

[Speech by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, at the mass rally called by the Cuban youths, students and workers on the occasion of the International Labor Day at the Revolution Square. May Day, 2000. \[1\]](#)

**Date:**

01/05/2000

Compatriots:

We extend our gratitude to the admirable personalities accompanying us today, and our recognition to the workers, students and all of the people filling this square.

We are living through days of intense and crucial battle. For five months we have been fighting restlessly. Millions of our compatriots, almost without exception, have participated in this fight. Our consciousness and the ideas sown by the Revolution throughout more than four decades have been our weapons.

Revolution means to have a sense of history; it is changing everything that must be changed; it is full equality and freedom; it is being treated and treating others like human beings; it is achieving emancipation by ourselves and through our own efforts; it is challenging powerful dominant forces from within and without the social and national milieu; it is defending the values in which we believe at the cost of any sacrifice; it is modesty, selflessness, altruism, solidarity and heroism; it is fighting with courage, intelligence and realism; it is never lying or violating ethical principles; it is a profound conviction that there is no power in the world that can crush the power of truth and ideas. Revolution means unity; it is independence, it is fighting for our dreams of justice for Cuba and for the world, which is the foundation of our patriotism, our socialism and our internationalism.

In real and concrete terms, for 41 years now we have confronted a neighbor located just 90 miles away, the most formidable power that has ever existed in a world that has become unipolar and hegemonic.

This time the struggle has taken on a particularly critical character, as a consequence of the kidnapping of a child. Has he by chance been the only one? No! Many Cuban children have been separated from one of their parents and illegally taken to the United States without the slightest possibility to recover them by turning to the U.S. authorities.

In just the first two and a half years of the Revolution, some 14,000 children were taken out of the country clandestinely, in this case with the consent of their fathers, mothers, or both. These parents were victims of deceit, taken in by a carefully crafted and deliberately fabricated rumor based on a fictitious law spread by the U.S. intelligence services and their agents in Cuba leading these parents to believe that they would be deprived of their paternal rights over their children. The subsequent abrupt suspension by the U.S. government of regular flights between Cuba and the United States left these parents separated from their children, many of whom suffered terribly feeling helpless and uprooted.

On this most recent occasion, a humble father turned to our government for help: his son, who had not even turned six, had suffered a horrible tragedy. Without the father's knowledge or consent, the child

had been taken out of the country illegally as part of an irresponsible and hazardous misadventure organized by an aggressive and violent criminal. As Elián's maternal grandmother Raquel stated upon arrival in New York on January 21 seeking her grandson's liberation, that abusive individual had dragged her daughter into this tragedy.

The boat sank and the boy watched his mother drown. She was an excellent worker, a member of the Young Communist League and the Communist Party, and all those who knew her thought highly of her. She was one of the victims among the 11 Cubans who lost their lives that day. Like many others throughout the last 34 years, they were led to their deaths by a monstrous and bloody aberration known as the Cuban Adjustment Act, which promotes illegal migration and the smuggling of humans. Like millions of people from poor countries on this and other continents, they travel to the United States lured by the ostentatious luxury and extravagant displays of consumer societies.

In the particular case of Cuba, these attractions are enhanced by the tremendous privileges granted by the aforementioned legislation exclusively to the Cubans traveling illegally to the United States from Cuba, which come on top of four decades of a blockade and an economic war as abhorrent as this law. Thus, in spite of the migratory agreements signed by the two countries, Florida is being filled with criminals who arrive by illegal means. Five out of every ten individuals who reach the United States in this way have criminal records that include burglary and other similar crimes.

As it is known, this child managed to survive by remaining adrift on an inner tube for more than 30 hours. The Cuban-American terrorist mob, created by irresponsible U.S. administrations after their own image and likeness, took control of the child as an invaluable poster boy. A corrupt and sinister individual --simply a distant relative who had only seen the child once in his life-- was given temporary custody. Completely under the mob's control, he refused to surrender Elián when his father claimed the boy after he was released from hospital.

Consequently, with their usual tenacity our people immediately began the fight to demand that the child be returned to his father and the close relatives with whom he had always lived.

According to international law and the legal standards prevailing both in the United States and Cuba, the proper procedure would have been to immediately return the child to his country of origin and to resolve any dispute in a Cuban court of law. However, almost 10 days would pass before a response was given to the diplomatic note presented by the Ministry of Foreign Relations demanding the return of the child as requested by the father from the very beginning. By that time, the first public protests had taken place in Cuba, and they have continued up until today.

