had to spend in Korea, or promise from different sources, plus the commitments in Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, left the International Monetary Fund out of funds, desperately asking the US Congress for an 18-billion-dollar contribution that the US Congress does not want to approve.

Now the Russians are desperately asking for funds. What are 10 or 15 billion dollars for a bottomless barrel of needs? How can they be urged to bring down their budgets? How long, then, will the millions of workers and nuclear missiles operators remain unpaid? What will be left to pay for health care, education, a minimum of utilities, public order. It is a budget that cannot be further reduced a single cent, and to reduce it would invite an outburst. And 15 billion is no money to that country. It is like a drop of water in the desert. A hundred billion are required. Perhaps much more. If Korea needed 100 billion according to estimates, how much would Russia need, whose population, although decreasing, is at least three and a half times that of Korea.

The Japanese economy does not take off regardless what measures are taken. The Chinese yuan is being forcibly sustained as the expression of China's will to cooperate in some way to avoid the international catastrophe. But not devaluing the yuan is already costing China tens of millions of dollars. How much longer will the Chinese economy be able to stand that? Particularly when it is accompanied by other phenomena like unusual floods resulting from climatic changes and from the deforestation and erosion brought about by the need to produce food. If the Chinese were forced to devalue the yuan, the economy of Southeast Asia would be more seriously affected in the third or fourth comeback of the crisis. The yen would inevitably plunge further and the wave would spread through the rest of the Third World.

Nobody's money is safe in any of those countries, you should know that. If the depositors' money is in the national currency and they sense that a devaluation is coming, it happens like in Moscow: endless

queues of people at the bank changing rubles for dollars. But, they do not have a lot of dollars there so they have to stop and declare a payments default that is considered a disaster within that scheme.

The other countries with a free exchange, the established design they have imposed on the world, have no way of protecting their reserves. It is absolutely forbidden by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to set exchange controls. That is the worst sin described in the theology of neo-liberalism. At the slightest risk everybody runs to the banks to take away what little hard currency the country has left.

And what happens with the hard currency that they take away when there is a crisis? They invest it in US bonds, or European bonds. Thus, hundreds of billions that have fled have ended up in those places because money seeks security.

Then, due also to historical factors, the only refuge they have left is the U.S. Treasury bonds. I say for historical reasons because after the Civil War that ended around 1864 - if my memory does not fail me - in the days when you were again establishing your independence over here, the United States took part in World War I some decades later. It possessed enormous natural, mineral, oil and agricultural resources. It participated in that war toward the end of it, it did not lose a single factory, it collected a lot of money and ended up with a powerful economy.

Then comes the World War II. The United States entered the war at a moment when Roosevelt's policy gained ground against an isolationist policy. Roosevelt was undoubtedly a great capitalist statesman. At a time of serious recession he began lifting the economy, fought the isolationist trend and set out in the struggle against fascism. It is a historic merit. But in that war, the already powerful US industry did not lose a single screw, either. They collected all the gold in the world: the gold of Europe, the gold of England, the gold of almost everybody on the whole planet. The war over, its intact industry quickly crossed over to civil production without any competition. The rest of the world was in ruins. It was then that the United Nations emerged, the Security Council with its five countries with a veto power and the Bretton Woods Treaty. That treaty gave the United States an exceptional privilege.

Yesterday, in Bani, I explained that we would donate to a school an award that we had been granted. But, I said, we have to prevent it from being devalued and someone from the audience cried: "Change it for gold". I remembered Bretton Woods right away. Gold, I said, is also devalued now. It is in the same situation with copper, aluminum, nickel, because all those crises are already influencing the commodity prices. Again the prices of copper, nickel, aluminum, all those products are depressed - some of them very depressed - and a global crisis still has not set in.

The fact is that in Bretton Woods they had all the gold accumulated and the gold standard was adopted. That institution worked on the basis of the gold standard. For every US dollar that was issued, there had to be a definite amount of gold in the treasury reserves. If you had 35 dollars you had the right to claim an ounce of gold, which was then maintained at 35 dollars, the troy ounce, as the bankers call it. Money had a gold backing and its price was stable. If the supply increased, the Americans bought enough to maintain it, understand? Well, that was done to prevent the price of gold from dropping below 35 dollars. When there was the threat of a price increase, they began selling gold from their reserve to keep it at 35. Since after the war when that institution was created, until 1971, the American dollar was convertible into gold.

But many things happened during that period. The Vietnam war cost 500 billion dollars without taxes. Wars, which are not popular, are less so if they come with taxes. Pearl Harbor, a big attack that filled the whole population with indignation, was one thing but a war 10,000 miles away, on the other side of the world, begun and carried out in an irresponsible way, was different. It cost 500 billion.

