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Socialist Voice #80, February 7, 2006

Canadian Delegates to World Social Forum Discuss Election Result, Working Class Political Action

By Roger Annis

CARACAS, VENEZUELA — Sixty delegates from Canada attending the World Social Forum here crowded into a conference room at the Hilton Hotel on January 26 to discuss the outcome and lessons of the just-concluded Canadian election. The meeting was organized by the International Socialists and featured four panelists who led off a discussion.

David Langille of the Center for Social Justice noted the increase in the New Democratic Party vote, up 475,000 from the previous federal election. He said the goal of the new, minority Conservative Party will be to govern for a short period of time and then call an election in which it would hope to win a majority. It is then, he said, and not before, that the party would try to implement the radical right program that it kept under wraps during the election campaign.

Langille said that the NDP could continue to improve its vote if it focused on three strategies — encouraging popular mobilization to oppose cuts to social services; engage in debate on the issues of the day to challenge the virtual monopoly of right-wing ideology in the mainstream of politics and media, and offer a “positive alternative” to the two main capitalist parties on issues such as taxation, military spending, and crime. He did not indicate what such an alternative would consist of.

Paul Kellogg of the International Socialists declared that the election result was a sign of the decline of “neoliberalism.” He noted the rise of the NDP vote and the growing combativity of the working class. He criticized the rightward shift of the NDP under Jack Layton’s leadership. “Layton needs to learn that the population is moving left. I don’t think the NDP ran a good campaign.”

He said that Layton was saying good things in the period after his election as NDP leader in 2003, citing the party’s support for the protests against the U.S. occupation in Iraq in March, 2004.

Conservative Party support in Quebec rose dramatically in this election, Kellogg argued, because it paid some lip service to Quebec sovereignty. The NDP, on the other hand, ran a chauvinist campaign that supported the federal government Clarity Bill.

Deborah Bourque, national president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, began her presentation by explaining that a delegation from her union had spent a day visiting with postal workers in Venezuela. She said the experience was inspiring. Postal workers here are moving to take more control over postal operations, including using post offices as centers for the delivery of social services. They are also striving to unite all postal workers into one, pro-Chavez trade union.

Bourque explained that her union had endorsed the NDP in the election for first time in its history. She said the decision was preceded by an intense discussion among union members. The reason for the decision was the continued attacks by the federal Liberal government on postal services.

“Personally,” she said, “I stopped voting for the NDP after 1995. Today I am waiting to see which direction the party moves in.”

Judy Rebick, well-known publisher and political activist, said the big story of the election was the rise of the Conservative vote in Quebec. The rightist party earned more than 900,000 votes, a huge gain from the previous election. “People I talk to from Quebec are in shock,” she said.

“The Tories will use this next period to build on their vote in Quebec and aim for a majority government in an election within two years. This will present an enormous challenge to the Bloc québécois.” (The Bloc won the majority of votes and seats in Quebec, but its vote declined from 2004.)

A lively discussion period followed the presentations. The most common concern voiced was the rightward shift of the NDP in the election and what should be done about it.

Steve DaSilva of the Toronto Haiti Action Committee spoke early on. He criticized an earlier comment that “Canada is a more left-wing country” than the United States. “While Canadians may be more wedded to the values of healthcare and social spending, the Canadian state is just as imperialist and right-wing as the United States. The difference being that Canada is one-tenth the size.”

Substantiating this claim, DaSilva went on to underline the importance of the issue of Haiti solidarity in Canada. “Defending Haiti’s sovereignty should be the number one priority for anyone claiming to defend social justice because the Canadian government has played a critical role in the imperialist occupation of Haiti.”

This writer also spoke. “I agree with others who have said that this election does not signify a shift to the right in the thinking or action of working people and youth.

“There is a shift to the right, however, and unfortunately it includes some of those who are leaders of the union movement and NDP. Several people here have given examples of this—Jack Layton’s support to the Clarity Bill and to tougher “anti-crime” measures. I will add a few more.