It is obvious that they underestimated our people, who have not rested a single day in fighting for something absolutely just, and who have conveyed to the American people and the rest of the world their message of pain and indignation over the injustice committed against a humble Cuban family and the terrible crime perpetrated against this child. Elián has endured almost five months of mental torture, psychological pressure and political manipulation. Not even Dante could have described the hell he has been through!

These events aroused the sympathies of tens of millions of American families with children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews of Elián's age. For them, as for the rest of the world, it became increasingly clear that there could be no political or ideological justification for such a barbaric and harsh crime against a child and his father, regardless of their nationality.

The Miami terrorist mob and its allies from the extreme right in the United States have accused us of politicizing the case, when we have actually been fighting against this crime through peaceful means. Not a single window has been broken at the U.S. Interests Section, not a single stone has been thrown at that building, not a single American official or visitor has been harassed, not a single U.S. flag has been trampled on or burned in our streets.

I wonder what the U.S. government would have done if a similar situation had been created with a barely six years old American child kidnapped in Cuba and subjected to the appalling treatment this child has sustained in that country.

Throughout almost five months --from the time the child was found off the Florida coast-- inconceivable things have happened and all kinds of abuses and mistakes have been made. Despite their knowledge of the situation, until very shortly before the boy was rescued, the various branches of the U.S. administration showed little concern over his mental health and the scandalous public exhibition and manipulation of which he was a victim, or something even more reprehensible: the physical dangers he was facing.

The chief of the commando force involved in the rescue operation recently stated that the resistance to the raid was perfectly organized and that there were numerous armed men around the house where the child was being held captive, just as the Cuban government had warned the State Department and publicly denounced between March 22 and April 22.

The last seven-point proposal sent by the Attorney General to the child's father, at close to 10:00 p.m. on Friday, April 21 --approximately seven hours before Elián was freed from his kidnappers at 5:00 a.m. the following day-- contained three points that I did not want to read at the mass rally in Jagüey Grande where we commemorated the painful episode of the Bay of Pigs mercenary invasion. I felt they were simply too grotesque and so I opted for the 24 four-hour truce of which I spoke, in recognition of the decision finally adopted by the Attorney General, although we remained profoundly concerned about future events. Those points were:

"2. Saturday morning Elián and Lázaro's family will fly to Washington on a USMS (United States Marshall Service) plane under the supervision of the USMS. DOJ (Department of Justice) will transport them directly to Airlie House. The child will be guarded by USMS.

"3. During the residence at Airlie, Elián will live with Juan Miguel, who will have full authority over Elián except for any condition of parole or other limitations imposed by the INS such as departure control. Upon Juan's arrival at Airlie House, the AG (Attorney General) will parole Elián into Juan Miguel's care. Lázaro's family will reside at Airlie House in separate quarters.

"4. The parties will remain in residence at the site while the CA (Court of Appeals) 11 injunction remains in effect, or until the AG in consultation with experts determines it is appropriate to change the arrangements.

Nothing could be more humiliating, or more closely resemble the imprisonment or kidnapping of Juan Miguel with his wife and two sons. It was the beginning of a new stage in the psychological torture of the whole family, even worse than that sustained by the boy in Miami.

Those who have seen Marisley's hysteria on television and know who the sinister Lázaro really is, and also all the honest psychiatrists, fully understand what this absurd and impossible cohabitation would have meant for Elián and his family. This is precisely what the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) was demanding. It was such a proposal that led to Juan Miguel's almost suicidal decision to immediately leave for Miami with his wife and son to personally rescue Elián.

But, those crazed counterrevolutionary ringleaders were so stupid that they opposed this proposal, even though it was exactly what they themselves had been demanding, except that they wanted it to take place in Miami, and not in Washington.

The well-known Congressman Bob Menéndez, a lobbyist and close ally of the Miami mob, together with an assistant under-Secretary of State spent Friday, April 21, desperately searching for a place similar to Airlie House in the Miami area.

These facts I have related to demonstrate the shameful lengths reached by the Attorney General to avoid the use of force. Nobody in our country ignores the potential dangers lying on the twisted path taken by the U.S. authorities --under pressure from the CANF-- to resolve what would have been a simple migratory case if it had not involved a Cuban child.

