

[Speech given by Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba Central Committee and President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers, in the closing ceremony of the first International Congress on Culture and Development. International Convention Center \[1\]](#)

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Esteemed ministers and culture leaders in the countries of Latin America or

Ibero-America,

Distinguished guests,

Dear delegates to the first International Congress on Culture and Development,

During four days those of you who took part in the Congress have worked hard. Happily, your efforts coincided with the ministers' and culture leaders' two-days meeting --on the 10th and 11th-- preceding the Ibero-American Summit conference to be held in the month of November. We have tried to be informed of what you have discussed and what the debates have been like.

It seems to me that the organizers are satisfied with the results of both meetings.

Among the subjects discussed --and undoubtedly there were many and of great value-- some caught my particular attention. I find they are among the subjects related to culture and politics that I mostly appreciate. For example, the need for states to promote a correct policy of environmental education; the importance of history to convey values and defend the peoples' identity; the need to reject colonialist or hegemonic models; the advisability of avoiding damages to the national identity from tourism; the necessity to meditate on the current world, to build a public awareness and to transmit ideas which I consider of basic importance; the urgent need to foster a true revolution of man's ethic through his education and the implementation of the right cultural policies. This is really the first time that I see this last subject so clearly formulated.

Finally, there is an item 12, which I do not know if absolutely everybody will agree with but at least I do, and it reads: "The capitalist economy cannot guarantee the prospective development of humanity because it does not take into account the cultural and human losses that result from its own expansion". I would go a little bit further and say that not only does it not guarantee the prospective development of humanity but that, as a system, it puts at risk its very existence.

You urged me to say a few words the day that the Congress opened and I touched on an essential point related to the transfer of ideas.

I do not know how much discussion there has been on the ways to implement that principle. I do know, however, that as a fundamental part of the integration policy that is up for debate you have raised the need for culture to be given a priority over the other objectives of that integration.

We feel that, united we would be worth the sum of many and very rich cultures. In this token, when we think about Our Americas, as [José] Martí called it, the Americas down from the Río Bravo [Río Grande] --although it should have been from the Canadian border because that portion also belonged to our Americas until an insatiable expansionist neighbor seized the whole territory of the west of what is today the United States of America-- it is that integration which I have in mind, but including the Caribbean nations.

The Caribbean nations are still not present in these Ibero-American Summit conferences. Fortunately, all Latin American and Caribbean countries will, for the first time, meet with the European Union in Río de Janeiro on the 28th and 29th of this month. So, the family is already growing although, in general, the Caribbean nations have been the last of the forgotten as we, Latin Americans, also were and still are forgotten.

The sum of all our cultures would make up one enormous culture and be a multiplication of our cultures. Integration should not adversely affect, but rather enrich, the culture of everyone of our countries.

In this context, when we talk about unity we still do so in a narrow framework. But I like to go beyond that. I believe in the unity of all the countries in the world, in the unity of all the peoples in the world and in a free unity, a truly free unity. I am not thinking of a fusion but of a free unity of all cultures in a truly just world, in a truly democratic world, in a world where it would be possible to apply the kind of globalization that Karl Marx talked about in his time and that [Pope] John Paul II talks about today when he speaks of the globalization of solidarity.

We still need a good definition of what the globalization of solidarity means. If we take this thought to its final consequences we will realize that item 12 is a reality because I wonder if the capitalist system can guarantee the globalization of solidarity. No one speaks about the "globalization of charity", which would be very good in the meantime, but let us hope the day will come when charity is unnecessary. That will be the day when the sentiments of solidarity become universal and the spirit of solidarity goes global.

I say this to make it clear that I am in no way a narrow nationalist or a chauvinist. I hold man in a higher concept and cherish more ambitious dreams for the future of the human species, which has gone through so much hardship to end up being what it is today, and accumulated such knowledge as it has today, while still not deserving the description of a truly human species. What we presently have is still very far from that but, perhaps, the further it seems, the closer it actually is, since this humanity is going through a colossal crisis and it is only from colossal crises that great solutions may come.

That is what history has been teaching us so far, up to this very moment when the real globalization, which was not even mentioned a few years ago, has been made possible and inevitable by the enormous advances in science, technology and communications. People communicate with one another in a matter of seconds, wherever they are.

Suffice it to say that it is more difficult for me to communicate with our minister of Foreign Affairs here than with our ambassador in the United Nations. The ambassador there has a cellular phone and even if he is in the meeting room beside his colleague, the U.S. ambassador --with an empty seat between them-- he can talk over the phone. Just today, when the phone connection was made and I asked where he was --whether in the mission, at home or in the United Nations-- he said: "I am in the car." I said: "In the car! But I hear you so well!" He said: "Yes, we have stopped at the traffic light now." And we continued talking for several more minutes. It is incredible, really.

Technological advances explain the accuracy of the famous satellites guiding the missiles and the smart weapons which are not so smart that they do not fail disturbingly often, that is, if they actually fail unintentionally.

The incident with the Chinese embassy [in Belgrade] seemed so strange, so bizarre; then in trying to explain it they said the problem was that they had been bombing guided by some old outdated maps. So, due to some outdated maps a bomb could have fallen here too, in this meeting room.

Money moves rapidly, too, and speculative operations with currencies are carried out at great speed for a trillion dollars every day; and they are not the only speculative operations taking place, nor is it only with currencies they speculate.

At the time of Maghellan, it took I do not know how many months to go round the world and now it can be done in barely 24 hours.

Me too, I went round the world not long ago, stopping off in Denmark, China, Vietnam, Japan, Canada and back to Havana. I then began playing with the numbers and doing some calculations and I realized that flying East, on a faster plane than mine, it is possible to leave China early on Monday morning and arrive in Havana on Sunday afternoon.

We have seen the world change in a few decades.

If you do not mind I will introduce an issue, just like you have introduced many others, and I would call it Culture and Sovereignty.

I will rely on concrete facts and I am not talking theory or philosophy but things that we can all see, that even a near-sighted person can see: namely, that there can be no culture without sovereignty. [Minister of Culture] Abel [Prieto] outlined how a handful of brilliant personalities succeeded in saving the national culture from American neocolonialism and hegemonism in Cuba.

Another country has more merit than we do: Puerto Rico, which has been a Yankee colony for 100 years now but where neither their language nor culture have been destroyed. It is admirable! (Applause)

Of course, imperialism has today much more powerful means to destroy cultures, to impose other cultures and homogenize cultures --much more powerful means. Perhaps, at this moment, it can be more influential in 10 years than it was in the past 100 years. However, the example I gave you sheds some light on the peoples' capacity to resist and on the value of culture. The Puerto Ricans were deprived of all sovereignty and, despite everything, they have resisted.

Although it is possible to find examples to show that there can be culture, or that a certain degree of culture can be preserved without sovereignty, what is inconceivable or unimaginable in today's world and toward the future is the existence of sovereignty without culture.

While you, Congress delegates, ministers and government leaders of culture in Ibero-America were here yesterday involved in your debates, a great battle was being fought at the United Nations for sovereignty and we would say a major battle for culture, too. Yes, because I say that, today, the means in the hands of those who dominate the world economically and almost politically are much more powerful than they ever were.

That great battle had to do with the Security Council meeting which discussed a draft resolution on the war unleashed against Yugoslavia, basically against Serbia. In my view, it was a historic battle because imperialism and its allies --or better still, imperialism and those who support it against their own best interests-- are waging a massive struggle against the principle of sovereignty, an awesome offensive against sovereignty.

We could see this coming. After the collapse of the socialist camp, the USSR disintegrated and a single superpower remained in the world. It was noticeable that that superpower --of well known origins whose diabolical methods and principles are also very well known-- could not refrain from trying to use all its vast power to impose its standards and its interests on the world, carefully at first and then by

increasingly stark means.

We are already looking at an imperialism that is using all its might and force to sweep away anything that stands in its way and culture is one of those things very much in its way. They are the owners of the vast majority of the communication networks, that is, 60 percent of the world communication networks and of the most powerful and unrivalled television channels. And, they have the almost absolute monopoly of the films shown in the world.

It can be said that France, which is fighting an almost heroic battle to preserve its culture as much as possible against the United States cultural invasion, is the only country in Europe, that I know of, where the American films shown account for less than 50 percent of the total. In the other countries of the Old Continent, it is above 50 percent. In some of them it can be 60, 65, 70 and even 80 percent. As for television series, it is 60, 70, 80 and 90 percent, so that about 70 percent of the television series shown and 75 percent of the video cassettes distributed are from the United States; these figures that you must have heard before. Ramonet [a French journalist] writes about those figures. It is an almost absolute monopoly.

There are major Latin American countries where 90 percent of the films and series shown come from the United States and you know the characteristics of what comes there. Very little material comes from Europe, so in those aspects there is a total cultural colonization by the United States.

It goes without saying that, in our case, it is extremely difficult to find films of some moral and cultural value. How do we escape from films that show violence, sex and the Mafia almost exclusively? How do we escape from so many alienating and poisonous films that they distribute throughout the world? It becomes difficult for us, for our television practically without commercials, as I said to you, to find films to show on weekends; and people are often critical of what is shown. On the other hand, they are copies because we should say, in all sincerity, that as we were blockaded and all our imports prevented we found ourselves forced to copy.

Some things are easy to copy, including films, and I think that the comrades in our prestigious ICAIC [Cuban Films Institute] in the early years --and rightly so, it is a historical merit-- specialized in copying U.S. films. Then, there were some good ones, I mean, in the past there used to be more good American and European films. They were worth watching.

The commercial spirit has so pervasively penetrated culture as to become overwhelming. Which country in Europe can spend 300 million US dollars or more on a film? Which country in Europe can make profits of \$500 million, or even \$1.2 billion trading on paraphernalia related to a film? Those are companies that exploit everything, and the sales of goods associated to an expensive and highly publicized film actually give them higher profits than the screening of the film.

Actually, those films can cover all their costs and produce high profits in the United States market alone. Therefore, as you can easily understand, they can sell the films much more cheaply anywhere in Europe or the world. Who can compete with them?

Still, those European countries, some of them in a real cultural shock and others relatively indifferent to the phenomenon, who with their unity and integration expect to develop their economic, technological, scientific and cultural possibilities, --practically as a necessity for survival-- even those countries support the imperialist policy. They are supporting a policy aimed at sweeping away the principles of sovereignty. And it is not the case of very small countries, small islands or very poor underdeveloped nations whose per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is 200 or 300 US dollars a year, but rather countries whose per capita GDP is 20, 25, 30 and even 40,000 US dollars.

They, of course, are giving up national sovereignty to the extent that they are uniting, opening borders, applying the free circulation of capital, of workers, of technicians and creating common institutions that provide advantages only for the European countries. The South countries must arrive in little boats and

enter illegally.

Those countries are giving up their national currencies, and with good logic, in order to adopt a common currency. That is different from adopting a foreign currency governed by the U.S. Federal Reserve System which is tantamount to annexing the country to the United States.

What would become of us, who have, at least, demonstrated that it is possible to resist a double blockade and such a difficult period as we have gone through during these years? How would that have been possible without our own currency? To this I would add, as in passing, that we have revalued our currency seven times. From 1994, when one US dollar bought 150 pesos, to 1999 or the end of 1998 --let us say almost five years; the whole of 1994 should be counted-- we have revalued the currency seven times. Today, one US dollar can only buy about 20 pesos. No country has done that, I tell you. None!

The formulas of the [International] Monetary Fund, all the recipes that it imposes and that you know so well, where do they lead? Sometimes, through privatization or savings the countries are able to accumulate major reserves to protect their currency but then, in a number of days or weeks, they lose everything. We have seen that happen in a matter of days. We neither have nor need those enormous reserves. Other countries have them and lose them.

There is only one country --one single country in the world!-- that does not even need a reserve because it prints the banknotes that circulate throughout the world; the country that, as we have said on other occasions, first converted gold into paper by unilaterally suspending the free conversion of its banknotes and which changed the gold in its reserves for the paper currency that it printed --a currency accepted by everybody for its equivalent value in gold. Later, then, it converted the paper into gold, the miracle dreamed of by the alchemists of the Middle Ages. In other words, they print a piece of paper that circulates as if it were gold. I am explaining the phenomenon in a simple way although the procedure is more complicated than that.

They use Treasury bonds and apply different mechanisms. But, in essence, the fact is they can afford it because they print the currency that circulates worldwide, they print the banknotes kept as a reserve in the banks of every country in the world. They print the paper, they buy with it and the others keep the paper --a large part of it, not all of it, of course. Therefore, they are the ones who print the world's reserve currency.

That is one of the reasons for the emergence of the euro. Let us say that it is an attempt to survive against that privilege and against that monetary power so that no speculator can come along and do to any European country as they did to the United Kingdom, France, Spain and others when their currencies were devalued after they fell prey of enormous speculative operations. Actually, when some American megamillionaire wolves get together, no country can resist their speculative attacks. The pound sterling, a currency queen not so long ago, was brought to its knees in a matter of days.

That can give you an idea of what I mean. That country --well, there is hardly any need to say it-- is the United States of America, the only one protected. Others, faced with the continuous and incessant devaluations, crises, catastrophes and flights of capital, in their desperation begin considering the idea of suppressing their national currencies and adopting the US dollar which is governed by the United States Federal Reserve.

Now, could our country survive if we had such a system? That is, if our currency were the US dollar and this country blockaded and unable to acquire dollars were to buy the peasants' products --chicken, eggs, mangoes-- in US dollars, could this country exist? Based on what we have had to go through and what we have learned, we realize that in our conditions, if we did not have our very modest peso, which we have revalued, as I said, seven times, we would not have been able to revalue in the slightest. Practically all the schools would have been closed here while not a single one has been closed, and all the hospitals while not a single one has been closed. On the contrary, in this special period, we have

increased the country's medical staff, especially the doctors working in the community but also those working in the hospitals by a figure that comes to approximately 30,000 new doctors. All this despite our great economic difficulties, lack of resources and often even of medicines, although we have the basic ones.

Today, a newspaper reported that in a central province of the country, not in the capital but in Villa Clara, infant mortality in children under one year was 3.9 for 1,000 live births. If we consider Washington, the United States capital, for example, its infant mortality rate is four or five times higher than in the Villa Clara province. There is one area, the Bronx, where it is 20 for 1,000 live births and other places in the United States where it is 30 for 1,000.

Our national average of infant mortality is lower than the United States national average by at least two or three percentage points. They are at perhaps 10 or 11 and our hope this year is to reduce it to 7 for 1,000. Last year, it was 7.1.

Needless to say that it is due to the efforts made that not a single day-care center has been closed. Not a single family doctor's office has been closed. The number of doctor's offices has increased by many thousands during the special period. We have been able to do this, of course, because there is a revolution, there is a united people, there is a spirit of sacrifice and there is an extensive political culture.

When we speak about culture we do not forget the political culture. It is one of the sectors whose development is badly needed and which is very much lacking in the world. It is impossible to believe or imagine that an average person in the United States has a higher political culture than a Cuban or a European. I admit that Europeans have a higher political culture than Americans but, in general, Europeans do not have a higher political culture than Cubans. That is for sure. You could even have a contest to compare the European average political knowledge and the Cuban average, a contest between people who unfortunately live alienated by millions of things and people who do not live like that.

In our Latin American countries, sometimes necessity and poverty help in the development of a political culture higher than in those very rich countries that do not suffer the calamities that we do. That is why, in the Latin American teachers' Congresses held in Cuba with thousands of teachers in attendance they constantly speak of the horrors of the neoliberalization that cuts off their budgets; and, in the medical Congresses they do likewise, as in the students Congresses or any congress for that matter, because they see it every day and they are conscious of it. Of course, awful things happen in Latin America that have not been seen for quite some time in Europe where the unemployed enjoy benefits that, according to some, allow them to vacation abroad for 15 days and more a year.

Where none of that exists, people suffer much more. We have more fertile ground to become politically cultured. In our case, we also have the experience accumulated by the country in very difficult battles against imperial aggression and in very great difficulties; and difficulties make good fighters.