“We saw union leaders campaigning for Paul Martin. And I’m not just talking about Buzz Hargrove. The president of the Alberta Union of Public Employees campaigned for (national security minister) Anne McClelland. Former IWA national president Dave Haggard was a Liberal candidate in Vancouver East.

“In the Haiti solidarity movement, we are campaigning to oppose the crimes being committed by the Canadian government in Haiti and to demand the withdrawal of its soldiers and police. But we can’t convince the NDP members of parliament to join us in this.

”The working class in Canada needs a political party that seeks to win political power and wield it to lead a process of social change similar to what we see unfolding in Venezuela today and Cuba before, that is, a struggle for socialism.

“Such a party must support the national rights of the Quebecois people in order that we may have a truly united working class movement,” I said.

This must necessarily involve unity among all left forces committed to such a program, be they inside the ranks of the NDP or outside. More discussions like the one held at this forum are vitally important to further such a process.

Socialist Voice #81, February 13, 2006

Haiti Solidarity Bursts onto the Scene at World Social Forum

By Roger Annis

The following article is based on a report prepared by the Canada Haiti Action Network (CHAN). The author was a member of the group's delegation to the World Social Forum.

Since this report was written, the foreign-imposed presidential election was held in Haiti on February 7. Former Lavalas Party leader and former president of Haiti René Préval won the election handily, according to preliminary counts and exit polls. But the body responsible for counting the vote, the Provisional Electoral Council is saying the vote tally will be slow and allegations are emerging of tampering with the count. If Préval does not receive 50 percent plus one of the vote, a runoff election will be held in March.

The February 7 election was hardly an exercise in democracy. The Lavalas Party was effectively banned from running. Ballot stations were few and far between in the poor neighborhoods of the country, but very present in the well-to-do neighborhoods. Regardless of the vote outcome, the real power in Haiti will still lie in the hands of the venal Haitian elite and the foreign occupying powers, including Canada.

The Haitian masses seized the narrow opening that the election offered to them and delivered a rebuke to the occupying powers by voting for the one candidate, René Préval, who is identified with the deposed president Jean-Bertrand Aristide and the social and political programs that he sought to implement. The masses show every sign of continuing their mobilizations until the country's sovereignty is restored and the job of building a society of social justice can continue.

A large Haiti solidarity delegation from Canada, Haiti and the United States made the ongoing human rights catastrophe in Haiti a focus of attention at the January 24 to 29, 2006 World Social Forum (WSF) in Caracas, Venezuela. The delegation organized public forums and other actions opposing the 2004 imperialist invasion and coup in Haiti. It organized to challenge apologists for the coup who had a significant presence in the WSF's deliberations.

The delegation from Canada was organized by the Canada Haiti Action Committee (CHAN) and included 19 people from six cities. There were ten people from Haiti in attendance as well as four others living in exile. A U.S. delegation included more than 10 activists.

Opening march and rally, January 24

The World Social Forum opened January 24 with a rally and march of several tens of thousands. Members of the Canadian delegation carried a large banner, "U.S., France, Canada, UN: Hands Off Haiti!" along the 10-kilometer route, along with colorful placards reading, "Canada Out of Haiti." They made Haiti solidarity a very vocal presence in the march, chanting in Spanish, "Canada (U.S., France, Brazil, Chile, Argentina) out of Haiti!" and "Sovereignty for Haiti, troops

out!” Other participants in the march as well as bystanders along the route cheered us on and asked lots of questions about the situation in Haiti.

Venezuelan people were especially encouraging. President Hugo Chavez has spoken out against the coup in Haiti, reminding the his people that if they do not organize to defend their sovereignty, they could face the same fate as Haiti. There are strong historical ties between Venezuela and Haiti that remain deep in the consciousness of the Venezuelan people. Haiti sent soldiers to Venezuela in the 1810s and 1820s to assist the liberation army of Simon Bolivar in the struggle to free South America from Spanish colonialism.