Here are a few facts that support this statement:

First: The three judges on the panel responsible for ruling on the mob's appeal are not trustworthy. The response to the Attorney General's request for them to legally direct Lázaro González to surrender the child, after his obvious failure to abide by the INS order, will go down in history as a prime example of outrageous, biased and overbearing conduct. On that day, they decreed that a child of any age and nationality could apply for asylum in the United States against his or her parents' will. On the other hand, the martyred child has been forced to remain in the United States until the legal proceedings have concluded. Nothing was said, however, about the failure to abide by the order issued to the kidnapper to surrender the child. The Attorney General had no choice. She was forced to either make shameless concessions or to use force. She did both. Only fate and the skill of the marshals prevented the worst from happening, and the child was rescued safe and sound.

What guarantee does the father now have that the reunion with his son will be final? None!

Second: The Nuevo Herald reported on April 26 that on the previous day, Tuesday, April 26, a group of 11 senators had called a meeting with Attorney General Janet Reno in order to "discuss concerns." When she was asked, "what would happen if the Atlanta Court of Appeals or any other court decided that the child should be granted asylum," the Attorney General answered, "Then I believe we will have to send him back to Miami."

The danger that this court will decide that the child has the right to asylum is real. It would fully coincide with the doctrine that it followed in its April 19 ruling and with what the terrorist mob demanded. Nobody could guess the reaction of the international public, and the public in the United States itself, if Elián were torn away from Juan Miguel and sent back to the living hell of the González' house, now that they have seen everything that was done to the child in Miami and witnessed the moving images of the father and son's reunion. It is impossibility, but this is what the Attorney General said, and this is what the Atlanta panel could decide.

Third: On April 26, the ANSA news agency issued the following report from Washington: "'Wye River' --that is the name of the place where Juan Miguel and his family are staying-- 'was chosen because it is very good for a child, who can play on its grounds. And it is big enough so that the relatives can potentially be there without bothering one another,' said a Department of Justice official who asked for anonymity."

As you can see, this is a recurrence of the old and sinister idea contained in the previously mentioned horrifying points in the proposal sent to Juan Miguel on the critical night of Friday, April 21. And none other than an "anonymous" Justice Department official stated it.

Fourth: On April 26, Gregory Craig, Juan Miguel's attorney, presented to the three-judge panel at the Atlanta Court of Appeals what is known as an emergency motion requesting Juan Miguel's intervention in the proceedings. The motion also requested that Juan Miguel replace Lázaro González as the child's sole legal representative, both in his capacity as the only surviving parent and as Elián's "next friend", a strange term used in the U.S. legal proceedings when a minor has no close relative to represent him or her in court, which obviously does not apply in Elián's case.

On the following day, April 27, the Atlanta panel refused to recognize Juan Miguel as the child's sole representative, but granted him the right to intervene in the proceedings, although voting was divided on the latter point.

With regard to this matter, the New York Times reported on April 28, "In a mixed decision on the Elián González case, a federal appeals court today put off a request by the boy's father to serve as his sole legal representative, which would have effectively ended the court challenge... In its ruling, the appellate court panel said it was 'hesitant' to grant Juan Miguel González the right to intervene in the case at this late date, but had agreed to the request because he was the boy's father. One of the three judges dissented.

"The court also said it would be 'premature' to decide whether the boy's father should serve as Elián's sole representative."

The well-founded motion presented by Juan Miguel's attorney and his sound arguments were dismissed by the panel with regard to the father serving as sole representative of his son.

According to legal experts, if the ruling to be made by the three judges on May 11 is divided, that is, based on a two-to-one vote, the losing side could request that all of the judges on the Atlanta Court of Appeals pass judgment on the case and not only the three who have been assigned to it.

In any case, the experts say, this recourse would mean a further possibility of prolonging the duration of legal proceedings, and could always be followed by an appeal before the Supreme Court.

There are five other alternatives that could be pursued to draw out the proceedings indefinitely.

At the same time, the mob's attorneys have applied for various orders and definitions.

Fifth: Going back to April 25, AP reported the following from Laredo, Texas: "'The Clinton administration should try to persuade Elián González's father to stay in the United States to raise his son here,' said Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush. 'I hope the government explains to the father that, if he prefers to, he can raise his son in freedom, that the father can stay here in the United States. It is important for our government to remember that the mother was fleeing in search of freedom, to bring her son to freedom. I hope that the government convinces the father to raise his son in the United States of America.'"

Sixth: On the following day, according to a wire report from the EFE news agency, Hillary Clinton, the U.S. president's wife, during a radio interview in Buffalo, New York, "expressed her hope that the father of the little Cuban boy Elián González, Juan Miguel, will eventually decide to seek exile and live in the United States.

"I hope that this taste of freedom and opportunity he has had with his son during this time might help him to reconsider staying definitively in the United States.