But, all that notwithstanding, we could have done none of what I am telling you if we did not have a national currency that helps us to redistribute, and also many free services.

Of course, you compare it with the US dollar and there comes the misleading formula of the exchange rate between the US dollar and the Cuban peso in the Exchange Bureaux. And, if they say that it is 20 to 1, then somebody earning 300 Cuban pesos is said to earn 15 US dollars. If it was in New York, to those 15 US dollars you would have to add 1,000 to 1,500 US dollars to pay the rent, another 500 to pay for public health services --this is about 2,000 already-- another 500 or 1,000 for education, depending on the educational level because there are university courses there that cost 30,000 dollars a year. The add some 750 dollars more for the free education given to children, adolescents and young people here and the total could be some 2,750 US dollars, plus 15 that would be 2,765 dollars. All this is very misleading, is it not?

If you take into account that all children in Cuba up to the age of seven receive a liter of milk for 25 cents of a Cuban peso, then this would be a child or a family that is paying only 1.3 [1.25] cents of a US dollar out of the supposed 15 US dollars, for a liter of milk, and similarly for other essential food. Unfortunately, there is not enough food but there is a certain amount that, measured in dollars, are bought at a minute price.

If you go to our stadium, you can watch an important baseball match for 50 cents or one peso at most. If you go to Baltimore, where our team played the US team, of the 45,000 fans there, the ones who paid the least paid 10 US dollars and the ones who paid the most paid 35. To watch a similar performance a hundred times, a Cuban pays a maximum of 100 pesos. An American must pay 3,500 dollars. The same applies to a lot of other activities and services. But our system, with all those characteristics, could not have had such achievements without a national currency.

Well, so far this long disquisition on the importance of a national currency and the delirious things crossing the minds of those considering the removal of the national currency.

There in Europe, when they talk about sovereignty, they cannot have the same concept we do. They are uniting and giving up many of the attributes of the nation state to a supranational state, to a supranational community. Other countries elsewhere in the world should do that and we, Latin Americans, should do that, too. If not, we will not advance even three yards. In fact, we will go backwards more yards every year if we do not integrate. In the light of what is happening in the world, it is not something to preach but rather to build an awareness about, to transmit a basic idea.

Actually, there is a very close powerful neighbor who wants to integrate us into it. Of course, this is to have access to our natural resources and the cheap labor of hundreds of millions of Latin Americans producing jeans, shoes, T-shirts, handicrafts that are very labor-intensive. Meanwhile, they keep the cutting-edge industries and the brain drain continues. Right now, they are talking about hiring 200,000 highly qualified foreign workers for their electronic industries, preferably Latin Americans. And so, they take away those highly qualified people that you train in the universities, the most scientifically talented. They give visas to them all right. These do not need to become wetbacks or illegal immigrants.

If there is a good artist, an excellent artist who can be exploited commercially, he is coaxed to go there. They cannot coax a great writer like García Márquez because García Márquez might be coaxing them (Applause). At the very least with the high value of his works he might take a substantial part of the banknotes they print. Actually, a good writer can work in his own country, he does not need to emigrate but in many areas of the arts it is not the same and they are coaxing the best talents to go there; many of them, at least. A man like Guayasamín could not be bought, not with all the money printed by the Federal Reserve. There are men who cannot be seduced with any money, men and women --I rather add those two words than be accused of gender discrimination-- and we have them here. We have them here! I do not need to mention names, they are humble men and women who are worth more than all the gold in the world. That is a fact.

I am explaining all this because they can help understand these phenomena of sovereignty, this battle. Because there are so many lies, so much demagoguery, so much confusion and so many methods devised to disseminate them that an enormous effort should be made at constant clarification. If some things are not understood, the rest cannot be understood.

They talk about flight of capital, about volatile capital such as the short-term loans, as if those were the only kind of volatile capital. In any Latin American country, the volatile capital suddenly goes. But, alongside the volatile capital goes all the money saved by the country's savers because if some people withdraw their money for fear of a devaluation or so, the others rush to the bank, change it for US currency and transfer it to the U.S. banks where the interest rate is higher or lower, depending on the situation.

So, all the Latin American and Caribbean money is volatile capital. Let us be well aware of this. Volatile capital is not limited to those short-term loans with a high interest rate that are then quickly withdrawn by the owners when faced with a risky situation. Any money can become volatile, except for Cuban money; there is no way our money can become volatile. If they want to take it away we shall be delighted. The liquidity would decrease and the value of the peso would increase.

Now the Europeans are uniting. They do it to compete with their competitor. They talk about being partners but the United States does not want to be anybody's partner. At any rate, our neighbor wants to be a privileged partner. It constantly takes measures against Europe: banning the export of cheese for such a reason or other or whatever other meat products because they use certain fodder. They are always fabricating pretexts. Right now, because of the banana and a resolution from the World Trade Organization which is nit unbiased, they have punished European exports for a total of about 500 million dollars. They take measures every day or threaten to take them. They are always wielding that weapon. Indeed, it is very clear to anybody who does a little thinking that Europe must compete very hard with them.

We welcome this Caribbean and Latin American meeting with the European Union that I previously mentioned. It is good and it is convenient. I think that it is convenient for Europe, it is convenient for the Caribbean and for Latin America as well. And let us hope that the euro is strengthened. It has now dropped a little. It is enduring the consequences of that adventurous and genocidal war --to call it by its true name.

It suits us that there is another reserve currency, so that there are two and not just one in the world. If only there were three. It suits us that there is more than one strong and stable currency.

I hope that, among the many historical acts of madness committed in this hemisphere we do not end up adopting the US dollar as a circulation currency. It is a currency entirely managed from the United States by the Federal Reserve and they are not going to accept any Latin American representative there. Because if they were willing to accept in their Federal Reserve System a representative for each Latin American country, even we would send them one, if we were allowed to, of course.

Obviously, that is a utopia. Of course, they are not going to welcome anybody, not even from the richer and more developed countries with a higher GDP, not even from Brazil, Argentina or Mexico, to mention the largest fraternal countries of Latin America. They are never going to accept our representatives in their Reserve System. The Latin American and Caribbean destiny is in danger but everything is not lost, far from it, we can still fight.

I hope you understand, European comrades, that the concept of sovereignty cannot be the one openly and shamelessly defended yesterday by a European representative for the first time since ideas began to be debated and doctrines developed against sovereignty. Europe, in general, is quite committed to that anti-sovereignty doctrine promoted by the imperialism of the superpower.

This explains that a European country --whose ambassador spoke at the United Nations in a way nobody had ever spoken there-- could regard as anachronistic the United Nations Charter and the principle of sovereignty and non-intervention, something fundamental in international law. Those who so express themselves have practically renounced sovereignty and will enjoy, in an near future, a simple national autonomy within a supranational state, with a supranational parliament and a supranational executive.

Even now, as a reward for his glorious wartime exploits and forgetting those who died and the millions who have suffered and will keep those wounds for life, they have created the position of European Minister of Foreign Affairs; a prize for an outstanding character who seriously believes that he is what he is not and who acts like he really is. I mean the great Marshall and Secretary General of NATO.

Do you not know who that is? Have you ever heard of him? He was a minister of Culture in a European country. He is Javier Solana. Did you know not that he was a minister of Culture? I met him at an Ibero-

American summit in Spain, he awaited me at the airport and I chatted with him for a few minutes as protocol demands. He was at the time a peaceful minister who actively participated in anti-NATO demonstrations. Today, he is the Secretary General of NATO and a field Marshall. He must really be at least a field Marshall to give orders to the American Generals. Now, they are making him a sort of European foreign minister.

Our comrades are asked by the press: Are you not worried that they have named him Europe's minister of Foreign Affairs? We, in fact, do not tend to worry about anything, nor do we exchange principles for interests or convenience. But we might answer that we would rather have him as a minister of Foreign Affairs than as a NATO field Marshall. I do not know what his power will be as a minister of Foreign Affairs but we know only too well the power that he claims as a NATO Secretary General.

We have all the statements he has made, both before and during the war, and I know few people as attached to the doctrine of violence who use such a threatening style, with such a merciless and tough language. Obviously, he has a very great responsibility which he assumed when he formally ordered U.S. General [Wesley] Clark, head of the NATO military forces in Europe, to start bombing at such and such an hour and at such and such a point, after the NATO countries had given their Secretary General the power to start the war when, in his view, the diplomatic procedures had been exhausted.

In his capacity as Secretary General he issued orders and made statements almost constantly during more than 70 days of brutal bombings. They were all threatening, arrogant, abusive, almost cynical statements. Then, after the Security Council's meeting yesterday he issued the last of his assumed orders: the cessation of the bombings. All this with the corresponding theatrical overtones.

How obedient those American Generals! A model of discipline such as history had never seen! They immediately attack or they immediately cease to attack because a distinguished ex-minister of Culture gives the order.

Can the countries of the European Union have the same concept of sovereignty as Mexico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic or any small Caribbean island, like a Central American country or like Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Argentina or a south-east Asian country like Indonesia, Malaysia or the Philippines? Can they have the same concept as the vast majority of countries in the world which are dismembered?

When we are all integrated in a Latin America and Caribbean union, our concept of sovereignty will be different. We will have to give up a lot of those principles to obey the laws and the administration or the decisions of a supranational state.

Moreover, a Marxist can never be a narrow national chauvinist. A Marxist can be a patriot, which is different, and love his or her homeland, which is different, too.

A long time before today, there were men who dreamed, like [Simón] Bolívar almost 200 years ago, of a united Latin America. There were men, like [José] Martí who, more than 100 years ago dreamed of a united Latin America. At that time, when Bolívar proclaimed his dreams, Latin America was not made up of free independent countries, not yet.

In fact, the first independent country following the United States of America was Haiti, a country that provided material assistance to Bolívar in his struggle for Latin American independence and which also contributed, with its ideas and exchanges, to consolidate Bolívar's consciousness about the impossibility to defer the slaves emancipation which was not attained after the first triumphant independence movement in Venezuela.

As you know, there was in the United States a struggle for independence and a declaration of principles in 1776. But, it was only after almost 90 years and a bloody war that the emancipation of slaves was formally declared. Of course, the slaves situation was often worse off afterwards since they were no

longer any master's property, they were no longer their owners' assets so, if they died, the former masters did not lose a dime. Previously, if a slave died, his or her master lost what the slave had cost him in the infamous auction. Later, as it was the case here too, and everywhere, they were practically worse off.

In Latin America, slavery as a system disappeared at a much earlier stage than in the United States. There were men who dreamed about those things. There were men who, for the creation of a great, united and strong republic dreamed that each of our current countries, without renouncing their national sentiments, would lay down their prerogatives or aspirations to the separate national independence of each of them.

There were not even independent states when Bolívar dreamed of a united, big and powerful Latin American state based on our similarities, such as no other group of countries in the world have in terms of language, ethnic groups of similar ancestry, religious beliefs and general culture.

Religion is also a part of culture. When we see the invasion of Latin America by fundamentalist sects --these things are known, these ideas emerged during the cold war-- I wonder about this invasion that wants to divide us into a thousand pieces. Why is there this fundamentalist invasion, by hundreds, even thousands of religious denominations that are not at all ecumenical, that are different from the traditional Christian religious denominations which have an increasing ecumenical spirit?

When I was a student there was nothing ecumenical about them. Really, when the Pope visited us, in my welcoming speech, I praised the current ecumenical spirit of his church. I recalled that it was not like that in my early youth, from first grade until I graduated from high school when I studied in Catholic schools. As a rule, I was a boarding student except for very short periods when I was a day pupil. Relations among the traditional churches have changed a lot since then.

Now I wonder, why do they want to fragment us with this invasion of thousands of non-unitary sects? As we understand it, in Latin America common religious beliefs constitute an important element of culture, identity and integration. It is not that there has to be a single church --far from it-- but pro-unity churches, ecumenical churches. Such elements should be preserved.

We, Latin Americans, have many more things in common than the Europeans. Until not long ago, for centuries, they were warring against each other. There was one war that they called the Hundred Years War, and wars of every kind: religious, national, ethnic wars. Those who know a bit of history know that only too well.

The Europeans have transcended all that because they have become aware of the importance of unity. It must be said, really, that the Europeans became conscious --their politicians, in general, did-- of the need to unite and to integrate and for around 50 years they have been working to that end. We have hardly even started.

The United Nations Charter and the principles of sovereignty are absolutely indispensable and crucial for the vast majority of peoples in the world, especially for the smallest and weakest who are still not integrated into any strong supranational grouping in the current stage of extraordinarily uneven political, economic and social development of the human community.

The United States, captain and leader of the doctrines fostered by NATO, wants to sweep away the foundations of national sovereignty. It simply wants to take possession of the markets and natural resources of the Third World countries including those that were part of the former Soviet Union, like Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and others, while it is already almost the master of the great oil reserves of the Caspian sea. It wants to play the role of a new Roman worldwide super-empire which, of course, will last much less than the Roman Empire and the reach of its ambitions and its clumsiness; and it will meet with universal resistance.

Nonetheless, it is preparing for the development, consolidation and exercise of an boundless empire. Some American analysts and writers from the same group as Ramonet --and Ramonet himself-- denounce the cultural invasion, the almost total dominion over the mass media and the cultural monopoly they are trying to impose on the world thus showing the way the empire's most fervent theoreticians consider culture to be the nuclear weapon of the 21st century. But, there is no need to be so well informed to realize this. It can be seen clearly in everything they do and in the way they do it.

The empire's pretexts? Ah, humanitarian reasons! Human rights is one of the reasons they give for which it is necessary to liquidate sovereignty and internal conflicts that must be resolved with "smart" bombs and missiles.

Whose proposal is this? Looking back, recalling what happened in our hemisphere in the past few decades, who fathered all the coups d'état? Who trained the torturers in the most sophisticated techniques? Who was responsible for there being relatively small countries where more than 100,000 persons were vanished and a total of about 150,000 were killed? Or the fact that, in other nations, tens of thousands of men and women had a similar fate? I am talking here only about people who were vanished after horrible torture. Who trained the sinister culprits? Who armed them? Who supported them? How can they now claim that national sovereignty must be removed in the name of human rights?

A few years ago, they killed four million Vietnamese by dropping millions of tons of explosives on a country that was 15,000 or 20,000 kilometers away. For a long time they kept fiercely bombing with the result of four million people dead and a large number disabled for life. Now, they are asking that sovereignty be removed in the name of human rights.

In Angola, for example, who armed UNITA which for more than 20 years massacred entire villages and killed hundreds of thousands of Angolans? We know very well who did it because we were there a long time supporting the Angolan people against the South African racists. They are still killing there and their favorite leader has hundreds of millions of US dollars in the banks --I do not know who launders the money-- part of which is used to buy weapons, much to the pleasure of arms manufacturers. He controls extensive areas that are very rich in diamonds and has a personal fortune of hundreds of millions of US dollars.

Likewise, there has been no repressive government in the world that the United States would not support. How could the apartheid regime have seven nuclear weapons? They had seven when we were there, on the Namibian border and, the United States intelligence service, which knows everything, did not know about it! Did it not know? And, how did those weapons get there? This is one question that could be asked and one of the things that will be known in full detail one day when some documents are declassified, because the day will come when absolutely everything will be known.

One could also ask where those seven nuclear weapons are because their manufacturers say they have been destroyed. That is all that those of the apartheid regime would say. The ANC leaders do not know. Nobody has answered that question. But, again, there are still a lot of questions that have never been answered.

Who supported Mobutu [Sese Seko]? The United States and Europe did. Where are the billions that Mobutu took from the Congo? Which bank is keeping them? Who protected and looked after him or inherited his immense fortune?

I could go on offering many similar examples. Who supported the acts of aggression against the Arab countries? The United States did.

I am in absolutely no way an anti-Semite, far from it. But, we have been very critical of the wars against the Arab countries, the massive evictions, the diaspora of Palestinians and other Arabs. Who supported those wars? And there are many other overt or covert wars and other similar incidents that I am not

going to mention which have been done and continue to be done by those who want to sweep away sovereignty or the principles of sovereignty, in the name of humanitarian reasons. Of course, that is only one of the pretexts but not the only one as we see in Africa.