The United States gold reserve began to dwindle. When there were approximately 10 billion left, they implemented the great swindle: they suspended the dollar's convertibility into gold, unilaterally and consulting no one. After that the American bill was nothing but a piece of paper, faith its only support,

and the fact that there was no other currency. De Gaulle always opposed that, because he realized the privileges that gave the United States. The right to issue money without any gold support.

Then Reagan comes along and carries forward the United States military build-up, including the Stars War program which was just beginning. The United States public debt when Reagan assumed office: 700 billion. Eight years later, at the end of Reagan's term, the U.S. public debt was more than 2 trillion dollars.

How did they solve their budget deficits? Sometimes these were in the order of 150 or 200 billion dollars. They sold treasury bonds at a certain interest. Those who bought the bonds kept them in the reserve or in safe banks. Since the dollar was the only currency, although at a point in time it faced some competition from the Dutch mark, the Japanese yen and a few others, when these had difficulties, again, it was left as the only reserve currency and the treasury bonds as the safest securities.

The countries exported goods and collected dollars. But, they did not spend the dollars in US goods or services, they deposited those in their reserves. Because every country needs reserves as every central bank does too.

Most of the world reserves of all central banks and of many commercial banks are in American bills, values that did not cost more than the paper and the ink to print them. The result is that the United States is the owner of the world currency. So, if there is the need to buy yens, it buys yens. It prints the money. An important part of that money is not spent, it is put away. If you are given a million dollars in exchange for goods and the right to buy from the person who gave it to you all that he can sell, but you take the million dollars, keep it in your house and do not spend it, then it does not cost the person who gave it to you a single penny.

Then the United States enjoys a privileged position today, a very privileged position, which no other country in the world enjoys. In times of panic, the first thing that all those who have money in the currency of any country do, whether they are in Mexico, Brazil, anywhere in fear of a devaluation, is to change it into dollars and deposit it mainly in American banks. It is one of the things they do, according to the interest rates in the banks. If the interest is too low, they might invest it in bonds or other securities.

Now comes the other problem. When the stock values in the stockmarket drops or people perceive they might drop - and this is where the greatest danger lies -, all of those whose money is invested in the stock exchange, if they get scared, they quickly sell those stocks and they do not necessarily invest it in other stocks considered less risky. They generally invest in United States treasure bonds. In other words, they put away their money in the form of bonds to try to guarantee its value.

So, under certain circumstances, they do one of two things: they either have stocks or they have national currency. They change the national currency into dollars because they know it is going to be devalued. The central banks spend up to their last penny in hard currency and that money is transferred to the American banks or used to buy stocks in the stockmarkets of that or another country if there is no fear of investing there.

When the stock values start to drop, they do exactly the same thing. They sell them, they collect them and as the stocks are unsafe, they resort to the safest of all the securities, until now, historically, the treasury bonds. That is how they are defending themselves and all the maneuvers to prevent a depression.

The real problem will come when the inevitable happens: a global crisis, as global as the global things they are doing. Because, there is no longer an isolated phenomenon in a country's economy that does not have an impact on the rest.

The Asian crises are already causing the American exports to decrease in the United States now

because everybody goes to buy the goods in Southeast Asia or in Japan where they can buy a lot cheaper. That is an immediate result, and they fear that that might affect their excellent situation with employment right now. In other words, they too are suffering the consequences.

The fear lies in what might occur in the event of a global financial crisis affecting all of those countries and a situation of panic, because all that edifice I have tried to describe is supported by a pillar known as trust, something a bit more unstable than love (Laughter). Because love might last a long time, even a whole lifetime, but not trust, trust is ephemeral and depends on many factors. There is an antidote for that thing called trust and that antidote is panic. All you need is panic and the whole edifice collapses. That is why the bosses of the world economy are going to such great length to avoid panic.

When there is news that such and such stockmarket fell so many points in Hong Kong, here or there, the IMF immediately comes out with: "No, no, no, everything is fine, great, excellent." Clinton immediately begins working the phone: "Everything is great. Our unemployment rate is the lowest we have had in such and such a time, our economy is growing at such and such a rate, inflation is at its lowest, there is no fear, there is security, everything is going excellently."

That is what you call a sedative - librium, I think is the name of that tranquilizer people take when they are nervous, there are many different brands -, calm down to avoid panic. Then Rubin, from the Treasury, comes out and says: "Everything is absolutely fine, in so many years we have not had such a high level of employment, nor has the economy grown as it is growing, nor are our potentials so splendid." The World Bank comes out and repeats the same thing. They have repeated it so much these days that it sounds like a scratched record.