Several Venezuelan participants in the rally told us, “They helped us win our independence, now it’s our turn to help them!”

Two forums, January 25 and 26

On January 25, eighty people attended the first of two forums organized by CHAN. The meeting featured presentations by five of the members of the delegation from Haiti, including Paul Loulou Chery, secretary general of the Haitian Workers Confederation (CTH). American sociologist William Robinson, author of *Promoting Polyarchy* and other writings, also spoke on the panel. Delegates attended from scores of countries, including Venezuela, Columbia, Brazil, Canada, the U.S., Britain, and Ivory Coast.

Presentations covered the range of political and social issues facing the Haitian people — the foreign occupation, prospects for a truly free election, the ongoing repression, the situation of the hundreds of political prisoners, social conditions among the population, and the conditions of Haitian workers, including those working under slave-like conditions in the Dominican Republic.

During the discussion period, several apologists for the February 2004 coup from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) criticized the views of the panelists. A representative from Canadian government-funded NGO Development and Peace defended the work of non-governmental organizations working in Haiti, but she left unanswered the charge that such organizations have failed to speak out against the coup or the post-coup repression in which thousands have perished.

Yolette Jeanty of Kay Fanm, an NGO in Haiti oriented to women, argued forcefully that the 2004 coup against President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his government is of no consequence for the Haitian people. “We are in solidarity with the Haitian people,” she said, “not with one man. He does not represent the people.”

The next day, another forum featured delegates from Haiti. This one, attended by 125 people, was organized by the U.S. delegation and the Haitian political rights organization September 30 Foundation. Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine, a leader of the Foundation and who lives in exile in the U.S., was one of the speakers. About 125 people attended.

Rally at the Brazil embassy

On Friday, January 27, 25 delegates from Canada joined an equal number from Brazil for a rally at the Brazil embassy in downtown Caracas demanding the withdrawal of that country's military forces from occupied Haiti.

Ivan Pinheira of the Comité por la Retirada de las Tropas Brasileñas de Haïti began the rally with a statement about the decision of the Brazilian government to support U.S. foreign policy objectives in the region. He was critical of Brazil's president Lula, who, he argued, had made terrible concessions to the demands of the U.S. government. Pinheira said that Brazil was now doing the "dirty work" of George Bush.

More speakers followed, representing CHAN and a number of left political parties in Brazil. Closing commentary was provided by Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine. He expressed appreciation for the solidarity being shown through this demonstration, and others like it taking place all over the world. He also talked about the importance of actions such as this for raising the morale of the people of Haiti. They continue to struggle despite the many serious obstacles and threats they face.

Following the demonstration, many participants traveled to an indoor rally where President Chavez spoke to some ten thousand people. His speech electrified the crowd, calling for a united and worldwide struggle against imperialism and declaring that if humanity is to survive the onslaught of imperialist war and environmental degradation, the 21st century must be a century for creating and expanding socialism throughout the world.

Final forum, January 28

The third forum of the Haiti solidarity movement, and the second one organized by CHAN, took place on January 28. More than 90 people attended. We heard a panel of speakers from Haiti, North America and South America. Two women from Haiti, one from the young generation, gave moving accounts of the struggle for survival in the poor neighborhoods of Haiti's towns and cities.

Members of Global Women's Strike attended the forum, and two of its leaders spoke. They both made sharp condemnations of the decision of the World Social Forum organizing committee to facilitate the participation of non-governmental organizations from Haiti and abroad that are complicit in the 2004 coup.

Andaiye, of Guyana, referring to the previous evening's rally with President Chavez, said, "Last night, through no fault of President Chavez, we saw the World Social Forum place a representative on the table of dignitaries, Camille Chalmers, who is opposed to the struggles of the Haitian people for sovereignty. This is not acceptable."