The Africans themselves are rightly concerned about tackling the problems of peace in their continent. They are trying to unite. They have a strong sense of unity. They also have their regional groupings and are trying to settle their conflicts. But who occupied and exploited Africa for centuries? Who kept it in poverty and underdevelopment? Who drew those border lines that cut through ethnic groups now separated by them?

With great wisdom, really great wisdom, the Africans, from the time they started emerging as independent states, set out the principle of the inviolability of the frontiers whereby the inherited borders were sacred. Otherwise, a huge number of conflicts would have unleashed in Africa.

The colonial powers created all that. They are responsible for centuries of exploitation, backwardness and poverty. Are we going to resort to a racist interpretation of the reasons for the poverty of those African peoples when it is a known fact that, in that continent, various civilizations had attained remarkable progress at a time when in Berlin, Paris and many other places of civilized Europe there were only wandering tribes? A thousand years before, there already existed a civilization in Egypt, Ethiopia and other parts of Africa.

The United States emerged as a nation only 20 centuries later. What is the cause of that poverty if not the colonialist, slavery, neo-colonialist, capitalist and imperialist system that reigned in the world in the past centuries? Why could those peoples not benefit from the fruits of science and human progress? Those who exploited them for centuries are guilty for this.

At one time, they also had China semi-colonized and humiliated. It is common knowledge that, in the past century, they used cannon shots to open up Japan's ports to world trade. It is a known fact that the British empire sent its troops to conquer a portion of Chinese territory and, in a coalition with other European powers and the United States, it sent troops as far as Beijing. Thus came the opium war, invasions and wars to sell opium.

Now they want to invade countries where poppies are planted, and not by the country but by a number of hungry and sometimes desperate people. Impoverished nations, aware of the huge market for drugs in the United States --one which was not created by a Latin American country or any other nation in the world-- plant poppies or coca for the colossal consumption of the industrialized and rich countries.

The question could be asked of how much drug per capita is consumed in the United States of America and in Europe. Possibly much more than in Brazil or Argentina, Uruguay or Paraguay, Central America or Mexico, or even in Colombia itself. The market is up North. It was a disgrace for our countries, those where the crop arose, that there was such a high demand in the United States.

This is important because yesterday was hardly the first time that they publicly tried to promote the doctrine that they have been elaborating against sovereignty, that they have been discussing among themselves and with other NATO members, the one they have been advancing little by little, step by step.

The so-called global threats are also considered enough reason to fully justify an intervention. We will quote four of those threats: drugs, terrorism and the possession of weapons of mass destruction. Of course, this has nothing to do with them. They can have all the weapons of mass destruction they want, thousands of nuclear weapons, as it is the case of the United States. They can also have rockets that, with great accuracy, they can position anywhere in the world and a whole arsenal of laboratories devoted to producing biological weapons --they have used biological weapons against us-- and any other kind of weapons. They have reached agreements among themselves to eliminate chemical and biological weapons. But, at the same time, they develop other even more deadly weapons.

According to the doctrine described, a Third World country could have a nuclear weapon and, for that reason, become the target of a sudden air strike and invasion. And, what about all those who possess nuclear weapons? It is a matter of wars, either pre-emptive or punitive, to preserve the monopoly of nuclear weapons and other kinds of weapons of mass destruction which are very far from being humanitarian.

The fourth reason is the massive violation of human rights.

Up to now, the great promoter, the great patron, the great fatherly educator and supporter of those who committed massive violations of human rights has been the United States of America. Massive destruction of the infrastructure and economy of a country, as it has just happened in Serbia; genocide using bombs to deprive millions of people of crucial services and their means of life; genocidal wars like the one launched against Vietnam. They were the culprits.

I am not talking of the time when more than half of Mexico was conquered. I am not talking of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a terrorist experiment into the effects of nuclear weapons on cities where hundreds of thousands of people lived. I am talking about things that have happened since World War II. Who were their allies? Why did the Franco government in Spain remained in power for almost 30 years after the end of a world war against fascism that lasted six vicious years and cost no less than 50 million lives? Because he had the support of the United States which wanted to have military bases there. Who supported utterly repressive governments in countries like Korea? They did. Who really supported the massive carnage of ethnic groups like Chinese, for example, or of communists or left-wing people in Indonesia? They did. Who supported the horrendous apartheid regime? They did.

There has been no bloody and repressive government, no massive violator of human rights that has not been their ally and has not been supported by them. In the case of Duvalier --to give you an example closer to home-- who supported him? They did, until one day when they intervened in Haiti to overthrow him, for humanitarian reasons.

Do you realize what I mean? It is the development of a whole philosophy aimed at sweeping away the United Nations Charter and the principles of national sovereignty. The doctrine can be divided into three categories of intervention: humanitarian interventions due to internal conflicts; interventions due to global threats, which we have already described, and interventions due to external conflicts, to which are added the very confusing Yankee concept of "diplomacy supported by force". This means, for example, that if Colombia cannot solve its internal conflict --a difficult battle, of course-- if it cannot achieve peace, for which many are working, including Cuba, this could become a reason for intervention. At the same rate, if it does not succeed in eradicating drug cultivation it could be the target of an armed intervention.

I have tried to collect precise information on what is happening with drugs in Colombia, how encompassing the phenomenon is and how many hectares of drug are planted. Some have told me that there are about 80,000 hectares of coca, just coca. It has been growing. And some have talked to me about up to a million people working in the cultivation of coca and the harvesting of leaves.

I asked about coffee and they told me that there are problems because the salary of a coffee harvester can come to 10 or 12 US dollars while those who harvest the coca leaves or clean the plantations, weed the crop and do other similar activities, earn five or six times higher wages.

What I do not know yet is whether they fertilize it although that is, seemingly, a natural process. Perhaps, with a certain regime of rain and climate the coca plant fertilizes itself. Maybe it is like the marabú. The marabú is a very harmful plant for agriculture here, terribly aggressive and thorny. It reproduces and spreads easily. It cannot be used to feed the animals but it is a leguminous plant, so it does not need to be fertilized. It feeds itself from nitrogen through the nodular bacteria in its roots. Apparently, something similar happens with the coca.

Can you imagine what the situation must be like in a country where a million people in the rural areas can earn 50, 60, 70 US dollars in the coca fields while the same working day in other crops would bring them 10 US dollars at most? And, at harvest time --and coca can be harvested three times a year-- it is only a matter of pulling off leaves.

Trying to learn about this I have almost become an expert by now, just by asking questions. I say: "Tell me, explain to me, are they all small plantations?" They tell me: "No, there are large estates of hundreds of hectares and plantations of as much as thousands of hectares". I ask: "How much earns, for example, somebody with a hectare of coca?" "That one receives the least," they say. The others receive more: the ones who turn it into the basic paste, the other ones who refine it and, fundamentally, those who market it. Before that phase, many airlines, transport companies and firms providing other services obtain high incomes. When such a cancer is introduced in a society it becomes a real tragedy, in every sense, because the danger that internal consumption may spread is multiplied.

We are striving against it ourselves. You were saying that tourism should not affect culture or damage the national identity but it can sometimes damage health, if prostitution, for instance, is promoted.

When I talked to you about the US dollar, I told you that it circulates here. The measures that we have had to take made its circulation necessary. Well, but that dollar neither escapes the country nor becomes volatile. It is a dollar that circulates here whose value decreases every day. It has to do with a historical stage. At the moment, we are not so interested in lowering its value, rather, depending on the resources available, we are interested in raising wages in Cuban pesos, without letting the peso lose its current parity in US dollars.

It is good not to be a part of the International Monetary Fund!

The truth is that the circulation of the US dollar, coupled with the unrestricted entry and exit of a lot of visitors, can encourage the drugs trade and the cultivation of drugs which forces us to be very watchful.

Taking back the problem of Colombia, somebody told me: "One hectare of coca can provide an income of up to 4,000 US dollars." I said: "And if it were planted with corn, in that tropical and rainy plain?" You all know that the Colombian plains are not a corn-growing area. The corn-growing area is a bit further North, at the same height as the central plains in the United States and also at the height of Europe, although corn originated in this hemisphere, in Mexico, Central and South America. Therefore, I assure you that planting corn there without fertilizers or anything would hardly give the peasant one ton per hectare. A ton of corn on the international market is worth more or less between 100 and 150 US dollars. In Argentina and other places, the export price has decreased to 90 US dollars. We have to import them so, we know the cost of each of these grains.

I have not talked about wheat which cannot be planted there. Corn, for example, can be planted for self-consumption or to market it. How much is the producer paid for his ton of corn that the middleman then sells in the market? On the other hand, if custom barriers are also removed then the grains produced abroad would enter freely. That is what the United States wants from its trade agreements with Latin America.

In that case, the Colombian would eat American corn because it is produced cheaper than Colombian corn. They obtain six, seven or more tons and cultivation there is very mechanized. They produce it cheaper than the French. The French should be careful about American corn because they will put it in France at a lower price than it costs to produce a ton of corn there. That is why agricultural issues become the great obstacle for the free-trade agreements.

The Yankees are reckoning: "I will give you some industrial advantages as soon as possible. I will give you an X number of years for you to start reducing the tariffs on the grains that I will export until the day that entry is unrestricted." We know very well what is going to happen: these countries will end up

with no corn farming, then corn will be very expensive and to the extent that the price rises there will not be any other corn but the American's.

But, how much would our farmer earn after changing a hectare of coca for one of corn? Instead of 4,000 US dollars, he would earn whatever he is paid for his corn by a middleman or by a chain of middlemen. It might be 60 or 100 US dollars. So, where are the possibilities for alternative crops?

They have already created a drug culture. They have alienated millions of people with their voracious market and their money-laundering. It has been the United States banks that have laundered the vast majority of the funds coming from drugs. They are not just a market but practically the financiers, the drug money launders. Moreover, they do not want to spend money to really eradicate the growing of coca or poppies, although they invest billions in repressive procedures.

I think that, theoretically, there might be a solution but it would cost billions of US dollars, even if those resources were rationally invested. What are they going to do with the men who live massively on drug growing. Are they going to be exterminated? They could also go there themselves and invade that country on account of "a global threat" even if the drug problem cannot be controlled with simple repressive measures. Of course, invading it would be madness because the heat in the forests of the Colombian plains would finish off their soldiers used to drinking Coca-Cola on combat missions, cold water at every hour, ice cream of the best quality. Actually, Vietnam is a well known case in point and they get more and more used to every kind of luxury and comfort.

The mosquitoes and the heat would almost suffice to finish them off but they could cause a real disaster if they intervened there to eradicate drugs. Certainly, that would not be the kind of war to use B-2 bombers because the coca crops cannot be fought with laser-guided bombs, smart missiles or planes. There, they would surely have to go in with ground forces, either to wipe out an irregular force in the jungle or to eradicate crops. On the other hand, since they describe guerrilla warfare as terrorism, insurgency and a great risk --practically a global threat-- there we have a country with two possible pretexts for intervention. I am talking of two categories: internal conflicts and drugs. Two causes for intervention according to the theories they are trying to impose.

Would an invasion or the bombing of Colombia solve the internal conflict? I wonder if NATO could solve that problem now that it is establishing the right of action beyond its borders. In principle, they agreed on that during the 50th anniversary celebration. Along such lines you can imagine so many cases. Is there anybody who believes that could be the solution?

I know, through opinion polls, that in their desperation at the violence and the problems in the country, not a few people in Colombia itself --actually a number of people worth taking into consideration-- have expressed support for the idea that, if there is no other solution to the violence, it be resolved through the intervention of an outside force.

Of course, the fighting and patriotic tradition of the Colombian people should not be overlooked. I am sure that such an act of madness against a country like Colombia, in the style of what they did in Serbia, would be a disaster, absolute madness. But, no one knows, really, since International law, the principles of respect for sovereignty and the United Nations Charter no longer provide a reliable coverage and that could be a decision taken on their own by a Mafia armed to the teeth, which is what NATO has become.

The rest of the countries, ours included, cannot feel safe. Not at all! And there is the risk of insane actions that cost millions of lives. I am sure that an invasion of Colombia, that is, the implementation of this doctrine in Colombia would cause millions of deaths. That is a country where violence is rampant, where 30,000 people meet a violent death every year --a figure that is well above the average of violent deaths in the rest of Latin America.

Now, would an invasion by NATO forces solve the problem? No, but then, they would come say as Solana did: "Diplomatic or peaceful ways were exhausted."

As Latin Americans, we should try to cooperate with Colombia, with the country itself (APPLAUSE), to help it achieve a fair peace, one that would benefit everybody.

There are formulas that, in my view, are so complex and difficult that I would tend to call them utopian because there is not one war there but three or four. There are significant guerilla forces with political motivations but divided into two organizations fighting on their own. There are extremely repressive paramilitary forces at the service of the landowners and there are the forces of the drug growers, people armed to shoot down the crop-spraying helicopters, for example.

Colombia's situation is really complex. I have mentioned it in the context of the theories that I have described and the consequences that they might have.

We should all help! It should never be said that the diplomatic and peaceful ways have been exhausted, the discussions should never stop. A process has already begun. Venezuela wants to cooperate. We cooperate to the extent of our possibilities and so do other countries. Colombia's domestic problems have no solution other than a political and peaceful settlement. This is crystal clear to me. Let us help the Latin Americans find these solutions!

If one day we had a federation of Latin American states, if there were unity, we would give up many of the attributes of our sovereignty. Then, domestic order would become the prerogative of a supranational state that is ours and does not belong to a foreign superpower that has nothing to do with us (APPLAUSE) or to a powerful Europe.

We want to involve in friendly relations with Europe, also in trade, science and technological development but it also has absolutely nothing to do with the domestic problems of our countries. We would surely be capable of solving our domestic problems ourselves politically, without bombings, destruction and bloodshed. We do not need anyone to do it for us.

Why are they going to demolish the principles of the United Nations? I could begin by exploring some examples. It would occur to me to ask how the NATO doctrine would apply to Russia, for example, if a conflict broke out there like the one in Chechnya or various other conflicts that might arise from the fact that the state is made up of numerous different ethnic groups that also have different religious beliefs. Also, an internal conflict might arise among the Slav Russians themselves because some are communists and others are liberals or neo-liberals or some position in between. And then what? Would they invade Russia? Would they unleash a nuclear war?

Russia was a superpower. There used to be two superpowers. Today, there is one superpower and one power. What makes the difference? That the power can destroy the superpower three or four times over and the superpower can destroy the power 12 or 14 times over. In other words, quite a few more times over. But just once is enough, is it not? Can they go about applying such theories?

At the UN Security Council they have had intensive discussions. A draft resolution has been passed by that body. If you would bear with me, really, I could tell you some even more interesting things. But I want to finish with this, I mean, the matter of the doctrines that are being developed. That is why I asked the previous question.

I will ask another: If there is a conflict in India, it might be a border conflict --right now, there is artillery fire on the Indo-Pakistani border-- can the doctrine be applied there? Would it apply where there are more than a 100 million Pakistanis and, on the other side, almost a billion Indians, from many different ethnic groups? Can such a deranged theory be applied in countries that, furthermore, possess nuclear weapons? I do not know whether they have 50, 100 or 20 nuclear weapons. But just 20 would be a huge amount and the war could become nuclear. How many would die enforcing this American formula inexplicably supported by Europe? Total madness!

I will go a bit further: What if the conflict is in China, where there are different ethnic groups, in a country with a population of more than 1,250 million and with an extraordinary war experience, courage, fighting spirit. This is the case with every people, of course, but the Chinese were forced to confront many acts of aggression and difficulties.

We also remember that during the Korean War as [General] MacArthur's troops were approaching the Chinese border and some were already talking about attacking the other side, a million Chinese combatants crossed the border and reached the present demarcation line. One million! Of course, the number of fatal casualties could have been --I cannot guarantee the exact number-- perhaps, up to 200,000 Chinese soldiers. The United States already had all sorts of bombers and other weapons but the human masses could not be contained and they would not have been able to achieve victory, not even with nuclear weapons.