The Federal Reserve says the same thing to calm everybody. Because, all you need is panic and the same thing that happened in 1929 may happen again. Everybody rushing off to sell their stocks and there is no stopping them. That is the moment of doom.

All that the theoreticians and experts of developed capitalism, the followers of this model and this economic order, have done is try to devise ways so that a depression such as the 1929 does not take place. In this case it would be more serious and global, really global, as global as the world they are designing, and it is all based on something so vulnerable and fragile as trust.

This without mentioning other factors that are influencing, and will continue to influence, the economy. Billions, hundreds of billions have been invested in many countries of Southeast Asia and elsewhere to produce the same things: refrigerators, TV sets, radios, computer chips. All of them producing the same thing. They are creating an enormous production capacity.

Large investments are made in China, and there are 1.2 billion Chinese. It can prove very difficult to surpass that country in manufacturing goods, and they are already producing them and with good quality.

Let us see what happens when the neo-liberal theories, with the enthusiastic effort of the WTO, do away with all the customs barriers. There will not even be the possibility of manufacturing jeans to sell in the United States, Canada and other places. The African might very well need jeans but they do not have a penny to buy it with; neither do the Indians, who are 900 million people; nor the people of Bangladesh, who are many millions; nor the hundreds of millions of poor people in Latin America. That is a trick, a consolation. They say, manufacture some garments and the countries are in such a difficult situation that they have no other choice but to find some hope in manufacturing at least those products: shoes, jeans.

Once, chatting with the prime minister of Canada, who was telling me about their billion dollar trade with the United States, and their relations with Latin America and other countries - Mexico, among them -, really interested in developing relations with Latin America, I told him: "Do you export to the United States shoes and all of those things that are produced with cheap labor?" He answered: "No, we export

state-of-the-art technology products obtained with intensive capital investment."

Well, they even sell water, electricity, natural gas, oil, some of these products. I asked him then if the Mexicans could export the same thing to the United States and Canada? The Mexicans, with their assembly plants, export items produced at very low cost with salaries which are one tenth of the salary of an American worker. Even the Americans oppose such an agreement for fear that the factories are taken away to set them up beyond the US borders.

I ask, then if we destined to export jeans, shoes and items requiring only cheap labor? When I start adding up all the Chinese who can produce that and other things, and all the Indians, and all the Bangladeshis and all the Indonesians, and all the Latin Americans, and all the Haitians and people from all over, I cannot find the customers anywhere. These are nothing but tricks.

They say: "Meanwhile, remove the tariff barriers and let foreign capital pour in." Very well, but the foreign capitals know we need them, like thirsty men lost in the desert, and they increasingly demand the lion's share in order to invest, presently not only free-trade zones that establish industries, provide jobs.

Of course, in a country with unemployment problems and all sorts of needs, it is better to have a man working, even if it is for a modest salary. These countries have no other alternative. It would be more just to receive a transfer of technology and a transfer of capital through soft loans on lenient terms, to be repaid in 20, 25, or 30 years, to set up a private or state owned national industry. But, I will not go into that topic.

Recently, in the Caribbean I met with a group of businessmen who manufacture different types of goods, in small factories, and who are logically seeking to expand their markets. They expressed certain commercial interests. I told them: "When some of those products you are making are manufactured massively in certain countries, what are your possibilities to compete?" They really had to admit that they did not stand a chance.

The fact is that this world order I am talking about affects every country, especially the Third World countries, not Europe, which is quickly uniting in order to have a currency that can compete with the dollar and a market of 400 million customers. It does not hurt us, anyway. From our point of view, to avoid the existence of one single economic power, it is preferable to have two or three.

Today everything depends on one currency, that of the United States. Privilege distributed among three or four is better than privilege in one single hand, because it then gains uncontrollable power. Let that power be distributed, at least in the economic sector, in the military sector it is unthinkable, let it be distributed among different poles.

The Europeans are quickly uniting beyond borders. They really have human transit over there. In united Europe, there is transit of capital, transit of goods and transit of people, they have no walls. To defend from the colossus, to defend themselves from the consequences, to have a place in this globalization, they have to unite even though they spent centuries warring against one another and they speak many different languages.

Our countries are the ones without any security, there is nothing there for us. We put this forward in the World Trade Organization, because we see the straight jacket they want to impose on us. Patents rights for a 50 years term, that is just great! The United States has taken the best talents from all parts of the world and also has the best research centers and all the necessary resources. Now they want to charge patent rights, like the gabelle in the low of the Middle Ages, for any product coming out of their research centers, no matter how badly needed those products are.