Chalmers was also a guest speaker at the aforementioned rally that opened the World Social Forum on January 24. He is the coordinator of the Haitian NGO PAPDA (Plateforme haitienne de plaidoyer pour un développement alternatif). It receives funding from agencies of the imperialist governments now occupying Haiti via NGOs such as the Quebec-based Alternatives. PAPDA was a prominent element of the anti-Aristide/anti-Lavalas Party bandwagon that helped

legitimize the coup. It called for President Aristide's resignation during the tense and critical months leading up to the coup.

Margaret Prescod, also of Global Women's Strike, spoke next. "Andaiye's comments on Camille Chalmers," she said, "speak to a deep problem in the World Social Forum — that racism and sexism is deeply embedded in its structures."

"I am originally from Barbados," she continued. "The Caribbean people have a deep stake in what is taking place in Haiti. Our lives depend on stopping the slaughter in Haiti, they depend on cleaning up the problem in the World Social Forum. Because if we don't, the other islands will become killing fields too."

Euvonie Georges Auguste, a women's rights activist living in exile in St. Lucia, tied together Prescod's points on lack of accountability and the work of organizations like that of Camille Chalmers' when she spoke on the "absolute lack of connection between NGOs and grassroots organizers in Haiti."

Lovinsky Pierre-Antoine spoke on the same subject. He cited the work of other pro-coup groups that receive imperialist funding, such as the trade union grouping Batay ouvriye. "These groups have significant support internationally. They know how to speak well, and they receive significant funding from such agencies as USAID."

An elected municipal official from Haiti gave a fiery talk at the meeting. He was one of thousands of elected and popular leaders who were also victims of the 2004 coup. He faces threats and intimidation today. "My biggest problem today is not with Gerard Latortue (president of the "interim government" of Haiti) or with George Bush," he said. "I know they will never help us. My problem is with those who speak in my name but who work against our movement for freedom."

Mario Joseph, the foremost human rights lawyer and defender of political prisoners in Haiti today, explained the living conditions of prisoners.

Two North-American researchers, Anthony Fenton, a CHAN activist from Vancouver, and Jeb Sprague, from Long Beach, California, spoke about the connections between "democracy promotion" by imperialist think tanks and the funding of opposition to Lavalas in Haiti. Tens of millions of dollars have been poured into the elite opposition to Lavalas by such outfits as the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy.

Sprague detailed the role of the International Republican Institute (IRI) in forming a "socialist coalition" between the Organization du peuple en lutte political party and other anti-Lavalas "left" organizations, calling this a policy of "political encirclement" around the popular movement.

Discussions with delegates from Canada, Brazil, elsewhere

Throughout the WSF, the Haiti solidarity delegation engaged delegates in discussions about the coup in Haiti and the serious implications of the complicity of NGOs or left political forces. On

January 27, several CHAN members participated with 60 fellow Canadian activists at a forum on the topic of the recent Canadian federal election organized by the International Socialists.

At another event, Canadian delegates met members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil and urged them to bring eyewitnesses from Haiti to Brazil to explain the role of United Nations forces in carrying out repression against the popular movements in Haiti.

Delegates also spoke to members of the governing Workers Party in Brazil and the Communist Party of Brazil, which gives critical support to the government. Typically, they would deny that Brazilian troops have been responsible for repression in Haiti. They argue that Brazil had sent troops to Haiti to “help” the Haitian people and to avoid a situation where the U.S. and Canada would exercise exclusive control over policing.

New-found contacts in Brazil have opened some doors for the solidarity delegation from the three countries to take its campaign to Brazil and join up with those prepared to take an honest look at the UN role in Haiti.

Discussions were also held with officials in the government of Venezuela, outlining the ongoing atrocities in Haiti and warning of the pernicious role of the imperialist government and the fake-left NGO's they fund.