How would the doctrine apply in China, a country they are constantly harassing with campaigns about human rights as they do with our own country? There have been some significant problems there widely exploited by Western propaganda. But, imagine how confused those young people were who took as a symbol the Statue of Liberty, as it stands at the entrance of the port of New York. They must have been widely alienated to choose what has become a symbol tainted by the hypocrisy and voracity of an empire that goes around suffocating and insulting every idea of justice and true human freedom.

It is striking that this happened in a country with a culture thousands of years old and a much more solid identity than that of any of us, that is, a more integrated country, more distant from the West in terms of language, culture, traditions and many other things. It is not a country like ours, which has a lot of ingredients from Western customs and culture, but a country that has often been humiliated and where an extraordinary social revolution eradicated age-old famines. It is a country that in barely 50 years raised to its current prestige and the impressive place it occupies in the world.

How would they solve it? If they feel like it, the imperialists and their allies could declare any incident that occurs in areas of China that have been turned into bones of contention a massive violation of human rights. Buddhist Tibet, for instance, is mentioned and certain Muslim minorities in the north-west. We closely follow, through the international press dispatches, China's constant harassment by the West. Any domestic political problem could be considered a massive violation of human rights. They constantly go to great lengths to provoke it, moved by petty propaganda purposes and the stupid attempt to do with China what they did with the USSR. They simply fear that great nation.

Of course, the Chinese are wise politicians --that is why people talk about the Chinese wisdom-- and they do not easily make the mistakes that a team of serious and skilled leaders should not make. They would not invade a country to take it over. They are, indeed, very zealous in matters relating to their own affairs. They strictly follow the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. For many years, they have been demanding the return of Taiwan to Chinese territory but they are ready to wait peacefully for a hundred years. Their mind set is that of a millennia-old patience, so they talk about what they intend to do in the next 50 or 100 years as if it were tomorrow or the day after.

Any of these problems might be an excuse to send B-2 bombers, all sorts of missiles and laser-guided bombs. Some of the principles of their absurd and arrogant doctrine could serve as an excuse to attack China. Is that not an insane proposition? I am no longer talking about Colombia, I am talking about China, I am talking about Russia or India or the conflict between India and Pakistan. We will see if those in NATO and their Marshall --their leader or Marshall Secretary General-- are really excited enough to solve the conflict in Kashmir with a "humanitarian intervention".

I ask: What is that doctrine for? Why think about such methods? Whom are they going to apply them to? Only to smaller countries that have no nuclear weapons and to the rest of the world, wherever there might be a problem among the many that constantly arise.

Such formulas do not apply to us, just in case anyone thinks that we are concerned by what might

happen to us. Putting aside all conceit or boastfulness our country, which has endured such hard trials, can sing The Pirate's Song: "And if I die / What is life? / I already gave it up / when the slave yoke I shook off/ as any brave man ought."

I still remember some of those lines which were in The Hundred Best Poems in Spanish Language. Nowadays, you do not see such books around much but at a certain time when we did not have many works of literature I took to learning such poems almost by heart and I still remember some of them.

We, Cuban revolutionaries, can say: "And if we die, what is life?" And there are a lot of us, Cuban revolutionaries. We know that no true revolutionary, no true leader of the Cuban revolution would hesitate to die if our country became the target of an aggression. (APPLAUSE)

I will say more, because we deeply analyze all their technology and their tactics and there is no war, big or small, and no criminal and cowardly bombing that we have not studied well. Aside from the fact that it will not be easy for them to find an excuse.

They are always inciting and scheming against Cuba, trying to stir up conflicts inside our country. They go to great lengths to create any kind of internal conflict that would justify monstrous crimes like they have just committed against the Serbs.

Those irresponsible people who in our country put themselves at the service of the United States and receive a salary from the U.S. Interests Section are really toying with sacred things. They are toying with the lives of our people and they should be aware of that. The empire, knowing that Cuba would not give in, longs to accumulate enough forces with its blockade, its propaganda and its money to create internal conflicts. We are not talking of family remittances, we are talking of the United States government money. It has been publicly recognized there as well as in its own laws or amendments. They have recently declared that any American can send money to any Cuban. They have practically said: "Let each American buy a Cuban." And I said to myself: "We should raise the price (LAUGHTER) since there is one Cuban to 27 Americans."

They authorize family remittances but no more than 300 US dollars every three months. Cuba is the only country in the world with such restrictions. No, they do not raise by a dime the amount authorized for people of Cuban descent to send remittances to their relatives but they invite Americans to send remittances to any Cuban. Perhaps, they will work through the telephone book, I do not know. They also give money to whatever small group or faction, to anyone. In their eagerness to stir up conflict, they have so declared and they have passed legislation about sending money. It is a serious matter. Extremely serious!

In their arrogance and disdain, they do not accept that Cuba is resisting. It is so hard for them to accept that they would like to vanish us from Earth, like they tried to do with Serbia. It is just that here it is different, or rather not. I would absolutely not question the Serbs' heroism and courage. Absolutely not. A country is not braver than any other, what makes people brave are their convictions and certain moral values. (APPLAUSE) It can sometimes be a religious conviction that leads a person to martyrdom, or it can be a political conviction served with religious fervor.

For example, our doctors who are in very isolated places in some countries of this continent or in neighboring Haiti show a heroic attitude, the morality of missionaries, like true priests working for human health, pastors at the service of life, of values. I was reading today that some journalists had left for Haiti in order to inform the people and the relatives of those stationed there on the work that they are doing in the remotest places. Many of those doctors are women, some with children here, and they work in faraway places which can sometimes only be reached after three days of walking through swampy ground.

Some people have been contesting or rather trying to create unrest about our doctors in one of those fraternal countries. They are disputing our doctors' degrees. Ah!, but as soon as they ask, we will

humbly and immediately forward them the curriculum vitae of each of those doctors and the grades they obtained in school, at the university, the specialist courses they have done, the surgeries they have performed, the lives they have saved. It would be wonderful to send the records of every one of them!

Our doctors are working there with humility and dedication in compliance with agreements signed by the governments. They are not there as an imposition. The moment any government tells us that their presence is inconvenient or that it creates any political problems, we shall immediately withdraw our doctors. This is it. But they work as missionaries, it could be said like true heroes. We know this very well because we are informed of what they are doing and we talk at great length with some of the people in charge of their activity when they come here. Our doctor's work is the expression of their own values.

We can say with satisfaction that if the World Health Organization wanted to implement a health program, or Europe, even our neighbors up north if they wanted to salve their consciences a little and were ready to contribute with the medicines, we would be able to send 10,000 doctors wherever they are needed in Latin America. We also have doctors in the north of Sub-Saharan Africa, working there for free in an ambitious health program.

If this country --I have to say it again-- if we sent one out of every three doctors on such missions, the two remaining would carry out their work and health care in our country would not be hurt. And, if we sent one out of every three we would still be the country with the highest rate of doctors per capita among all countries in the world --higher than industrial Europe, higher than Sweden, higher than Denmark and, of course, higher than the United States, Canada and other great industrialized nations. Yes, a poor and blockaded country can also do things. This is a fact. And we have more teachers too and possibly more art instructors per capita than any of those countries.

I state the same thing about sports because we have about 30,000 qualified physical education and sports teachers, most of whom are university graduates. They know not only how to palpate a muscle but they know what muscle it is that they are palpating because they have a university education.

We also have another small merit, which is the highest number of gold medals per capita in the Olympic Games. And we shall continue to have them, even if the games go professional because we have just proven that our modest amateur sport can compete with good professional teams. It is obvious that a small and poor country can do things. They are wrong to underestimate us.

Really, this is not bragging; on the contrary, we prefer to discuss our mistakes, to criticize ourselves but after seeing the insolence, the demagoguery, the lies and the slanders against Cuba we have no other choice but to talk about some of the things we have done. Anything else would be foolish, I mean, boasting here about what we have done. We are rather very critical of ourselves for not having done more and for not having done it better. That is how it is. I am saying it in all honesty. I think that one of the reasons for the resistance and the survival of the revolution is that the leaders here are never complacent. We hope and we dream that they will continue the same way in the future as well. And, of course, we have great confidence in our people.

I was telling you that if it occurred to them to carry out one of those mad actions against us, they would not only find the people I have described but one with a sound political culture and important, sacred values to defend. This fight has been going on for many years and I can tell you that we will not ask for a truce. No truce! (APPLAUSE) The people in charge of this Revolution would die rather than make a single concession of principles to the empire. (APPLAUSE)

Rather than relinquishing a single atom of our sovereignty, those of us responsible for leading our people in peace and in war, in every endeavor, we would not survive capitulation. We are deeply committed to what we have done all our lives and because we feel it very intensively, because our commitment rests on convictions and values, we would stand right under the bombs rather than

surrender.

In such an adventure it is not difficult to die. There is no greater glory! At least we would be setting an example for others! The Yugoslavian people set an example. They resisted the most unbelievable bombings for almost 80 days, without hesitation. We knew about the spirit of the people there through our diplomatic representatives.

I do not intend to criticize anybody. I respect the decision that any government might take and it does not escape me that decisions are difficult under certain circumstances. But, for us they will not be at all difficult because we solved that problem a long time ago. If they were to do that here, they would be defeated, as simple as that. Not even a genocide would give them victory because there is a limit to their killing capacity, and I firmly believe that, if the aggressors had had to extend those bombings for 15 or 20 more days, the world and the European public opinion would not have accepted it. A few days before the famous peace formula was imposed on Yugoslavia, the world opinion was increasingly turning against the aggressors, I have a large number of newspaper articles reflecting exactly that.

Of course, nobody would have been able to impose that on us because we have been here alone, all by ourselves, all alone for a long while, near the mightiest power that ever existed. So, who could come here to impose it on us?

Nobody could. And we do not need any mediator. Honor is not negotiable! Our homeland is not negotiable! Dignity is not negotiable! Independence, sovereignty, history and glory are not negotiable! (PROLONGED APPLAUSE)

There would be no negotiating with us for a cessation of bombings. I will advance that if they started bombing some day, they would have to continue for a hundred years if it was a war from the air they wanted to make; or they would have to stop dropping bombs because as long as there were a few combatants still alive in this country, they would be forced to send ground troops. I would like to know what would happen if they did that.

As I was saying, we do not do anything foolish that they can use as an excuse. You can see how patient we have been with that [Guantanamo] base. It is a small piece of Cuban land and we have every right to have it back. The people here have had quite a radical view of the issue. Not us, we are patient. We say: "No, it is much more important to liberate the world than to liberate that beloved piece of land that we will never give up." They would have loved it if we had started a strong national movement claiming the base in order to have an easy pretext for their adventures, to deceive US and world public opinion, to say that we have attacked them. Before concluding, I will show you some things in this respect. But they have never had the remotest chance of saying that Cuba has been hostile or aggressive toward the American military personnel stationed there.

What can they say about us on humanitarian issues? That we have not a single illiterate, that we have not a single child without a school, not a single person without medical care. That there are no beggars here although there are sometimes irresponsible families who send out their children on errands. That is associated with tourism and it affects, if not our identity, at least our honor. There is nobody abandoned in the streets.

What can they say? That we have a massive number of excellent doctors as I have been telling you about. What else can they say? That we can save hundreds of thousands of lives each year in our hemisphere and in Africa.

What did we tell the Haitians? That we are willing to put forward a plan to save some 30,000 lives a year, 25,000 of them children's lives.

What was our proposal to the Central Americans? A plan to save, every year, as many lives as the hurricane took, if it actually took 30,000. That figure decreased later because many that were missing

began to show up. As we said, the lives that could be saved every year could be as many as those taken by the hurricane, if the highest figure announced was true --and that is a conservative estimate. The truth is that, on that program, we were ready to contribute the required staff and we asked that any industrial country, no matter which, contribute the drugs. Why is it that all those spending so many billions on bombs and genocide do not use a little money to save lives?

I told you the other day about how they attributed loathsome things to us and I mentioned a number of them. I told you and I will repeat it now: Not a single person is tortured in this country! Not a single political assassination! Not a single vanished person! Forty years have already passed since the triumph of the Revolution despite all the conspiracies and all the efforts made to divide us, to subvert the Revolution. They have crashed against our people's iron-like unity and patriotism, against their political culture. All this under extremely difficult circumstances.

I am absolutely certain that very few people would resist the almost 10 years that we have resisted after loosing all our markets and supply sources and with a tightened blockade. They underestimated us.

Also, if they carried out one of the acts of madness mentioned, they would be underestimating us and I do not think they underestimate us quite that much, I really do not. I will say no more. We are not defending ourselves here but the right of other peoples who do not have our possibilities or our unity or the fighting capacity that we have as an organized and prepared people.

I already told you, and I am not dramatizing, that we have no need for that kind of new specialist who emerged from this war in Yugoslavia with the category of mediator. They can come only to report that they will proceed to suspend the bombings or withdraw troops or to cease all hostilities. This much we dare say: No weapon has been invented that can conquer man! We are not afraid of those repulsive and cowardly wars where they do not risk a single life! They are nauseating, disgusting but they only make us better socialists and better revolutionaries. That is all. (APPLAUSE)

I was telling you that an important battle was fought at the United Nations. Here is the famous Resolution. They are incorrigible cheats, mediocre and incompetent politicians. I brought some papers but I will just use a few things I underlined.

Well, this is the agreement that was passed, the draft Resolution. Who sponsored it? Germany, a NATO country; Canada, a NATO country; the United States, a leading country and chief of NATO; the Russians are among the sponsors because they reached previous agreements in the Group of Eight but they made a critical speech there; France, a NATO country; Italy, a NATO country; the Netherlands, a NATO country; the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, a NATO country. I counted them and I saw that there were seven NATO countries among the 12 sponsors of the draft in the Security Council --seven countries involved in the aggression.

There was also, Gabon, a French neocolonial dominion and Slovenia, a former Yugoslav republic. This was the first one that --heedless of the constitutional rules set forth when the Yugoslav Federation was created recognizing the right to secession and the procedures to accomplish it-- encouraged by Germany and Austria unilaterally declared its independence avoiding any legal formality. Yes, there had undoubtedly been previous groundwork. On the other hand, it was disintegration time!

One of the republics separated constitutionally through a plebiscite. That was Macedonia, but Slovenia declared its independence on June 25, 1991. In Europe, there were doubts over what to do. Later on came Croatia's declaration of independence, that is, two splits avoiding all constitutional procedures. And this, as our ambassador to the United Nations said, was promoted by some European countries and later unanimously supported by the West.

This is important because when that country emerged --the heroic Yugoslavia that kept even Hitler's troops at bay-- the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia lived in peace, despite centuries-old national,

ethnic, cultural and religious struggles. That area of Yugoslavia, between the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was a battlefield. It is well known story that the Ottomans reached the outskirts of Vienna.

We have been reading a lot of background information and, really, there were people who contributed to the so-called ethnic wars that broke out in the 1990s, people who helped, certainly not on purpose since I do not attribute it to a premeditated and cynical concept but to irresponsible acts. Anyway, they unleashed the disintegration of Yugoslavia and it all began, as I said, with Slovenia on June 25, 1991 when avoiding any legal procedure Slovenia declared its independence and its leaders took command of the troops corresponding to that republic, since every republic had its self-defense troops; they were about 40,000 men. As I understand it, some 2,000 young draftees from the neighboring Croatian republic left for Slovenia. There was practically no combat. There were only such pressures.

The disease began to spread. Another republic, Croatia, did the same. In that case, more violent conflicts broke out.

What happened? These republics could very well have followed the constitutional procedures. Yugoslavia was no longer a socialist country. It was a country that had established all the capitalist and market standards. It was not the old Yugoslavia of [Marshall] Tito and of a later period. It was a capitalist country with the multi-party system officially recommended by the West.

A very influential factor was that in 1981, ten years before this happened, Slovenia's GDP was five times the per capita GDP of the rest of Yugoslavia. They began to feel that the poorer republics were a burden and they were encouraged to move toward closer economic integration with the West. Some supported them --as I said-- some gave them weapons at that stage, even before they had declared independent. One of their leaders has admitted this much.