The day must come when intelligence is rewarded. The day must come when works like the Iliad, the Odyssey, Don Quixote, Shakespeare and all the others, become universal property. The day must come

when there are other ways to reward talent, to stimulate it, to further it.

Right now, if there are two Central American transnational companies that are jealous of the bananas exported by the small Caribbean islands, subjected to droughts, hurricanes, two phenomena that are enemies of bananas, and if they are paid a preferential price in Europe, despite the fact that those island only partake of 1% of the banana trade, the interests of two American companies prevail over the interests of the islands, some of which live exclusively from the banana trade. The WTO rules in favor of the United States.

Now they are cooking up the Multilateral Agreement on Investments in the OECD, a club of the rich, so that the others subscribe it and they can impose on all the countries whatever they agree there. In other words, we already have the IMF, but the WTO is gradually becoming another risky instrument of the appalling new order, because there is not enough awareness among our own allegedly developing countries which are the vast majority there.

We need to make the political leaders see the consequences of all of this. Sweep away the custom tariffs, they say. And what are we going to export? Who are we going to compete with? If there are no custom revenues, and besides there are no taxes, and there are no taxes because the investors are in a free-trade zone or because they demand from the country receiving the investment more and more years of tax exemption even when they are not in a free trade zone.

I asked the Grenadians how many years of tax exemption they grant to those who are building hotels there. Hotels, too, are a source of jobs for them. They originate other economic activities, give life to the island. It is better than having nothing, since they have no other alternative. Their answer: They have ten years of tax exemption.

We ourselves have to grant tax exemptions, although not that long. Sometimes, while the investment is recovered. As a rule, it takes five, six or even seven years. We have to do it, because we need that capital, although we dedicate part of the country's resources to build hotels which are the nation's property. Sometimes we let foreign companies manage them for us. They have the expertise and the markets. We then tell them to manage them for a given percentage.

We are told about Sweden and the social conditions there which are now also declining, just like development aid but, if I remember well, the enterprises contribute with up to 60% of their net profits to make possible the social programs, social welfare, social development of countries. We are threatened with being left without taxes and incomes from custom tariffs. How are we going to meet our needs in education, health care, housing, drinking water, social development, development, employment? They leave us nothing. That new order simply wants to impose on us the condition of universal wage earners, and it cannot guarantee even that.

If they had been able to conceive something that under their philosophical conception is impossible, that is, a model that would give employment to the 6 billion inhabitants of the planet, I mean employment for the active labor force of a community that already reaches 6 billion, you might say: Well they are promising something. They have not conceived it and they cannot conceive it, because their irrational system makes it impossible.

Oftentimes the working hours cannot be reduced, as the French want to do, because then they compete with the other countries which have not reduced the working hours. And that is absurd in a humanity that has created machines that can reduce physical work from 60 hours in the last century to 20 hours per week; sometimes they were more, 70 and 80 hours even.

It may be said today that, with the existing technology the production of all of those things that are going to be in excess and are not going to have any market might serve to meet the real demands, the real needs of the world population working 20 hours a week. The rest of the time they could use for culture, recreation, studying and a thousand ways that human beings can spend their time. There need

not be unemployment.

Cuba is an example. It has more than 60,000 doctors and none of them are unemployed, because they not only work in hospitals and polyclinics, there is a doctor in every ship, every work center, every day-care center, every school, every community. There are almost 30,000 community doctors in the urban areas and the mountains. Of course, we cannot pay them a very high salary for, where are we going to get it from now? But that person is doing a useful job for society. That person is not a useless, unemployed illiterate, but a professional who gains more and more knowledge daily, who saves lives and promotes health. If there are too many of them, they can be sent to the universities to receive courses like the teachers do, to upgrade themselves during their sabbatical, by studying, and have other doctors substitute them.

We have 63,000 doctors and around 2,000 medical students still enroll in the university every year. A doctor is a professional who never wants to retire, the older he is the more experienced he considers himself. We have 21 medical faculties and we are cooperating with some countries in the training of doctors.

And who do we have studying at the universities now? The nurses. They must graduate from the university. Also health technicians must be university graduates. In other words, we use those capacities to raise our quality standards. Why should there be a surplus of people if they can be trained and used in a rational manner?

Do not let them come around telling us that the market, that wild and crazy beast, that cannot be called any other way, is going to organize human society, nor that the law of supply and demand can be above the organizational capacity of human beings or above the million and trillion neurons in the human brain. The market is a chaotic and uncontrollable wild beast (Applause).

Let me tell you that I am saying this at a time when the market is fashionable everywhere. They are even talking about a socialist market economy. They will have to describe well the meaning of a socialist market economy. Well, if they say that it is a necessary type of distribution, a mechanism for that, we listen but it cannot be the market that plans and determines humanity's future, the market preserving the environment, the market preserving nature and life.