"I am convinced that many people would be happy to take him in if he decides to defect,' said the first lady, using the term applied to soldiers who resolve to abandon their own country and seek refuge in another, usually an enemy country."

In other words, they do not mind talking about instigating the defection of a father who has been viciously slandered for months. They cannot even conceive of an honorable Cuban. First, they accused him of being a coward, who did not dare to travel to the United States and did not even care about his son. Then, they claimed that the Cuban government would not allow him to go to the United States, so that he did not defect. Now, that they have seen him arrive with his wife and infant son, at the exact time, hour and minute he should do so, they have still not recovered from their amazement at Juan Miguel's dignity, courage and sense of honor. They are trying to keep him there indefinitely in the hope of enticing him away. They are all working in unison in pursuit of the same goal: to ensure that the boy never returns to Cuba, and thus deal a moral blow to the proud and heroic people that produced Juan Miguel and Elián.

Where are the ethics of that country's political leaders? How can they be so utterly ignorant of the realities of Cuba? Why such contempt? How long will they go on believing their own lies?

On April 27, a whole series of limitations and obstacles were suddenly imposed on the movements of the Cuban officials responsible for Juan Miguel, his wife and his two sons, who are currently 70 miles away. Only four visas were granted for the children who should travel to the United States to help with Elián's recovery, and they have been limited to a 15-day stay. An absurd formula has been developed by which they must rotate every two weeks; and none of the crucially needed specialists requested by the family has received permission to travel to the United States. Obviously, the purpose was to isolate Juan Miguel, his wife and the two children in the distant Wye River estate in Maryland.

Coinciding with Mr. Bush and Mrs. Hillary Clinton's statements, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said in an interview with the Fox TV network, "We have some very serious problems with Cuba and we are going to maintain the embargo law" --that is what she calls the blockade and the economic war-- "and the Cuban Democracy Act" --that is how she refers to the genocidal Helms-Burton Act.

It is amazing, though, because nobody in Cuba had asked the U.S. government for forgiveness nor had anyone asked it to put an end to this blockade, which is becoming increasingly unsustainable and is definitely crumbling because it is obsolete and it is ever more costly in political and moral terms for the United States.

The forefathers who instituted our homeland's heroic tradition of challenging the United States' two-hundred-year old dream of annexing Cuba taught us that rights are demanded, not begged for. Nothing will be easy with regard to Cuba in the future. Forty years resisting all sorts of aggressions and injustices, and the war of ideas we have been waging ceaselessly throughout five long months have made us much stronger.

We will fight tirelessly against the murderous Cuban Adjustment Act; against the cruel Helms-Burton Act, whose sponsors deserve to stand trial for the crime of genocide, according to the conventions signed in 1948 and 1949 by both Cuba and the United States; and against the Act whose namesake, Robert Torricelli, is an ally of the Miami terrorist mob.

We will fight against the blockade and the economic war that our people have endured for almost half a century. We will fight against all subversive activities carried out from within the United States, including terrorist acts aimed at destabilizing our nation, and we will fight for the return to our homeland of the territory illegally occupied in our country. We will fulfill everything we pledged in the Baraguá Oath, in honor of the indelible and immortal memory of Antonio Maceo, the Bronze Titan.

We do not blame the American people; we blame those who are responsible for the lies used to deceive them for much longer than Lincoln ever imagined. On the contrary, we pay tribute to the overwhelming majority of those people who, despite all those lies, have opposed the odious crime committed against a small Cuban boy.

It would be wise for the current and future leaders of the United States to realize that David has grown and that he has gradually become a moral giant who does not throw stones with his sling, but rather examples and ideas against which the Goliath of finances, colossal wealth, nuclear weapons, the most sophisticated technology and worldwide political power based on selfishness, demagoguery, hypocrisy and lies is completely helpless.

To ensure that they do not get their hopes too high over their ridiculous and Pyrrhic victory arising from the loathsome resolution adopted in Geneva, based on slander and imposed by the U.S. government through humiliating pressures and the backing of its NATO allies, during that same session Cuba put forward six resolutions in favor of Third World nations. They were all adopted by an overwhelming majority, with the United States voting against every single one, generally with the sole support or abstention of the small group of its wealthy European allies.

The peoples of an ungovernable world, who suffer poverty and indigence and are exploited and plundered at an ever-growing rate, will be our best comrades in arms. We certainly lack the financial resources to cooperate with them. Instead, we have an extraordinary and selfless human capital that the wealthy countries do not have and never will possess.

Long live patriotism!

Long live socialism!

Long live internationalism!

Patria o muerte!

Venceremos!

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