On June 21, 1996, in a program on the Ljubljana television specially devoted to the fifth anniversary of independence, President Kucan conceded that "Slovenia was already building up its army before 1990 in anticipation of a war." In the same interview, the Slovene president added: "The European Union played a great role in making possible the breakup from Yugoslavia."

This is real history. I do not want to offend anybody nor do I mean to hurt anyone. I abide by the facts, the historical facts that we have been looking at again together with some information we already had when this conflict broke out.

It was irresponsible and truly criminal to encourage and support the disintegration of that country which had achieved the miracle of living in peace for 45 years.

There were different factors bearing on the situation there, both economic and of a nationalist character, and there were a lot of people in Europe who understood the potential consequences. I have spoken with European leaders, European politicians who understood that this was very risky. However, one day two countries, specifically Germany and Austria, officially recognized Slovenia and Croatia and, immediately, the rest of Europe followed, thus beginning all sorts of conflicts that we now know about.

There were difficulties in Kosovo where there was a strong nationalist movement. The Albanian Kosovars or Kosovar Albanians were already a large majority. I remember that even when [Marshall] Tito was alive, many Serbs had migrated to Serbia because they felt unsafe. In 1974, the Constitution was amended and Kosovo was granted autonomy --I have not read that Constitution-- but that is precisely the Serbs' birthplace. There are many historical sites there that they value highly. Some of those sites have suffered with the bombings. But I do not know whether that Constitution --that I am trying to obtain-- which granted autonomy to the Kosovo province, gave it the right to secession, as it did with the republics. Anyway, it was not declared a republic but an autonomous province. I assume that it did not have that right recognized and that, in any case, there would have been a process, like in Macedonia.

What began in 1991 has continued until today and nobody knows when it will end. There were all sorts of wars and blood was unquestionably shed from both sides. That is the truth, as I see it.

Now then, instead of starting to supposedly straighten out those countries, it would have been better if they had not been disrupted, if they had not been disorganized. Of course, living standards were largely different in Macedonia and Slovenia, very different. There was a Constitution by virtue of which the Socialist Federal Republic was established. It had the word "socialist" before but more or less after the perestroika it was removed, that much is clear. Its present name is Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. That is, the name of what is left because what remained was Serbia and Montenegro since Kosovo was not a republic. What is left is called the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, is it not? I have some papers here but I will not be looking for the exact name. We even have here the UN Security Council resolution: "Federal Republic of Yugoslavia," that's it. The word "socialist" was removed long ago.

The government may call itself socialist because you know that there are many governments where there are socialist parties but the countries are not socialist. There are socialist parties in many places and in the government, but this does not mean that the country is socialist or that it plans to be so. They are countries with free enterprise, neo-liberalization, pure capitalism.

As for Yugoslavia, our position is based on principles, both with respect to Serbs and with respect to Kosovars. We defend their right to autonomy. Moreover, we defend not only their right to have their own culture, their religious beliefs, their national rights and feelings but also if one day the Kosovars of all ethnic groups and the rest of Serbia decided to separate peacefully and democratically, once an equitable and just peace has been achieved and not one imposed from outside by means of war, we would support them.

No one knows what will happen with Montenegro. During the war Montenegro behaved the best it could for NATO's taste. It volunteered some criticisms, some opposition, and perhaps that is why its quota of bombs was much lower than Serbia's. I have read many messages sent by the aggressors to Montenegro encouraging it to secede and it was accorded special treatment during the war. All the bombs were for Serbia.

When the agreement reached by the Group of Eight refers to substantial autonomy for the Kosovars, one could ask: Does it mean the kind of autonomy that Macedonia used to have? We do not know but, in that case, there would be a peaceful road to independence. There are many aspects on which Serbs and Kosovars can agree. It is beyond question that most of the Kosovo population are not Serbs. The Serbs constitute a minority and it is very likely that after this dreadful war Serb civilians will follow the Serb troops out. It is apparent. News have come that they were exhuming their dead because it is part of their traditions to migrate with the remains of their ancestors.

I do not know what they will do. Messages are being sent discouraging a massive migration and violence against the Serbs living there. Those risks exist at the moment. Many are claiming victory but, who is accepting blame for all the factors that led to this situation and all the ethnic conflicts? A horrendous crime they are calling a victory. A victory they would have to be ashamed of because from the moral point of view if we are to talk about victory and defeat, the morally defeated were those who waged a cowardly war and dropped 23,000 bombs over Serbia, some of the most sophisticated, destructive and technologically advanced bombs. What a victory!

Our UN ambassador estimated that the NATO countries' GDP is 1,013 times greater than Serbia's and that the Alliance member countries have 43 times more regular troops. But, regular troops are useless in an air war like it was waged there. The difference was zero to infinite. Bomber planes arriving from the United States were able to drop bombs from great distances without running the slightest risk. It was a war that lasted 80 days and in which 23,000 bombs were launched against a country while the aggressors did not have a single combat casualty. It was the first time in history that something like that happened.

It must be said that this war, of which nobody can be proud, is a cowardly war, the most cowardly of all wars ever waged. The alleged victory was morally Pyrrhic and the war a genocide.

Why was it a genocide? What is a genocide? The attempt to exterminate a population: you either surrender or face extermination. How long were the bombings going to last? They were talking of up to October or November but that was idle talk. We know very well how many European leaders felt. Many newspaper articles were published on the growing discontent and opposition to the bombings in Europe and even in the United States. And there was even greater opposition to ground troops involvement. In my view, NATO was in no condition to continue that bombing much longer. Neither Europe nor the world would have tolerated it. NATO would have broken apart if it had persisted on that path.

As I said that we had three comrades there with a cell phone, working day and night, round the clock, under the bombs and with the air-raid sirens, even when there was no electric power. We always asked them about the morale of the population, about the prevailing spirit. The people there covered the bridges with crowds; men, women and children went there so that they would not be destroyed. That was the case of the last bridge standing in Belgrade.

The NATO planes attacked all the bridges and there were times when it mostly attacked the electrical network. It destroyed virtually all the power plants leaving millions without light and energy. Imagine a house, if they had something to cook, how could they if there was no fuel, no light, no water? All those pumping systems operate with electricity. Take away the electricity and the cities are left without water. Destroy all the bridges and the cities are left without any supplies whatsoever.

When the electrical service, for example, is rendered useless a whole lot of basic services become useless too. Imagine intensive-care units without electricity or water; hospitals without electricity or water; schools without electricity or water; households, medical and educational facilities, all facilities and supplies cut off. So, it was not a war against the military, it was a war against the civilian population.

Then it occurred to Marshall Solana to make a solemn statement, that "electric facilities were absolutely military objectives". No one should be so arbitrary with words, ideas and concepts to justify a genocide. All means of life were under attack. The main workplaces were destroyed so half a million Serb workers were left jobless and it is not known how many more will be. Hospitals, schools, embassies, prisons, Kosovar convoys were attacked. They said that these had been failures.

I remember reading a dispatch about a General in the British air force who, after 15 or 20 days of bombing, said: "Well, it is just that our pilots have been very restricted up to now. Now, each plane will simply go hunting a target." They went hunting targets, whether it was a convoy of Kosovar refugees they attacked mistaken for Serb troops, or a prison where they killed 87 people; also, maternity and pediatric hospitals. There is a very long list of such incidents. Above all, admitting that a bomb might have been dropped by mistake, the destruction of all the bridges and electric systems could not be, and was not, a mistake.

What would have happened if the Serbs had continued resisting? How long could they have prolonged such barbarian actions?

The UN Security Council adopted a draft resolution. Of its 12 sponsors, seven belong to NATO, another is a neo-colony of one of the seven NATO co-sponsors and another one triggered the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991. There is also Japan, a member of the group of the seven richest countries --and this draft was by the Group of Seven-- and the Russian Federation, which took part in the meeting of the Group of Seven plus Russia that agreed on a peace plan and sent its emissaries to Belgrade to submit it and Ukraine, a Slav country separated from Russia although it keeps normal relations with it and very good relations with NATO. These are the 12 sponsors of the draft resolution submitted to the UN Security Council and produced, in this case, by the Group of Eight.

What happened can be seen clearly, in strict chronological order.

Marshall Solana gave the order for the attack and the disciplined U.S. Generals, who were leading the operation, began the attacks on the night of March 24. They were completely certain that the attacks would only last three days. Look at how senseless and shortsighted, irresponsible and poor calculators they were. They estimated that Serbia would immediately surrender after three days of bombings. The fourth day went by, then the fifth, the sixth, the seventh...

We have some interesting documents that might be published some day, various messages in different directions where our role as prophets shows, and the events unfolded exactly as we predicted on the basis of an elementary calculation of what was going to happen. We were familiar with the Yugoslavs' traditions: they fought against 40 of Hitler's divisions and among the countries that took part in that war it was Yugoslavia that had the highest percentage of dead compared to its total population. The Soviet Union had about 20 million, as was always said, with a population of about 250 million. Higher figures were given later but 20 million was the one always reported, a round figure. The Serbs must have had some 1,700,000 dead in that war. I cannot tell you right now how accurate that figure is but I do know that it was the country that suffered the highest number of dead with relation to its population. They fought then using methods of irregular warfare and a concept of fighting with the involvement of all the people.

Right now, the Serb troops are withdrawing from Kosovo with almost all their tanks, cannons and armored vehicles. It is amazing! It is amazing that complete units are being withdrawn, as shown on television, despite the density and the intensity of the attacks launched against them. They were in perfect conditions for ground combat.

I really believe that they should have developed other concepts. I say this in all sincerity. This is an issue to which we have given a lot of thought. They had complete units although this was not a war of conventional Serbian war units against NATO units. They could have used tanks, cannons and whatever they wanted but with the units organized in unconventional ways. Perhaps, or almost certainly, they had them deployed in a way that was absolutely appropriate for the type of war they might have had to wage. We have no information on what they did and how they did it.

We knew beforehand what was going to happen, namely, that they were going to resist. If it had not been for the pressures they came under from friends and enemies alike, which seems to have been enormous, possibly the Serb leaders would have continued to resist. I will say no more. The people would surely have resisted indefinitely. NATO would have had to decide on a ground campaign or else suspend the bombing and in a ground war it would not have been easy for NATO to overcome the growing political obstacles nor would the war ever have ended. That is my point of view.

Well then, the draft resolution by NATO and the Group of Eight was adopted and the bombings stopped. In one of its sections, the resolution adopted reads, and I quote, that the UN Security Council:

"Decides on the deployment in Kosovo, under United Nations auspices, of international civil and security presences," the words seem so harmless, "... and welcomes the agreement of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to such presences." Well, it does not say what presences. International security forces, it does not say whose.

It later reads that it: "Requests the Secretary General to appoint, in consultation with the Security Council, a Special Representative to control the implementation of the international civil presence." The question is who is in command there? The United Nations leads the civil presence, "and further requests the Secretary General to instruct his Special Representative to coordinate closely with the international security presence to ensure that both presences operate towards the same goals and in a mutually supportive manner."

It asks its man to coordinate with the leaders of those troops while still not saying which troops --a civil leadership which is the one under the orders of the United Nations-- and it asks the civil representative to coordinate with the security forces, in case they pay any attention to him.

"Authorizes Member States and relevant international organizations to establish the international security presence in Kosovo as set out in point 4 of annex 2 with all necessary means to fulfil its responsibilities under paragraph 9 below."

It authorizes, they are not under its command. It invites, knowing beforehand who were invited. It is said that many are called but few are chosen.

"Affirms the need for the rapid early deployment of effective international civil and security presences to Kosovo, and demands," a terribly strong word, "that the parties cooperate fully in their deployment." In other words, that the different countries cooperate fully. We are also ready to cooperate if they want doctors but not one soldier because that is not an internationalist or a peace mission. It is an imperialist mission with very specific objectives. We are ready to cooperate to save lives. As for the rest, the decisions taken by each one do not concern us.

It is known, however, that the British will have 13,000 troops in Kosovo --the main forces-- with a British General in command. The number of Americans is unknown. Some marines have already landed in Greece --they will probably arrive in the thousands. The French too, and all the aggressors. The figure of Russians is not public although it is known more or less how many Russians are already there; a press dispatch has brought the news that somebody said that there could be between 2,000 and 10,000. Who is commanding them? We will see because this is a bone of contention.

As to the possibilities for the presence of Russian soldiers, a statement was made yesterday by the current Russian prime minister [Stepashin] which reads: "The armed forces are in such a catastrophic state that the military-industrial complex and the army are barely surviving. We must remember this in next year's budget." What will be next year's budget? Nobody knows. Even if it is catastrophic, they would have to cover the costs of the troops which will come to 4,000 or 5,000. If they get to 5,000, they would only be 10 percent of the so-called security forces.

What is well known is that regardless of who accompanies NATO, it will be NATO that will have 90 percent of the occupying troops under its direct command, and not only its own troops but also the accompanying troops. There will be countries, such as Ukraine, that will offer some soldiers. A Latin American country might offer a small group of soldiers, some young draftees. But, NATO will have everything there in addition to the thousand planes that took part in the bombing.

The Russians will, at most, have a helicopter, a light aircraft to fly from one place to another. (LAUGHTER) The Ukrainians might have some jeeps and maybe even a helicopter. NATO will have everything on air, land and sea and command over everything. The discrepancy now is with the Russians who are embittered, humiliated and threatened, that is the truth. Actually, with that precedent anybody might think that any day now missiles, laser-guided bombs and millions of other things could begin falling on them, especially when it has been admitted that "the armed forces are in a catastrophic state", which does not exclude the fact that the strategic missiles do work and they have thousands of them. Yes, they have thousands of strategic missiles. They are a nuclear power and, of course, all that is expensive.

The UN Security Council: "Welcomes the work in hand in the European Union and other international organizations to develop a comprehensive approach to the economic development and stabilization of the region affected by the Kosovo crisis, including the implementation of a Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe with broad international participation in order to further the promotion of democracy, economic prosperity, stability and regional cooperation."

The adopted resolution does not say: The international community should contribute to rebuilding

everything destroyed there, whether Kosovar or Serb. No, what the NATO leaders are declaring is that the government that made an agreement with them, and yielded to the advise or the pressures of the Group of Eight's mediators, must step down now and appear before the International Tribunal for Yugoslavia where it has been accused.

Not a word about building anything in Serbia. About Montenegro, they do say that it will receive suitable treatment, that it has behaved very well and accepted refugees. But, nothing about Serbia. Before, they dropped bombs on them for having such a government and now, for the same reason, they will not help them to feed themselves, and that after all the destruction. Look how noble, how generous and humanitarian the United States and NATO are! Do you not think? What is the fault of children there aged from zero to one, 10, 15 years old? What is the old people's fault? What is the fault of the pregnant women, the retired, ordinary men and women who have lived through such a traumatic experience?

Often, the most traumatizing about a bombing is the explosions, the noise. The Nazis, who have been quite well imitated in this merciless war --and I say this from my heart-- used some terrifying sirens in their Stuka planes when dive-bombing their targets. I remember that war. I had just turned 13 when it began but I was interested in all the news and I read about it. I remember the war almost as if it were yesterday. In their combat planes, they had some sirens that made a hellish noise aimed at sowing fear, panic and disarray while they dropped their bombs, which were not at all like those of today. They were toy bombs compared to those dropped by NATO over Serbia.

The terror of bombings produces lifelong trauma, much more so in a child of three, four, five, six, seven, eight years, who remain day after day and every night under the noise of the sirens and the explosions. Would any doctor, any psychologist dare say that those children and millions of people will not endure a lifelong trauma with the terror they lived under for 80 days from the air-raid sirens plus the hellish roar of the combat planes engines as they flew at ground level, which is much more deafening than the Stuka sirens and with much more powerful explosions than those of the Nazi bombs?

Yet, they must now be punished: not one dime to rebuild a school of those they say were mistakenly destroyed, not one hospital, not one power plant. What are they going to live on? Well, now it is a hunger bombing. An agreement was signed with certain leaders who will handle things and they will know what they are doing. But, I consider it a crime to deny even a handful of wheat to the Serb people after dropping 23,000 bombs and missiles on them. Then, if the man presiding Serbia remains in government for three months or six or if he simply stays longer, a year --I do not know, nobody can foretell-- the people will be subjected to a genocidal war for a year, all the civilians, all those who are in no way responsible for any ethnic cleansing or for the masses of refugees.