Who are they going to make believe that story about the market watching over the purity of the air, the good quality of the waters, fruitful seas where the fish necessary for the growing number of inhabitants of this planet can grow, to prevent what occurred when the market filled them with fishing fleets and trawlers that have diminished their ability to produce food, apart from the pollution of that food with mercury and other chemicals harmful to human health that have been dumped into the sea? The Mediterranean alone receives waste from 140,000 European factories.

The time will come when it will not be possible to eat even a sardine without having a jar of antihistamines and antitoxins by one's side, because they are really increasingly poisonous.

And what is that? That is the market. What has destroyed nature? That system has. What has provoked the warming of the atmosphere, the possibility of the polar icecaps melting, the increase of floods on the one hand and of hurricanes on the other, even if dozens of islands and parts of the coastal areas will be under water when the sea level rises? What good will all our docks, ports and current maritime facilities, including recreation centers, do us then? These are real dangers not fantasy.

They have lately fell in the habit of referring to people who make this sort of criticism as catastrophists. Since my name is Castro, it is all the same if they call me catastrophist or whatever they like (Applause). I know that my rational, mathematical and physical calculations are accurate. Besides, they are the real catastrophists because they are the ones who cause the catastrophe.

In any event, we are warning them not to cause it, and telling them that we are hopeful that the world

can survive, that the human specie has advanced so much in technological, scientific and intellectual development, as well as in the means to support man's intelligence and strength, as to find solutions not even dreamed of before, to produce food and goods for the human population, to preserve nature, which is a decisive issue, and preserve it soon.

Millions of tons of chlorofluorocarbon advancing toward the ozone layer, more and more millions of carbon dioxide, millions, hundreds of million, billions of tons of this gas go to the atmosphere every year.

When they meet for discussion, the United States is last to accept the slightest reduction or the slightest commitment. They have created the market of the air pollution quotas, I can not call it otherwise. If a country has a quota of pollution to send up into the atmosphere and saves it, it can sell it to another so the other one can send it. That is a very humane, very rational, very understanding market. It is really incredible! It is not worthy of a civilized society, of a developed humanity!

It is about these matters - and I know you have been too kind already (Applause) - that I invite you to think.

Another terrible problem that we are suffering - perhaps the last one I will touch upon - is that of the aggression to our national identities, the ruthless aggression to our cultures, as never before in history, the trend towards a universal monoculture. How can anyone conceive such world? It is not a world order that combines the wealth and culture of many countries, but a world order that, by definition, destroys culture, a globalization that inevitably destroys culture.

What is one's homeland, if not one's own culture? What is national identity if not the country's own culture? Can there be a greater spiritual wealth than one's own culture, created during eons by mankind? Can our customs be simply swept away, ruthlessly swept away? We have to be aware of that, because the battles of ideas and concepts will be a great battle.

If we are to speak about ideology, let us speak about the ideology of saving the world; not later, but as soon as possible. Let's try to save it and improve it as of now. After we have saved it, we will be able to improve it even more.

I was saying that this battle for survival is not a class struggle, even though the classes may be involved in the conflict. This battle for the survival of the Third World countries include us all: those who have large resources and those who have very little.

I think that both, the rich and the poor, if they are sailing on the same ship, would not want the ship to sink. There might be a minimum of collaboration to try to save the ship. We are really sailing in a Titanic with a lot of sea beneath and many icebergs in the way. That dramatic story, has now served to invest 300 million dollars in a movie with more than a billion dollars in profits.

The great films are no longer simply films, but a combination of film and commercial operation, and when they have drawn hundreds of millions from the film, they have obtained thousands of millions from the products connected with the picture that are sold, from lion kings, dolls, toys and myriads of objects that absorb the families' money. It is all a combination, the merging of commercial and recreation enterprises whose objectives have nothing to do with culture.

A question: Who are the only ones in the world who have 300 million dollars for a film? There is only one answer: the growing, uncontrollable monopolies of the mass media in the hands of the American transnationals.

Suffice it to cite a few examples, if you allow me I will recall some facts: 50% of all the films made and shown in the world today belong to American companies, 75% to 80% of the TV serials, 70% of videos, 50% of satellites through which any place can be reached, 60% of the world's networks and 75% of

Internet. All of this is in their hands, and all of this is at the service of the neo-liberal globalization concepts and the ideas it is putting forward. These are very powerful sources of ideology, information, beliefs, customs that can transform many things.

In the Spanish speaking America, an average of 245 films are premiered per country yearly, of which 70% are American, 10% correspond to the local film industry, 14% are European and only 3% are Spanish American. Seventy-nine percent of the TV programs imported by the Spanish America come from the United States.