Conclusions

A new political situation will open up in Haiti following the foreign-imposed national election on February 7. The Haitian people will have enormous expectations that whoever is elected, a new government must put an end to the killings and repression and get the foreign occupation forces out of the country.

The occupiers have other intentions. In Canada, a new government was elected on January 23 and all the evidence suggests it is committed to an even deeper military and political role in Haiti. The U.S. government is also committed to its neocolonial course in Haiti.

The contacts made throughout the World Social Forum open up new possibilities for taking Haiti solidarity deeper into political life of Canada, the U.S., Brazil and other countries implicated in the coup. It is vital that Haiti solidarity work be expanded with new energies, right around the world.

Socialist Voice #82, February 15, 2006

Yankee Government Orders Second Round; UN Blue Helmets Repress the Haitian People

This Editorial was published in the February 14 issue of Granma, the daily newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba.

After two years of foreign occupation after the coup d'état against Jean Bertrand Aristide orchestrated by Washington with French collaboration, long-suffering Haiti held elections one week ago to proclaim a new president.

There was a good turnout for the elections in spite of some acts of violence and delays in the polling stations in the poorest districts. More than 60% of registered Haitians cast their vote in the hope of change in a country where constant U.S. invasions and successive dictatorships have cut it off from two centuries of development.

More than 80% of the eight million Haitians live in poverty and a similar percentage are unemployed, the illiteracy rate is extremely high, the life expectancy rate is no more than 50 years and diseases such as AIDS are rapidly expanding.

The recent elections in Haiti were acknowledged by the international community as a positive step toward stability and peace in that nation. From the first minute, surveys at the polling station gave the victory to former president René Préval.

The initial results announced by the electoral authorities showed Préval with a comfortable advantage of 61% of votes cast, many more than those needed to win the elections in the first round. The Haitian press and the international media reflected his ample victory.

However, as days passed, the Haitian elections, postponed for months with U.S. consent, have fallen under the mantle of manipulation and suspicion. Seven days after the vote, the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) has not concluded its work, in spite of being supposed to announce the results 72 hours after the polls closed.

Surprisingly, on Sunday, the Council president announced to the media that the votes for Préval had dropped to 49%, while the web page of that institution reflected 52% in his favor. Yesterday, Monday, the Electoral Council stated that with 90% of the votes counted, the former premier and candidate for the Espoir (Hope) Party now had 48.7% of the vote.

The manipulation of the results has been evident and shameless. Two of the members of the Electoral Council have exposed tampering with the vote count. Pierre Richard Duchemin, representative of the Episcopal Conference of the Catholic Church on the commission body, informed a Haitian radio station that "there has been an insane manipulation of the data, there is no transparency."

Another member of the board, Patrick Requière, publicly criticized Jacques Bernard, CEP general director, for not consulting with the other members of that agency or of disclosing where he was obtaining the results that he has announced to the press.

This Monday, the presidential candidate Jeune Jean Chavannes, fourth to date in the polls, acknowledged Préval's win and stated that the situation created is the result of a conspiracy mounted in pursuit of social chaos. Chavannes called for guaranteeing national sovereignty and not bending to base interests as certain people want.

Everyone is pointing to something that is absolutely clear and has been leaked through various channels: Mr. Bernard, general director of the Council, is fulfilling the U.S. mandate of forcing a second round. A number of analysts have taken it on themselves in the last few days to recall that Préval is not the favorite of the White House given his former links with the deposed President Jean Aristide, removed from power by force by U.S. troops and sent into enforced exile.

In January, The New York Times published a thorough investigation that demonstrates the efforts of the Republican International Institute, closely linked to the Bush administration, and various State Department officials to destabilize Aristide's government and expel him from the country.

In the face of the evident attempt to steal away his victory from René Préval, a man of much prestige who has taken great pains to serve the people, his followers – most of them from the poorest barrios of the capital – have taken to the streets in the last three days demanding respect for their vote. Thousands of demonstrators protested yesterday outside the headquarters of the Electoral Council and the government chanting the slogans: "Préval is president" and "Thief, you don't know how to count," in a clear reference to the action of the general director of the electoral body. The protesters accused the CEP of manipulating the votes and expressed their opposition to a second round, shouting "We're not voting twice."