There were 20,000 refugees but when the massive bombings began people withdrew for many different reasons: out of fear or because they were afraid of being evicted or suppressed, or maybe because they were terrified by the bombings or afraid of dying. You can never say it is only one reason. What is the fault of the children, the civilians, the hundreds of thousands who were left jobless and other workers, the peasants, the farmers, the pensioners, the civilian population in general? What is their fault, really? It is a crime to keep them waiting until the government changes. To make them wait for a month is 30 times more criminal and a year would be 365 times more criminal. Each day that they are denied food is a crime.

I remember that during our liberation struggle we had an enemy force under siege, with no water or food because we had cut off their water supply and they had run out of food. Our combatants handed their cigarettes and their food to the exhausted soldiers who surrendered because a sense of chivalry had been created in the revolutionary troops and there was a policy in place for treating the enemy. If a policy like that does not exist, a war cannot be won. If you mistreat your enemies, if you torture them, they will never surrender. They will fight to their last bullet.

We had a strict policy in that sense: after 24 or 48 hours, they were set free. At the beginning, they fought very hard. Later, when they realized they were lost, they parleyed and the officers were allowed

to leave with their pistols. We did not want to make them go hungry nor could we give them what little food we had. At times, we called in the International Red Cross, as we did during the last enemy offensive when we took hundreds of prisoners in two-and-a-half months of combat. During the war, we ended up with thousands of prisoners that we had taken in combat. Entire units were besieged and we treated them gently because they were our arm suppliers.

We did not receive arms from anybody during our short but intense liberation war while fighting against quite powerful forces but it did not occur to any of us to surrender. At a certain time I only had two rifles and other comrades were left with five. We were two armed groups when we met again, after a significant setback, to resume the struggle. Comrade Raúl's group had five rifles and four men and my group had two rifles and three men. In total, we were seven men with seven rifles but we were not discouraged. Twenty-four months later, we attained victory.

This is not self-glorification. It was a real situation that we had the privilege to live through and I cannot help but remember it at this moment. When there is a will, when men are not discouraged, when they believe in what they are doing, no setback will make them back down!

As I said, our supplier was Batista's army, organized, equipped, trained and also advised during all that time by American officers. It was not an army to look down on, not at all. They believed themselves to be the masters of the world. We had to endure great needs but we gave our enemy prisoners our food and even our medicine.

We have the right to ask ourselves about that Serbia destroyed by NATO, if the West is going to refuse a handful of wheat to a pregnant woman in a country that is said to have surrendered and accepted every condition and still more conditions than those demanded by the Group of Eight? Is that correct? Is that fair? Is that humanitarian? I needed to ask those questions.

I already told you that they were arguing over who was going to lead that security force. Of course, there is in the first place the speech delivered yesterday in the United Nations by the U.S. ambassador. Actually, that Security Council agreement does not say under whose command the security forces are going to be. It only calls for them to go and it is known beforehand who can go and who will go.

Now the Yankees are interpreting the agreement. There comes the time for interpretations! This resolution establishes an international security force in Kosovo. Now here is the catch. In his speech, the United States representative says, among other things: "The authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia accepted that KFOR," I do not know how to pronounce it but that is the acronym --I do not know if it is in English or in what language-- "the Kosovo International Security Force will operate with a unified NATO chain of command," this was just yesterday, after the resolution, "under the political direction of the North Atlantic Council, in consultation with non-NATO force contributors."

It is NATO and under the direction of the North Atlantic Council, in other words, the NATO Council. Who gave them permission? The Security Council? No. This demand was contained in the agreement of the Group of Eight meeting of May 6. Because, on May 6, when they saw that the bombings were continuing through March and all of April, forty-odd days had passed, three days many times over and there was not the least sign of capitulation, they began to worry. Many of those in NATO began to make up things and they put up a Group of Eight meeting that took place on May 6, that is, 44 or 45 into the bombings, and they adopted certain agreements. The Russian prime minister had still not been changed but before that change took place somebody had been appointed as special envoy of the Russian government for the so-called peace efforts.

I am not criticizing that, of course. I think it was very appropriate that the Russian government did everything possible to try to find a political solution to the conflict. That conflict could not have a military solution and they were not in any condition nor they had any possibility to help the Serbs militarily, only with nuclear weapons and that is out of the question. Nobody would agree to that. That form of support would have seemed to us absolutely insane and impossible and it would have been a

worldwide suicide.

But, it was obvious that the Russians did not even have the possibility of sending a plane with ammunition to Serbia. Nothing could be sent by land or sea. Hungary, a new NATO member is there on the border. There are other similar countries there. Nothing could be sent by land; nothing by air; nothing by sea. They had nothing but their nuclear weapons left and, let us say, political support, the firm denunciation of it all.

There was the Agreement of the Group of Eight under which a peace plan was adopted, a peace plan that after thorough discussions, was signed on May 6 and adopted or accepted by the Yugoslavs on June 3, that is, almost a month later. After its approval in May, many efforts were made: [President] Ahtisaari, from Finland, comes and goes, the same as Chernomyrdin. There were American envoys and Russian envoys until June 3, when during a visit to Belgrade the Russian envoy and the President of Finland convinced the President of Yugoslavia to accept the formula.

It has been said that the President of Finland went out and the Russian envoy once alone was finally able convinced the President of Yugoslavia. Some day we shall know what they said and how they said it. So, I am not criticizing the Russian peace efforts, that is quite different from the question of Yugoslav leaders accepting the conditions imposed on them. I have my personal view of the different things that might have happened. I will just say that in spite of its immense power, NATO's position was already weak because you cannot go on bombing and killing every day before the eyes of the whole world that is watching a live show of what is going on. There comes a moment when the killing becomes too scandalous and intolerable.

But nobody there talked about who was going to command the troops. That would be discussed later. Until the last minute, when the resolution was about to be submitted to the Security Council, the Russians opposed the idea that the troops taking part in the aggression be allowed there --that was also the Yugoslav position-- and that there should be a single command under NATO. The mediators had to consult the Chinese, and the Chinese had reasons to be irritated by the method, the procedure used by NATO, the attack on the Chinese Embassy, all those things.

The Russians agreed to discuss the draft first in the Security Council and then discuss the organization and distribution modalities, the question of security forces in Kosovo. Giving in first to something and then discussing another important issue is not good tactics. You give in and when you start discussing then they ask for more. No, sir, take a few more minutes to get things straight before supporting the agreement, before renouncing the right to veto and voting in favor.

I know of Russian leaders who have made serious and honest efforts to find a solution to a really complicated and dangerous situation. They have weakened themselves a lot politically and people do not respect them like before. That is why nobody knew who was going to lead the troops.

But the Americans rapidly found a solution which is found in the speech delivered by the United States representative in the Security Council. Look, they were discussing in Macedonia with the representatives of the Serb troops in Kosovo. They discussed for a whole day but did not reach an agreement. They returned for a second day of discussions and used the situation to request a false permit. And now a new finding which was disclosed yesterday: the role of NATO had already been authorized.

It was not the Group of Eight or the United Nations or the Russians who agreed. They discussed with those Serb military chiefs in Macedonia and, according to them, the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia accepted that KFOR operated with a unified NATO command under the political leadership of the North Atlantic Council, that is, the Yugoslavs gave them permission. There is evidence that they have made fools of the Russians. A cable revealing this was broadcast today showing that the Russians did not like it at all.

I am abusing your patience telling you a story but, after all, your presence here is voluntary while I have

no other choice but to finish when I can, when I am through with what I have to say. (LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE) Do not get any ideas, I do not make any extra money for this job which requires an effort. What I want to do, since they brought me here --it is your fault, I did not volunteer-- (LAUGHTER) is to complete the ideas I want to present which can be useful to our people, too. I cannot forget them, they would like to know many things and this is an opportunity to tell them although it might take some time.

They solved the problem. Who? The vanquished. Nobody else authorized the Americans and NATO and the British Generals who discussed with them, of course, following strict orders from Marshall Solana, with due respect to the new Minister of Foreign Affairs of Europe, the pre-united Europe. He is a pre-Minister of a supranational pre-authority. These are the tittles, more or less, strictly speaking.

Right away, the United Kingdom takes the floor and here is another underlined excerpt: "The authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Serb Parliament have now accepted the principles and demands set out in the G-8 statement of May 6 and in the Chernomyrdin-Ahtisaari paper."

"This resolution and its annexes clearly set out the key demands of the international community." They are the international community --NATO is-- to which Belgrade must now oblige.

"They also provide for the deployment of an international civil presence, led by the United Nations, and for an effective international security presence to re-establish a safe environment in Kosovo (...) That is why NATO has made clear that it will be essential to have a unified chain of command under the political direction of the North Atlantic Council" --not the United Nations-- "in consultation with non-NATO force contributors. This force, with NATO at its core, will be commanded by a British General. The United Kingdom will provide the leading contribution, at least 13,000 troops."

"To have come this far, to have secured Belgrade's acceptance of all our demands, required a huge diplomatic effort. My government pays tribute and expresses its gratitude to Mr. Chernomyrdin, President Ahtisaari and Mr. Talbot for their outstanding contribution. The positive engagement of the Russian Government, via its Special Envoy and in the preparation of this Resolution by Ministers of the Group of Eight has been vital." They start by saying that the Yugoslavs authorized NATO to lead the security forces.

Were the Russians happy? Ah, no! I did not bring that cable, unfortunately. But today there were news from Europe that a Russian force of about 500 paratroopers who were in Bosnia in over 20 armored vehicles, trucks and some tanks moved forward, crossed over Serbia and were marching towards the Kosovo border to await there the entrance of different forces, that is, the solution of the problem of how forces were going to be distributed and, of course, they have said that Russian forces will not accept NATO command.

They must have been irritated when, without saying a word to anybody, 24 hours before the resolution and the American interpretations, they sent a column of paratroopers in armored vehicles who have not crossed the border, so far. Undoubtedly, this is an answer to all these interpretations. They hate accepting the idea and I suppose that domestically, in their own country where all this has been very traumatic, it must be very difficult for the Russian leaders to accept that their troops there --whether they are 2,000, 4,000, 5,000, with or without a salary-- be under NATO orders. It is only tricks and more tricks on the part of those who unleashed that dirty war. That is how it has all been.

These are the two main leaders, of course: the United States and the United Kingdom. They are also the two countries bombing Iraq every day. Nobody remembers this but it happens every day. It has become a habit, a daily shooting exercise to preserve their right to bomb every day. That is something they do on their own, and with all these problems nobody even remembers.

We had denounced that Yugoslavia had been turned into a shouting range.

In a declaration on June 1st, that is, just nine days ago, before the government of Yugoslavia accepted

the Group of Eight plan, Cuba issued a Declaration including different items. Among other things, reference was made to what was going on there day by day, each target, the attacks. That Declaration said inter alia:

"Yugoslavia has become a military testing ground. Planes taking off from the United States drop their deadly load on the Serb people, refuel in midair and return to their bases non-stop. Missiles are air-launched at a distance off the range of anti-aircraft. Unmanned aircraft are bombing hospitals with patients inside, households with people inside, bridges full of pedestrians and buses with passengers."

Anybody could say that it was an uncalled for denunciation on our part. But it so happens that yesterday --June 10, about nine days later-- in Washington, a France Press cable by Benjamin Kahn, reported:

"NATO bombings in Yugoslavia against military targets and civil infrastructure allowed the US Air Force to test several high-tech weapons, upgraded since the 1991 Iraq War.

"Intelligent bombs designed to set their trajectory in flight were used in the Gulf War but the new upgraded versions were used in Yugoslavia and in a bigger number than ever before.

"Computer-guided bombs allowed the United States to kill thousands of Yugoslav soldiers from far away, without risking their pilots or ground troops."

And it goes on:

"Analysts affirm that the massive use of new Cruiser missiles and other state-of-the-art weapons will continue growing as a result of the search of the US military to upgrade their capacity to attack beyond the reach of enemy defense.

"Another breakthrough since the Gulf War was the building-up of missiles noses with titanium to allow them to run through thick layers of cement and explode causing greater damage.

"The new generation of B-2 Stealth bombers --the most expensive of all-- also made their debut in Yugoslavia.

"At a cost a 2.2 billion dollars each, B-2s of a super-sophisticated technology, manufactured by Northrop Grumman, Boeing and General Electric, flew from a base in the state of Missouri and eluded the Yugoslav anti-aircraft defense and dropped many satellite-guided bombs in each flight."

Today there are new facts. A dispatch reported that in three sorties such bombers hit 20% of their targets; 20% of the targets hit by bombs and missiles. They have been talking about that.

I believe that Mr. Clinton went today to this air base to congratulate warmly and fraternally the super-heroes who, always out of reach of enemy weapons, killed hundreds or thousands of persons or caused who knows what sort of destruction. An exercise in new technology, and by air. They did not land midway. B-52s, flying straight from US territory, dropping tons and tons of bombs. They had to be tested using real fire against real targets.

"Bombs dropped by B-2 JDAMs --also new-- use a GPS orientation system weighing 450-900 kilos and costing 18,000 dollars each." Rather cheap for an aircraft that, according to the Washington reporter, costs 2.2 billion. With 2.2 billion, according to the programs I have been telling you about, you can estimate the hundreds of thousands of lives of children, and people in general, in Haiti, in Central America and similar places who could be saved in a few years. You can almost estimate how many lives can be saved in one year. (RECKONING) This can be more than 400,000. Saving a child's life never costs more than 500 US dollars: from a child who dies for lack of a vaccine worth 25 cents to another who dies from lack of rehydration salts, etc. Let us say 500 US dollars, an exaggerated figure. With 500 million US dollars you could save almost 1 million people, if there are doctors and medicines.

With 1 billion US dollars, 2 million children can be saved; with 2 billion US dollars, 4 million children; with 2,2 billion US dollars, you could save the lives of 4.4 million children. Everyone knows, including the World Health Organization, that about 12 million children die of curable diseases, 10 to 12 million children. I do not recall exactly the latest figures.

Almost half of those dying in one year could be saved with the cost of a single aircraft. It would really be humanitarian to invest the cost of one of these planes in saving the lives of almost 4,5 million children by conservative estimates! Because in the programs we are designing doctors work for free. We pay our doctors here, with our currency. We do not have to spend US dollars because they are paid in our own currency and recently all doctors wages have been raised. As for NATO, it is surely setting a humanitarian record!

It is very sad the way they manipulate people with lies and demagoguery. Actually, you should not leave without these few facts I still have here to share with you.

I say that there are three basic ideas. I have spoken of the Group of Eight. I already said who tabled the motion: seven out of 12 belonged to NATO, those I mentioned.

But, what is the Group of Eight? The Group of Eight is a company, a small club of the super-rich. On account of their major influence and money, the United States, Japan, Germany --tremendously rich countries-- are there and all the others and they set monetary policies for the International Monetary Fund. They dictate measures for coping with crises and make certain arrangements if there is a crisis in Southeast Asia or in Russia or if there is any danger that it may spread to Latin America.

The Seven Rich meet annually. But with the collapse of the USSR and the improved relations with Russia, once in a while they invite it. From Russia alone, the West --mainly Europe-- has taken out 300 billion US dollars. Of course, they did not go there to get them at gun-point. It was not necessary either because so skilful business people have cropped up there that they have become multimillionaires in a few years.

Under the reforms introduced by the West, Russia has suffered terribly. Its economy was cut by half; its defense considerably weakened. For granting her a 20 billion US dollar credit, the West imposes restrictions and demands many conditions that Russia cannot meet, some of them humiliating. What are 20 billion US dollars in Russia so badly in need after the August crisis? And spread throughout a whole year even if it is only one fifteenth of the hard currency that wound up in the West.

But not only that. The ruble has been devalued twice. Before, a ruble equaled a US dollar and had a higher purchasing power in Russia than a dollar. In a few years its purchasing power was 6 thousand times lower, that is, you needed 6 thousand rubles to buy 1 US dollar. All those who had savings, pensioners and others, lost them. As a result of devaluation, an entire nation lost its money.