Actually, I was amazed when I read not long ago that hamburgers were already in India. The Indians, whose culture is so special, who do not even eat beef, already have the Mc Donald produced with buffalo meat. Well, you have had it for a long time now (Laughter). They are here, they are everywhere, but I am talking of India. I can imagine those who are capable of mixing even the meat of a dead oxen killed by accident on a highway with the buffalo meat. Well, the Indians with Mc Donald, and chains of Mc Donald stores, that is the culture of globalization that is imposed. The Indians have other consumption habits, and they have a lot better and more refined dishes than hamburgers.

The Chinese consuming Mc Donald, the Africans consuming Mc Donald, wherever there is the possibility for that product. The Chinese consuming Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola. The Latin Americans have had the habit for a long time now, but the Chinese did not have it, they drank tea and other things. The Chinese and the Indians are consuming Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola. The Europeans are also learning very quick to consume hot dogs and hamburgers. They gradually acquire the Western customs and habits, they even smoke the cigarettes targeted for critical campaigns in the United States to reduce death by cancer but which are advertised and exported to the whole world.

The culture of reading, which was a privilege of our ancestors, when over 80% of the population was illiterate which is amazing, is considerably losing ground. Reading habits? No. TV serials? Serials, yes, one after the other, unstoppable superficiality of all sorts, escapism.

How much time do children have for studying? The average TV time of children with electricity in their homes is three hours of their after-school time. The reading habit is gradually disappearing.

Books? What books are available to the Third World? In Finland, for example where they have a lot of paper and big forests they now prefer to exploit the least bit possible, they buy trees from the Russians, they preserve theirs and go to Siberia. The number of books published in Finland between 1991 and 1994 was 246 per 100,000 people, while in India and Madagascar it was barely one per 100,000. The average number of books published in the developed countries is 54 per 100,000 people, while in the countries still to develop it is 7 books. That is their possibility of reading, of knowing at least the history of the country.

It is very sad to hear - and it is true - that if a survey is made among Latin American children, if you ask many Mexican children who were Hidalgo and Morelos, or if you ask Central American children who was Morazán, or in Latin America who was Bolívar, they don not know who Bolívar was, and yet, a great majority of those children know who Mickey Mouse is. That is their cultural legacy to us, they are destroying the most cherished values of our lives, our peoples, our nations, our communities.

Three transnational news agencies circulated 80% of the news disseminated in the world by cables. And that is nothing compared to digital television, the increasing number of channels, fiber optics and the possibilities that keep emerging.

Something as sacred as culture is threatened with extinction, because those media are mainly used for commercial and not for educational purposes. Very few Africans have a TV channel, a radio station, and when they do have a TV channel, then all that is shown comes from abroad, comes from the developed, consumers societies, comes particularly from the United States.

Are they going to leave us any freedom? They are not even going to leave us the freedom of choosing our food, nor cooking it as our ancestors historically did. All at the service of that unsustainable order.

I expressed that idea clearly: What will happen when the inevitable depression comes as it will in a global fashion? Nothing has been devised, nor can anything be devised to prevent it in a world increasingly governed by the market laws. But this time it will be different! It will not be like in 1929. The stocks are more inflated, a lot more inflated than in 1929, five times, six times inflated, the stocks in the United States. Something which has nothing to do with the creation of new riches, but with what I referred to as trust, the hope that they will continue gaining value: earning money by betting, buying stocks, buying currencies, anything. People invest their money based on that hope.

I already explained in the CARICOM meeting that currently, everyday, every 24 hours, speculative operations are carried out for 1.5 trillion dollars. This figure equals eighteen times - I used a smaller figure in the Caribbean meeting, I always prefer to use a lower figure, I said: around 15 times - the GDP of the whole world in 15 days. In the calculations I made, it came to around 17 or 18 days. This amount is bet in the world everyday. There has never been anything like this.

As I explained, it is money going for money; not money invested in a factory, in an enterprise, in industry or services, but money invested in bonds, currencies, in stocks, anything, even coffee; but not in real coffee, rather coffee quoted in the stockmarkets, which is quoted at two dollars and a buyer thinks that it is going to go up to 2.30, so he buys it to sell it later when it is at 2.30. He has not produced a single coffee bean, he has not grown it; but he invented a game, a lottery with coffee, with sugar and with any other product, and, above all, with stocks.

Before, it was only the rich, the millionaires, the Rockefellers who had stocks in the stockmarkets. Today, in the United States, tens and tens of millions of people have their savings invested in stocks, and the insurance mutual funds are invested in stocks.