The demonstrations on Monday were repressed by the UN blue helmets stationed in the country, provoking various injuries and at least one death. Violence has returned to that impoverished country after various days of post-electoral calm and new confrontations are predicted if attempts continue to falsify the election results.

Meanwhile, from Washington and with total cynicism, a State Department spokesperson stated after a meeting between Bush, Condoleezza Rice and the UN secretary general that whenever a vote count is challenged it is important for the parties to come together and cooperate over and above allegiances in the interest of the country. Nobody knows exactly to which elections Sean McCormack was referring, as in the Haitian case the second candidate in the elections did not even gain 12% of the vote.

What is happening in Haiti comes as no surprise. It is not the first time that the United States has intervened at its whim in the destiny of that nation, nor the first time that it is barefacedly manipulating the electoral results in another country to its own advantage.

The international community must demand respect for the majority will of the Haitian people expressed at the polling stations and that that suffering nation is not led into a worse period of chaos and violence as a consequence of the malign interests of the United States and specific Haitian power groups.

The world cannot allow the imperial power to guide the reins of the entire planet. The Haitian people, patient but selfless and heroic, will fight for their rights, let nobody be in any doubt as to that. Full responsibility for any such an outcome will fall on the U.S. government and the occupying forces that do not hesitate to fire on the people.

Socialist Voice #83, February 20, 2006

Our Society Will Truly Be An Entirely New Society

By Fidel Castro

Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, at the Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of his admission to University of Havana, in the Aula Magna of the University of Havana, on November 17, 2005. Text reviewed and shaped up by its author with absolute respect for the integrity of the ideas expressed during his speech.

Dear students and professors of Universities fro all over Cuba;

Dear comrades, leaders and guests who have shared with us so many years of struggle:

This is the most difficult moment, when I must say some words in this Aula Magna, where so many words have already been spoken. A universe of ideas comes to mind, and it's only logical, because time has passed.

You have been very kind to remember that today is a very special day: the 60th anniversary of my timid entry into this University.

There is a photo somewhere, I was just looking at it: I was wearing a jacket, and I have an angry face, or tough, or a nice, or irritated because that photo was not taken on the first day; I think I had already been here for several months, and I was starting to react to so many things, that were happening then. It was not a deep-seated thought. There was this eagerness for ideas, and also a desire to learn, and a spirit that was perhaps rebellious. We were full of dreams that couldn't be described as revolutionary, but certainly full of illusions and energy, and possibly also an anxiety to take up a struggle.

I had been active in sports, I had climbed mountains. I had even been promoted to some kind of Boy Scout lieutenant, I'm not exactly why, and later on they made me a general of the Boy Scout. So, when I was in high school, I had been given more ranks than I have today (Laughter). Because later on, I became *Comandante*, but nothing more than *Comandante*; this thing of being *Comandante en Jefe* doesn't mean any more than being chief commander of that small troop of about 82 men, the men who came in the *Granma* yacht.

That title came up after the landing, on December 2, 1956. There had to be a chief among those 82 men. Later on, they added the "in". So, little by little, I went from being Chief Commander to being the Commander in Chief when we had more commanders, because that was the highest rank for a long time. I was remembering these things. One has to think about what one was, what one thought about and what feelings one had.

Perhaps some special circumstances in my life made me react. I had to face some difficulties from a very early age and, maybe because of that, I grew up to be some kind of a professional rebel.