They set a new parity and a new ruble. They took off the zeros, divided it by 1,000 and then, with 6 rubles you bought 1 dollar. Therefore, when the crisis began, those who had saved rubles found that their rubles instead of being rated 6 to 1 dollar were worth only 24 to 1 dollar, one fourth. Once again those with savings had lost their money. This has happened not only in Russia but in many other countries as well. Latin America is tired of living through these experiences, through the repeated devaluations I already mentioned. The currencies become volatile capital.

Where is the person who having lost all his savings in his own country twice would want to have his cash in the national currency again, even if it pays a 40, 50 or 80 percent interest rate. On the other hand, no economy can withstand that. It is impossible, because the mechanism recommended by the theoreticians of neoliberalization in the International Monetary Fund to the countries is an increase in the interest rate, so that people do not take away their money. Which budget can withstand 80% rates?

It is impossible. Besides, even if interest rates are raised to those levels, there can be a 400 to 500 percent devaluation, incomparably higher than the increased rate. What do savers or people with revenues do? They exchange their money for dollars. No bank can resist that. How much money would a country need to keep the ruble-foreign exchange convertibility? An endless amount of dollars.

How many years will pass before the nationals of a country suffering this problem can have confidence in their currency again? And there goes the IMF demanding free conversion and lots of other unpractical things which cannot be implemented. A few estimates suffice to identify the problem, they change everything to dollars, stuff them inside a mattress and take them out of the country.

So the country is now very impoverished and heavily dependent on foreign credits. Yet, I do not believe it must necessarily be like that. A country like Cuba that has gone through a hard experience --without fuel, steel, lumber, anything and has survived without a dime from any international agency-- knows that with its huge resources that country would not need any credits. As simple as that. I shall say no more. Just that if we had those resources we would be growing at a two digits rate. Without anything and despite everything, including the blockade, we are growing and this year we shall grow from 3 to 4 percent, approximately.

We have the right to imagine what could be done. The revenues of most of our exports are spent just in fuel because the Revolution took electricity to the most distant places, to the mountains. Ninety-five percent of the population has electricity although it was less than 50 percent at the triumph of the Revolution, and oil was worth 7 US dollars a barrel and with 1 ton of sugar you could buy 7-8 tons of oil. Then, after the collapse of the socialist camp, oil prices climbed tremendously and with 1 ton of sugar we could only buy 1 ton of oil.

We do not have the immense Siberian forests, oil and gas fields. We do not have a significant steel industry and machinery either. If we only had raw materials and today's experience, because we must add that we have learned to be more efficient and make a better use of our resources, the Cuban economy might grow perhaps 12 or 14 percent.

It is my conviction, and this is the first time I say this in public, that that country can save itself. It does not have to depend on Western credits, sooner or later its leaders will understand that. But, undoubtedly, today it depends on credits.

I mentioned the Group of Eight. The seven richest countries in the world, six of them NATO members who unleashed and took an active part in that war, the other one is not a NATO member but is the main strategic ally of the United States in the Pacific: Japan. I do not intend to criticize Japan. We have good relations with that country. When we were hit by a hurricane after a severe drought, they spontaneously offered food relief to the most vulnerable populations worth 8 million US dollars, with which 30 thousand tons of rice were bought. That is a gesture we appreciate very much. I limit myself to the presentation of facts.

The group of the seven richest countries in the world except Japan, which is not a NATO member, took part in the attack on Serbia. The eighth country, Russia, is ironically the country that has become poorer in less time. Its per capita GDP is at Third World levels.

It is now an impoverished, indebted country depending on Western credits. Still, I am not suggesting at all that these were the reasons for the sad role it played in the Group of Eight. I believe that they were genuinely concerned about the crisis unleashed, the danger of this adventurous war and the impact on its own population, a mirror image of what might happen to them some day. They must have grown aware of all the influence and strength they have lost.

Actually, I would admit that their position is right in as much as they advocate a political solution of conflicts and the United Nations Charter. Their speech in the Security Council was critical and positive but, of course, that is the Group of Eight which was no longer inviting Russia but this time they called it,

met with it and, in was in those circumstances that they participated.

I think it was this morning that I read some news on the rapid advance of a column of Russian paratroopers heading for Kosovo. It caught NATO by surprise; in fact, it caught everybody by surprise. It was an undeniable answer to the deceit of negotiating permission with the Yugoslavs so that NATO would head security forces in Kosovo. It was not a United Nations decision, it was not discussed with Russia. That was the humiliation, deceit and trickery.

In short, NATO attacked and got stuck. They invented a meeting of the Group of Eight and fabricated a peace plan. The peace plan which excited so many discrepancies and differences with the Russians was finally adopted and taken to the Security Council while the issue of who was in command of that force remained unresolved. But, the question had already been solved. Right there in his speech, the United States Representative informed that they had permission from the Yugoslavs to take command of the Yugoslav province of Kosovo. That is the way the matter was handled. I think that everything is quite clear.

I want to say something else. We started delving as deep as possible in the history of that region, its past and recent history, and we have put together some interesting information. There is one in particular, however, that has greatly struck our attention. It was denounced yesterday by our UN Ambassador: when Hitler invaded Yugoslavia he set up a fascist government in Zagreb which included Croatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and a great part of Voivodina, almost to the doors of Belgrade.

The fascist regime of Ante Pavelic enforced the so-called Three-Thirds Doctrine. What did it mean? One third of the Serbs were to be deported, another third assimilated and forcibly converted to Catholicism --the official religion of the country (Croatia) because the others, the Serbs, were Christians too but from another church, the Orthodox Church rather close, in general, to the Catholic doctrine although with evident tensions between them. The last third would be annihilated. That doctrine became the political orientation of the State machinery which started organizing all three things with unequally effective results.

Many of the converts were finally annihilated since deportation was not easy. Thus, physical extermination became the most general practice. Amazing! For us it was a discovery, a holocaust, a true holocaust of huge magnitude.

In terms of the total Serb, not Yugoslav, population at that time it is possible that they annihilated (I only say that it is possible, because I still have not done the exact reckoning, someone should do it) a higher percentage of Serbs as compared to the total Serb population living in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina than the percentage of Jews annihilated during World War II, vis-à-vis their total number. A more detailed study would be required. This holocaust has been hidden. The West never wanted to mention it.

We have tried to learn as much as possible about the author of the research contained in this small book [Shows it]. He is a journalist who works with many humanitarian organizations. He was raised as a Catholic and not in the least close to Marxism-Leninism or Communism. Looking for materials we found this. We are collecting more information. Some of his articles have been published and the book is certainly well written. It contains a lot of interesting data.

Now what do Croat and Serb writers say? Croat writers acknowledge that there were 200,000 victims, that is, those who were killed under the fascist Three Thirds Doctrine.

What do Serb writers say? They speak of 1 million people killed.

What do more reliable sources say? That they were 400,000 to 700,000.

What does one of the admittedly most reliable sources, the British Admiralty Archives, have to say? Do not forget that the United Kingdom was an ally of Yugoslavia at the time taking part in operations in the

Balkans and their archives are considered important, serious sources. Raising the issue may perhaps awaken interest so that better informed people can speak up on the it. The British Admiralty Archives set in 675,000 the number of civilian Serbs killed, including many peasants and people of all ages and gender who were coldly murdered in concentration camps or in the places where they lived. Whole villages were wiped out. That was the figure used yesterday by our UN Ambassador. But there are other interesting data. I suspect the number of victims to have been higher.

There is a population analysis based on 1941 population data of three territories --Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina-- their different cultures, ethnic groups and nationalities living there. Although among Bosnian-Herzegovinians, Serbs and Croats one cannot actually speak of ethnic differences because the three nations are ethnic Slavs. There is even a Serbo-Croatian language. The difference is rather cultural, religious and national. A single ethnic group may have several nations. In Latin America, besides the language we share many ethnic traits. The Dominican Republic and Cuba --just to mention an example-- belong to the same ethnic group and are two independent nations.

According to statistics, in 1941 when there was still no war, how many Croats lived in that territory? In that territory the population was 3.3 million. Forty years later, according to the 1981 census, how many Croats were living there? 4,210,000, that is, an almost one million increase.

Muslims, who are Slavs too but of the Muslim religion: In 1941, there were 700,000; in 1981, there were 1,629,000 (more than doubled).

Serbs, how many Serbs were living in that same territory in 1941? 1,925,000. How many after 40 years, according to the 1981 census? 1,879,000, that is, approximately 45,000 less. Based on these facts, people who have analyzed population, customs, habits, growth, etc. have estimated that in that holocaust 800,000 to 900,000 Serbs died.

All of us have heard of Oswiecim and other concentration camps. Some of us have had the possibility of visiting them and having a terrifying vision of what those concentration camps were. Now we find out, or we are told, that there was an extermination camp called Jasenovac, the equal of Oswiecim in Poland. In Jasenovac lie the remains of hundreds of thousands of Serbs as well as thousands of Jews, gypsies and people of all ethnic groups. People say that the biggest Serbian city after Belgrade lies there, below the ground.

How many of you knew about it? Did anyone of you know or had anyone of you heard about this? We are going to keep on researching. Could you please raise your hand if you knew it. (SOMEBODY RAISES A HAND). Good, tell us. (ONE OF THE DELEGATES SAYS THAT A BOOK ON THIS SUBJECT WAS PUBLISHED IN SERBIA AND TRANSLATED TO SEVERAL LANGUAGES, BUT THAT IN EUROPE PEOPLE ARE GENERALLY IGNORANT OF THIS CROAT-NAZI FASCIST ALLIANCE AND THE GENOCIDE THEY COMMITTED).

Who wrote that book? (HE SAYS THAT HE BELIEVES IT WAS WRITTEN BY TWO SERBS).

This one I have here, from which I took the information we are going to research deeper into --the fact that Croat writers themselves acknowledge the figure of 200,000, is significant-- was written by Josep Palau, an ethnic Catalanian journalist. Since 1982 he has been involved in many international activities linked to European peace movements and has been a representative of various non-governmental organizations. He has also been a United Nations consultant.

I asked our ambassador in New York if he had any information because we had suggested to him to buy this book (Shows it). We sent him the references but in a bookstore he was told that it would take six weeks to get it. Right away, yesterday, we e-mailed him a copy. He had the whole book there. Then he told me that he had read another very interesting article by the same author who is considered one of the most knowledgeable in the history of the Balkans and, in general, about these problems. We do not know anything else. That is why I asked, in case any of you knew.

It is understandable that Yugoslav leaders avoided digging into the issue. It is hard to do so when such a horrible thing has happened. When there have been century-old conflicts, undoubtedly digging into this type of problems would have run against the aim of building a solid federation, a united and just state, a peaceful society.

One could ask why the West does not speak of this holocaust. It is particularly important now when they have been dropping thousands and thousands of bombs on that same nation. To this we would have to add that these are only those who died in the territory of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina because the fascist government imposed by Hitler covered more territory, including part of Voivodina. However, it seems that there is information only on the three aforementioned territories, not Voivodina.

We need to calculate the number of those who died in the territory ruled by that government and those who died in parts temporarily occupied by Italian fascists or Hungarian fascists.

The carnage must have ended by late 1942 because in 1943 there were many liberated territories, the guerrilla force was stronger. I will try to gather information to know what percentage of the population died in concentration camps at that time. I do not mean in combats but in concentration camps and killed in cold blood.

A holocaust and no one talks about it, why? There are sad and painful stories of the more recent massacres and ethnic cleansing, and I do not doubt that they did take place. I have not been there or seen it, nor am I going to ask for the papers. It is enough to know a bit about the history of hatred and real conflicts.

But I know too that during the 45 years that the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia existed there was peace among all those ethnic groups. [Joseph B.] Tito himself was an ethnic Croat but he knew how to win the love of the Serbs and the Serbs were actually the backbone of the resistance. It is understandable that in Tito's time there was not much talk about the matter. Today, in a split-up Yugoslavia and when in one part of the country a crime such as this has been committed, it is worthwhile making these truths known.

I must say that it is not my intention to incite nor blame anybody, least of all the people in that country. I do not intend to blame Croats for this. It would be like blaming the Germans for Hitler's massacres of Jews, gypsies and many others who died in concentration camps, in the systematic efforts to coldly exterminate an ethnic group, a nation, a multiethnic population or a single ethnic group.

But a holocaust of such magnitude is tremendously important. Blaming the Croat people would be like blaming the Italian people for the crimes of that clown named Mussolini. I cannot think of calling him anything else because that is what he was to a great extent and he killed many people, invaded, waged war, sent troops to the Soviet Union. It would be unfair to blame any people for the crimes committed by a fascist system. I want to make this clear, honestly. I am not blaming anybody, I simply rely on historical facts.

Something else must be said: The Jews who suffered the holocaust in Germany and elsewhere were very friendly to the Serbs and very grateful to them because the Serbs saved the lives of many Jews. It is even said that the US Secretary of State, on her way from Czechoslovakia sought refuge in Serbian territory and there she received help and support from the Serbs. They played a role, fighting heroically against Nazism. And I reiterate that our stance, the one we hold and shall hold, is based on principles.

If you have a chance, you can read the speeches delivered by our UN Ambassador. Our position on Kosovo is very clear there. Not only now, but 12 days after the bombings began, when as a direct or indirect consequence --surely, in my opinion, in the overwhelming majority of cases as a direct result-- of the bombings, all sorts of conflicts must have triggered or worsened, we offered doctors to a religious Catholic community involved in assisting refugees. They told us about the tragedy there and we offered to send up to 1,000 doctors. Twelve days after the conflict began! This is not something new said a

week before Cuba spoke in the United Nations. We did not say it publicly because we left it to them. Eventually, several weeks ago, we also said it publicly.

Likewise, when the Americans who occupy a base in our territory informed us --they usually do not do it-- rather than request permission they informed that they would bring 20,000 Kosovars, in violation of the terms of the agreement under which they stay there, an agreement which has been violated by all possible means, but at least this time they had the decency of telling us, perhaps they thought that we would say that they should not bring the Kosovars but we told them: "We absolutely agree that you bring them. We are ready to cooperate in everything. We can offer our hospitals, water services, all the help we can give them."

Later, perhaps they thought things over. Because it was really disgusting to unleash a war which, in its turn, would unleash a colossal migration, a human drama and bring those people from Albania to a naval base in a tropical country, a long distance away. I believe they finally brought 2,000 to a camp in their own territory. Out of the 1 million, with a generous and humanitarian spirit they have assisted a little over 2,000 refugees, Great Britain another handful, I believe that 0.8 percent the two of them combined or some other rather negligible number of refugees.

We said that we agreed, that they would be welcomed in the occupied Cuban territory. We offered medical care and we reiterate it now. That was our clear and categorical position: respect for their cultural, national and religious rights and support for their autonomy. We went even further, and possibly many Yugoslavs do not understand this, or many Serbs do not understand this well, but we admitted the idea of independence provided all Kosovo ethnic groups attained a fair peace and the Serbs in other territories of that republic reached an agreement peacefully and decided to do it. Yes, I say that it has to be peacefully and mutually agreed.

I believe that such a possibility exist. Yet, I do not think we should interfere with this delicate issue. We have stated our position. We have done our duty. We do not do things to make friends or enemies. Sometimes we hurt friends and make enemies at the same time. But there is something much more important than any temporary advantages: seriousness and honesty.

I have criticized the Europeans with the words I have used without having any feelings of animosity against them. But one day I will be able to demonstrate that I warned them very precisely, and only seven days after the attacks began, I warned them of what was going to happen exactly. I apologize for preserving and not declassifying this material.

One of the big European mistakes was that instead of working with moderate forces, they worked with the most extremist called by them fearful terrorists just a few months ago. It was only in 1998 that the movement went from a few hundred armed men to over 15,000 to 20,000 armed men. Now we have to find out what the famous CIA did, how many it trained, with which weaponry and what tasks it gave them. What nobody doubts is that this war practically had a time-table. I believe that the greatest chance for peace was in supporting moderate groups and not extremist groups, called terrorists shortly before. They use any term, any adjective.