A crisis like that of 1929 would be a huge catastrophe. Let us ask Greenspan, Rubin, Camdessus and the director of the World Bank if they think that speculative balloon can be sustained. Exactly the same thing in 1929. We must tell them: Gentlemen, you have created a World Bank that keeps running around, a monetary fund that has no funds, or not enough, and the crises spread. Are you sure that balloon is not going to deflate?

At the WTO, at the end of their different agendas, I proposed an issue. I humorously proposed to add an issue: Global economic crisis, what can be done? That is what I want to ask those gentlemen, what can be done? Have they invented the philosopher's stone? What have they invented so that these phenomena don't bring about the feared depression?

I personally do not have the slightest doubt. It does not seem like we will have to wait long, bearing in mind some of the things we have listed here and many more. Events are happening very fast. These are times in which events follow one another at great speed.

This is a very new problem. The concepts of globalization are very recent. They have developed with a great force in the last 15 or 20 years, but mainly in the last 10 years. Environmental awareness is also new. Thirty or thirty-five years ago, very few people spoke about the environment; today everybody talks about it and there is awareness. Events are moving very fast.

I ask myself if this is the last or next to last crisis. We are very interested in, and try to inform ourselves as much as possible about, how events might unfold this year and the next. What will happen in Russia, Japan and Southeast Asia? If the crisis reaches the other regions how will they solve the problem, plus the pressing political issues, which are very serious. A very serious political problem can be an outburst in Russia, which is not the same as an outburst in Yugoslavia or in the Kosovo province, it would be a political catastrophe.

All this means that we are facing the risk of problems that are called to affect the whole world, because the crisis that is already here is affecting many countries. Sugar producers see the price of sugar at eight cents. Those who produce copper see the price cut in half and the same occurs with nickel, aluminum, rubber. Everybody is seeing the prices of their commodities cut almost in half right now.

The economy of every country is exposed to Stock Exchange moves and speculation and to losing in a moment of panic all the monetary reserves of a country's central bank, any country. We are not included, because since we were thrown out of all those agencies, we do not have to abide by any IMF recipe or anybody else's (Laughter and applause). The others have to comply with them, and they are liable to wake up one day without a penny in their reserves.

These are very tough problems. The climatic changes. The great influence that can have on the food prices or the people purchasing power. But this should be no reason for us to do like the IMF, the World Bank, the Federal Reserve Bank and the US Treasury and say: Be calm, be calm, everything is doing very well. This is a passing phenomenon."

Some of you have young nephews and nieces, or children, or grandchildren five, six or seven years old. In 50 years they will be a lot younger than what I am now, a lot younger. After 50 years have passed they do so quickly - and I certainly know it, I sometimes think I am still in school, or it seems only like yesterday. How quickly have 50 years gone by for me! The Cubans who have lived through almost 40 years of revolution and blockade, we know.

Forty years can go to quickly! Sometimes it seems like a second but, when those 50 years have passed, the population of this planet will be 10 billion. That will determine the need for more rice, more hamburgers, more wheat, more corn, more milk, more clothes and shoes, more medicines, more housing, more transportation, more drinking water, more recreation, more culture, more spiritual goods that can be produced in infinite quantities, or rather that a rational humanity might produce, not a few thousand transnationals guided by the market laws.

There is so much spiritual wealth that humanity might create! And man does not live on bread alone, as the Bible says. Spiritual goods or riches, spiritual values are missed a lot more when material needs are satisfied, and for those 4 billion additional population, humanity will have to train doctors, teachers, build hospitals, develop new medicines, which should also prolong life, and defeat cancer, AIDS and other new and old diseases.

The number of those who will have to be fed and aided by a smaller percentage of the people will grow every year. That is why in the United States, England and other places they are beginning to worry and want to raise the retirement age to 65 or more. The life of human beings will be prolonged, it can be prolonged. New medicines and the WHO programs have cut in half the number of children who died 30 or 40 years ago. Productivity must grow. Humanity must be fed!

Does that humanity exist or not? Must it not be fed, educated and given the maximum well-being which does not only lie with material goods? There comes a time when material goods are more than enough. Right now, there are those who have three or four more automobiles than they need. The consumption patterns would also need to be analyzed. All those food chains I talked about, all those media monopolies are wholly devoted to advertising the consumption habits of the developed capitalist societies. It is awful.

How can we imagine every Chinese and every Indian with an automobile at the doorstep! What would be left of the 10 million hectares that the Chinese have today to produce grains, rice, food for 1.5 billion people that they will be in a few decades and at the same time build roads, highways, garages, houses?