This is the last idea I want to share. Why should we be so concerned about this policy, this onslaught on sovereignty, this attempt to do away with the principles of the UN Charter? Why are all these theories invented, these doctrines I mentioned, so many pretexts for humanitarian intervention or against global threats? As I was saying, there is something called diplomacy supported by force which is another concept. What else will follow?

We have had bitter experiences with the behavior of US political leaders. Once in a while they elect someone with a religious ethic. I would dare mention a case in point: President James Carter. I cannot think of Carter waging this type of genocidal war. But we have known a few U.S. presidents of whom the same cannot be said.

We have just sued the United States for 181 billion dollars, I already told you a bit about it. I hope they give you a copy of our legal demand. I think you had one in your briefcases, but just in case, for the benefit of those who have not read it since you have not had much time, I will brief you about it. In those pages there are two things, two major cases of cynicism described. In the lawsuit we said: "The unquestionable historical truth about these events and the cynicism and lies that have invariably accompanied all American actions against Cuba can be found in the original documents of the time, produced by those who, from within that country, planned the policy of aggression and subversion against Cuba."

The plots against Cuba and their actions began as soon as we passed a Land Reform Act because U.S. companies owned here estates of 10,000, 50,000 and even 150,000 hectares. We passed a Land Act that logically and inevitably affected their properties and as of that moment their crimes against Cuba began. By August the first terrorist actions were carried out, the first plans to assassinate Cuban leaders, and it was an honor that they devoted a good number of them to me. They started in November 1959. It is right there, in that same section.

Nobody here had spoken of socialism. We talked about socialism on April 16, when we buried the combatants who fell victims of the attacks by U.S. warplanes manned by Cuban mercenaries and deceitfully carrying painted Cuban flags. They even had Stevenson say a big lie at the United Nations when he was an Ambassador, the same official explanation they gave when they said that they were rebel Cuban Air Force planes.

Actually, it served as a warning about something we were expecting. We foresaw an imminent mercenary landing in the attempt to destroy our small Air Force, which they were unable to because our fighter planes were scattered and the base was defended by anti-aircraft batteries. They destroyed part of it, but we still had more planes than pilots and the ones left operational were enough for the time the adventure lasted.

In one of its sections the lawsuit reads: "In this token, it may be illustrative for this Court that, on March 17, 1960, at a meeting attended by Vice-President Richard Nixon --an angel-- "Secretary of State Christian Herter --who was later not elected president-- Secretary of the Treasury Robert B. Anderson, Assistant Secretary of Defense John N. Irwin, Under Secretary of State Livingston T. Merchant, Assistant Secretary of State Roy Rubottom, Admiral Arleigh Burke of the Joint Chief of Staff, CIA Director Allen Dulles, the high-ranking CIA officers Richard Bissell and J.C. King and the White House officials Gordon Gray and General Andrew J. Goodpaster, the United States President approved the so-called "Program of Covert Action Against the Castro Regime" --a number of brutal actions are mentioned before in the document-- proposed by the CIA.

Among other things, that program enabled the creation of a secret intelligence and action organization within Cuba, for which the CIA allocated the necessary funds. In a recently declassified memorandum --they declassified it because almost 40 years have gone by, and it is a standard procedure-- on that meeting, General Goodpaster noted: "'The President" --it is President Eisenhower-- "said that he knows of no better plan for dealing with this situation. The great problem is leakage and breach of security. Everyone must be prepared to swear that he [Eisenhower] has not heard of it. [...] He said our hand should not show in anything that is done."

Serious things were already taking place here. In August 1959 pirate attacks and bombings began, sugar cane fields were set on fire by planes coming from the United States and the ship La Coubre was blown up resulting in the death of 101 Cubans. The meeting had been held a few days before. Actually, that was a formal meeting, especially because the CIA had already suggested my assassination before the end of 1959, on December 11. Not even one year after the triumph of the Revolution! There are other more revolting things and they are here for those of you who have not read it.

This is another declassified document. Nixon was no longer Vice-President nor was Eisenhower President. Kennedy was President and it was after the Bay of Pigs invasion:

"On March 7, 1962, the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated in a secret document: ...determination that a credible internal revolt is impossible of attainment during the next 9-10 months will require a decision by the United States to develop a Cuban "provocation" as justification for positive U.S. military action."

"On March 9, 1962, under the title 'Pretexts to Justify U.S. Military Intervention in Cuba', the Office of the Secretary of Defense submitted to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a package of harassment measures aimed at creating conditions to justify a military intervention in Cuba". See this? They were always looking for pretexts. Some of the measures considered included the following, which were taken to the Joint Chiefs of Staff by the Office of the Secretary of Defense:

"A series of well coordinated incidents will be planned to take place in and around Guantanamo [Naval base] to give a genuine appearance of being done by hostile Cuban forces", one of their alternatives.

"The United States would respond by executing offensive operations to secure water and power supplies, destroying artillery and mortar emplacements threatening the base. Commence large-scale United States military operations.

"A 'Remember the Maine' incident could be arranged in several forms.

"We could blow up a U.S. ship in Guantanamo Bay and blame Cuba.

"We could blow up a drone (unmanned) vessel anywhere in the Cuban waters.

"We could arrange to cause such incident in the vicinity of Havana or Santiago as a spectacular result of a Cuban attack from the air or sea, or both.

"The presence of Cuban planes or ships merely investigating the intent of the vessel could be fairly compelling evidence that the ship was taken under attack.

"The US could follow up with an air/sea rescue operation covered by U.S. fighters to 'evacuate' remaining members of the non-existent crew.

"Casualty lists in U.S. newspapers would cause a helpful wave of national indignation.

"We could develop a Communist-Cuban terror campaign in the Miami area, in other Florida cities and even in Washington. The terror campaign could be pointed at Cuban refugees seeking haven in the United States.

"We could sink a boatload of Cubans en route to Florida (real or simulated).

"We could foster attempts on lives of Cuban refugees in the United States even to the extent of wounding in instances to be widely publicized.

"Exploding a few plastic bombs in carefully chosen spots, the arrest of Cuban agents and the release of prepared documents substantiating Cuban involvement would also be helpful in projecting the idea of an irresponsible government.

"A 'Cuban-based, Castro-supported' filibuster could be simulated against a neighboring Caribbean nation.

"Use of MIG-type aircraft by U.S. pilots could provide additional provocation.

"Harassment of civil aircraft, attacks on surface shipping and destruction of U.S. military drone aircraft by MIG-type planes would be useful as complementary actions.

"An F-86 properly painted would convince air passengers that they saw a Cuban MIG, especially if the pilot of the transport were to announce such fact.

"Hijacking attempts against civil air and surface craft should appear to continue as harassing measures condoned by the government of Cuba.

"It is possible to create an incident which will demonstrate convincingly that a Cuban aircraft has attacked and shot down a chartered civil airliner en route from the United States to Jamaica, Guatemala, Panama or Venezuela.

"The passengers could be a group of college students off on a holiday or any grouping of persons with a common interest to support chartering a non-scheduled flight.

"It is possible to create an incident which will make it appear that Communist-Cuban MIGs have destroyed a U.S.A.F. aircraft over international waters in an unprovoked attack".

"Five months later" --of these sinister, truly sinister variables suggested by the Joint Chiefs of Staff-- "in August 1962" --mark the year-- "General Maxwell D. Taylor, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, confirmed to President Kennedy that no possibility was perceived whereby the Cuban government could be overthrown without direct U.S. military intervention, which was why the Special Group-Augmented was recommending the even more aggressive approach of Operation Mongoose. Kennedy authorized its implementation: "'It's a matter of urgency.'"

1962: October [Missile] Crisis. Some news simply came to the Soviets's attention and to our attention. Not this document I just read, at least, we did not know about it.

But Jrushov was totally convinced. For us it was something we were used to. We were always mobilized on news of a possible invasion. We were not interested in having strategic missiles here. Actually, we were more interested in the image of our country, that it would not look like a base of our Soviet friends.

The decision was made based on our sense of solidarity because before the Bay of Pigs invasion they had sent us many weapons. We had hundreds of thousands of weapons. We had already bought them from the socialist camp and the USSR since that March 4 when La Coubre was blown up. It was in 1960, she was bringing weapons from Belgium. The rest of the time until the Bay of Pigs invasion in April, that is, 1 year and 1 month later, we received dozens and dozens of ships with weapons from the USSR through Czechoslovakia: tanks and cannons, anti-aircraft artillery and rifles.

Very soon we learned how to use them because the heaviest got here during the first quarter of 1960, and when the Bay of Pigs invasion was launched we had weapons taken from Batista's army and some we had bought in Belgium --the second cargo was the one blown up. We did not want to give them any excuse, as in the case of Guatemala where they had used the pretext of a ship carrying weapons from Czechoslovakia to Arbenz's government and blown up the ship. But, by the time of the invasion, we had hundreds of thousands of men trained and armed, thousands and thousands of artillery men to operate those weapons. They were not very experienced but they could handle those weapons and had a fighting spirit.

The Soviets were very, very concerned because they got news of a possible invasion. They gave us the sources, not the most important, not to me. The information they possibly received was incomplete but they did give us the information they extracted from their talks with Kennedy and other high-ranking personalities.

By the time of Bay of Pigs invasion they had sent us not only weapons but they had also made very strong statements and even spoken of the missiles. They were irritated because at that time the Cuban Revolution was like a miracle. They could not have imagined it. It was not imported or promoted by

anyone from abroad. It was truly and fully ours.

The only thing we imported, actually, were the ideas or rather the books from which we got a revolutionary political culture. To this we added some Cuban notions and tailored it to the Cuban reality. According to Engels --I must say this-- ever since the big avenues were built in Paris and a rifle firing five bullets was invented, he considered that from that moment onwards an uprising in Paris or similar places would be impossible.

We had to build our revolutionary consciousness when there were planes, tanks, cannons, communications and many things unimaginable in Engels' days. Since we believed in a number of principles and had a tradition, we conceived the idea of an armed struggle, the strategy and tactics to be pursued.

No Russian had absolutely anything to do with it. No Soviet. Nobody. Nobody sent us guns either. Nobody gave us a dime. Later, there were revolutionary movements in this hemisphere that had tens of millions of dollars. One day I estimated the cost of the Moncada, the Granma and the Sierra Maestra warfare, perhaps I am not too wrong if I put their cost at 300,000 US dollars. So, we can score another point to our favor and say that we carried out the cheapest revolution ever. (LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE)

I am being very candid with you. Yes, we have stood in solidarity with the revolutionary movement. We have not denied it. We may not tell the enemy what we do not want for it to know but we never tell lies. That is for sure, we never tell lies to them, to journalists or to anybody. That is an invariable principle.

I was telling you about the [Missile] Crisis. We knew that the Americans had some missiles in Turkey and Italy, medium-range missiles which are faster than strategic missiles and bombers. There is no doubt that the presence of 42 missiles here gave the Soviets a certain strategic balance. So, for us, who received weapons, support and even the hope that they might fight for us, no matter how much we wanted to preserve a certain image of the Revolution, it was not fair, it was not honorable to refuse an agreement on the question of medium-range missiles. Actually, for us it would have been better to run the risk of not having them, although based on what we know today, the invasion was a sure thing.

By that time, the number of weapons and trained people we had was considerable. We would have been a Vietnam and paid a very high price.

Why did the attack not take place? The Soviet thesis proved its value. We received additional news but we did not pay attention because we were used to such hazards. We had no fear of imperialism or anything like it and we had the experience of our war which was short but intense, therefore, it was the best of schools to enrich that experience. The Soviets were fully convinced, a conviction that could not come out of the blue, without access to documents or other sensitive sources of information.

Looking back at those times, I see that the recommendations to fabricate a pretext date from March 9, 1962.

It is known that the Soviets had some friends or sympathizers in many US institutions taking part in meetings with a lot of people, meetings resulting in lots of papers. They had them. At that time, as I said, we did not know of these documents. But, carefully recalling the story of the contacts, the first time they told us about it, the envoys that came to Cuba, who they were and what they talked about, what they said and how they said it, and the way in which we analyzed it, I do not have any doubts that what they knew came from very reliable sources. I discussed the problem with the revolutionary leadership. In those days Che, Raúl and other comrades were the main leaders, we analyzed it and made a decision.

The Soviets asked me a question, I should say it. They asked me: "What do you think would prevent this invasion?" I told them, and I still believe it: "A Soviet declaration stating that an attack on Cuba would be tantamount to an attack on the Soviet Union." They said: "Yes, yes. But how do we make it

plausible?" That was when they suggested deploying the missiles. Then we started thinking and analyzing among ourselves, and we analyzed it from the angle I told you, in terms of honor and solidarity. The answer was "Yes". That was weeks after instructions had been given to fabricate the pretext for an invasion.

I have to reconstruct that story a bit, inquire about some facts and dates. I already told you about this --I was only going to read what I had here-- and be more precise. Because the moment we signed an agreement on that, we began working really fast. So, by August Kennedy had accepted the plan, adopted the plan and said: "It's a matter of urgency."

We probably prevented a direct invasion at that time. Later, there were rumors of movements of arms and ships, and so on. In July and August there were some rumors because the missiles were arriving --land-to-air missiles-- and a large amount of weapons, modern planes and many other things. The Crisis began after October 20, really. The Soviets were absolutely right. Jrushov was absolutely right. But such certainty as he had would not have been possible without access to the documents and activities in which the United States was engaged. And they had many more resources than we did to obtain that information.

We had some hard information, enough I think and, above all, intuition, we outguessed them. On the other hand, we had a rule: An attack should never take us by surprise. It is better to mobilize twenty times, even if nothing happens, than not mobilizing once and be attacked. We might say that a mobilized troop or country is 20-25 times stronger than when taken by surprise.

That was what happened to the Soviets in June 1941. That happened to Stalin, when he behaved like an ostrich, sticking his head into a hole while the Germans concentrated 3 million troops near the border, tens of thousands of vehicles, thousands upon thousands of tanks, thousands upon thousands of planes. They attacked on a Sunday, when many officers and soldiers were on leave and they destroyed almost every plane on the ground. That story is incredible and we know it very well because we have read a lot about that war and it has helped enrich our experience in many fields.

It was only when the Americans decided to declassify these documents that we learned the details of those sinister plans and their unbelievable lack of scruples. One of those people said: "I don't know anything. You must be prepared to swear that I don't know anything about it." Another one recommended shameful ways to fabricate pretexts to justify a war. The other one accepted. All this is useful today. Other documents will be declassified because there is this procedure, and that has been a contribution --as I was saying-- the declassified documents, in addition to all the evidence we have. Something like the Bay of Pigs is definitely easy to prove. But there is a whole story, from the first to the last man recruited, who did it, where he was sent, the weapons he was given. We took 1,200 prisoners here and swapped them for baby food and medicine. That was the compensation they paid.

Through the declassification process they have put in our hands documents, precedents and facts. Now, we are engaged in this legal battle. I hope that they do not invade us because they consider it a global threat.

I can certainly speak of another global threat, namely, ideas. Clear ideas, all that you have analyzed and adopted. We should all help globalize ideas, help them expand. We should all work the miracle of sending them everywhere, as I said the first day. Those are indeed global threats: speaking, reasoning, thinking, explaining, showing. If in your opinion I have been too extensive, in my opinion I have not.

It has been a pleasant experience to discuss all this with you, and I have told you a number of things, many of which I have exposed for the first time. I have done it with great pleasure, with great satisfaction. It is the least I can do for the honor of your visit, because you have come without any fears and under certain circumstances you need to be brave to come and visit us. I am talking to the Congress delegates. I am talking too --although it is not the same situation-- to the Ministers. Ministers are more powerful, therefore, less vulnerable than you.

For the spirit of friendship we have seen, for your honesty and solidarity it has been a great satisfaction to speak to you for I do not know how many hours --I can hardly estimate the number-- but I can assure you that if I started talking at 5:00 p.m., it is still far from the record. (LAUGHTER) I hope it can be useful!

Thank you (OVATION).

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