Can they continue spreading in the world and imposing a desire for those consumption patterns? Could we not instill a greater desire for culture and spiritual wealth? When humans discover it, oftentimes they prefer that rather than any other thing (Applause). Things for edification not alienation, and television

not only for recreation but for education, training, nurturing man's spirit, making him better, more generous, not for turning him into a wild animal, into a killer.

Other statistical data show that in many countries there is an average of 5 to 10 acts of aggression per hour of television, and that in the period 1996-97 the programs showing violence were 61% of the total. Violence and more violence, sex and more sex, which differs from reality, for man is not violent by nature, even if the Bible tells us that Cain killed Abel, although television did not exist then (Laughter).

As for sex, man needs to be educated, because it is instinctively, naturally awoken, there is no need to go around proclaiming it either, isn't that right, young university students? (Laughter.) It is exploited and exacerbated for grossly commercial purposes. This also brings about many phenomena of our society, linked to today's world such as: irresponsibility, emotional instability, disappointments, separations, divorces.

Believe me, this is not a priest speaking from his pulpit (Laughter). I am not and cannot be against the right to divorce, but as leaders of a country, we wish that there were more stability in the family, so the less divorces the better.

It is because stability really helps the children who are the ones most affected and it helps man, for instance, to control his instincts. Nothing is gained by exacerbating them.

Violence and sex are two things much resorted to by these media with a commercial orientation. Everything turns out to be commercial. There is nothing human, nothing that seeks human betterment, but anything that can bring profit even if it destroys mankind, even if it makes social life more complicated.

We must nurture values. There is no alternative, if within a maximum of freedom, because authentic values are those practiced in the greatest freedom (Applause).

It is neither a dream nor something impossible that all those fabulous resources that could serve to educate, train and improve mankind, can one day be used for these humane purposes.

I say that time goes by very quickly, not only the time I have used up on this rostrum (Laughter), but the other - and I say it because I am afraid I might miss the plane (Laughter) -, time flies! I said 50 years. You already have an idea that, no matter how many we are, there will be less space. Let us ask ourselves what should be our life patterns, our consumption patterns; what patterns befit us, as an immense, growing humanity.

I think these problems are a source of concern to many people today, one way or another, regardless of social classes or religious beliefs. The great challenge is how to bring all the talents, all the values and all the ethical systems in conjunction to achieve those objectives.

I have taken up a few hours of your time, but I did not want to come here to simply say: "Good afternoon. How are you all? We are very happy for the way you have welcome us!" (Applause.) Of course, all this is true, but I do not have to say what you know so well.

I wanted to share some of our ideas, our thoughts. I was not planning to speak too much about Cuba. I was a bit lengthy on that topic to explain some of our experiences. I wanted, rather, to address these issues here, brother to brother, heart to heart, with a frankness equal to the hospitality, the generosity and the affection you have shown our delegation.

You, who have so much contributed to the success of this visit in every respect, you who have been so brotherly, you who have upheld our souls with so much spirit, so much enthusiasm and so much encouragement. Because that trust has not been forged under a clear sky, it has been forged under a deluge of lies, misinformation, slanders; it has been forged under a storm of lightening bolts during

these years that we have not even had the opportunity of seeing each other this way, of meeting people to people, in representation, along with other comrades, of the Cuban people.

Let us rejoice for this great progress, let us rejoice that our peoples can come closer, exchange, talk. But your courage is great - I was saying - because your trust has developed under almost impossible conditions. What does this teach us? That one must have confidence in man, one must have confidence in the peoples, their talent, their intelligence.

If in many parts of the world the representatives of that blockaded Cuba, slandered through the most sophisticated media, have friends and find so many ordinary men and women who understand their struggle, who understand their cause and express their solidarity with it, is it not that perhaps a lot more difficult than to dream of a better future, of a more just world and of a global, universal society which is truly humane? (Applause.)

What I have described, born from the experience of our fighting, militant people, from the experiences we have lived through in matters of this kind, from sleepless eyes that try to see and guess the evolution of events, are my convictions, and the convictions of our comrades. We want to leave them here for you, Dominican brothers and sisters, as curators of these ideas which I do not ask you to agree with, but I do ask you to think about. We ourselves have to delve deeper and learn a lot more.

You have listened with patience and respect. I thank you and once again express my admiration, because in this meeting with you, and I know very well who I am meeting with, I can once again appreciate how many deep-thinking men and women and how many noble men and women we have had the privilege of seeing and meeting on this trip.

I will say it now: I am leaving your country a happy man. We will all try, and all Cubans will try, to be worthy of that solidarity, that trust and that extraordinary love you have shown us.

Thank you very much (Applause and exclamations of: "Fidel, Fidel, Fidel!").

(Ovation.)

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