I've heard talk about rebels without a cause; but I seem to remember, whenever I think about it, that I was a rebel with many causes; and I thank life that I have continued being a rebel over the

years, even today, perhaps more rightly so today, because I have many more ideas and more experience; because I have learned a lot from my own struggle, or because I have a better understanding of this country where we were all born and of this world where we live, this globalized world living now a decisive time for its destiny. I wouldn't dare say a decisive time in its history, because its history is shorter, really brief, when compared to the life span of a species that in recent times, perhaps 3,000 or 4,000 or 5,000 years ago, took its first steps after its long and brief evolution. I say long and brief because it evolved to the point of becoming a homo sapiens some hundreds of thousands of years after life came into existence on this planet, as scholars believe it to be; if my memory doesn't fail me, around 1 or 1,5 billion years ago a life form was born and after that came millions of species. And we are only that, we are one of the species born on this planet. And that is why I said, after a brief and at the same time long life, we have come to this point, in this millennium, which is said to be the third millennium since the beginning of the Christian era.

Why am I circling around this idea? Because I would dare say that today this species is facing a very real and true danger of extinction, and no one can be sure, listen to this well, no one can be sure that it will survive this danger.

Well, the fact that the species would not survive was discussed about 2,000 years ago. I remember that when I was a student I heard of the Apocalypse, a book of prophesy in the Bible. Apparently, 2000 years ago someone realized that this weak species could one day disappear.

Of course, so did the Marxists. I remember Engel's book, *Dialectics*, very well. He said there that one day the light of the Sun would go out, that the fuel feeding the fires of that star which illuminates our world would run out and the light of the Sun would cease to exist. So, a question remains in my mind: a question that maybe you, or your professors, or hundreds of thousands of you have also asked yourselves, and that is if there is any possibility that this species can emigrate to another solar system.

Have you never asked yourselves that question? Well, at some point you will, because many questions come to our minds during our lifetime, particularly these questions, which are asked mostly when there is a reason to do so. I believe that mankind never had more reasons than it does now to wonder about this, because if that Marxist considered the problem of solar heat and light disappearing, and if that scientist considered that one day the solar system would cease to exist, we too, as revolutionaries, giving wings to our imaginations, must ask ourselves what will happen and if there is any hope for this species to escape to another solar system where life already exists or could exist. All that we know today is that there is one Sun four light years away, among the billions of suns that exist in that enormous outer space of which we still don't know whether it is finite or infinite.

For the little we know of physics and mathematics, of light and the speed of light, and those traveling to the closest planets, nothing has been found, and those who travel to Venus –I believe that Venus was the Roman goddess of love — those that have the privilege of reaching that planet will find hurricanes that are many hundreds of times worse than Katrina or Rita or Michelle or Mitch, or any of the others that hit us with ever increasing fury as it has been said

that the temperature on Venus is 400 degrees, and that there are masses of air or heavy atmosphere constantly blowing around.

Those that have been to Mars, a place where they said life could exist –Chavez jokes about the likely existence of life there in the past — and it disappeared, everything vanished. They keep searching for some particle of oxygen or some sign of life. Well, anything could have happened, but the most probable is that no developed life form ever existed on any of these planets. The combination of factors that made life possible occurred after billions of years on planet Earth, this very fragile life form that can only survive between a few limited degrees of temperature, between a few degrees below zero and a few degrees above zero, since nobody can survive in a water temperature of 60 degrees; just 20 seconds without any protection and no human being would survive; a few scores degrees below zero, with no source of artificial heat, would be enough to cause anyone's death. It was in that limited margin of temperature that life came into being.

We are speaking of life, because whenever we speak of universities, we speak of life.

What are you? If I were asked that question right now, I would have to say that you are life, you are symbols of life.

We have been speaking of events in our lives, in our university, in our Alma Mater, about those of us who came here a few decades ago and who are present here today, those who are in their fresh year or are about to graduate, or those who have already graduated and are engaged in tasks that others with less experience would not be able to do.

I was trying to recall how those universities were, what we did, what our concerns were. We were concerned about this island, this tiny island. There was no talk then of globalization; there was no television or Internet; instant communication were not possible from one end of the planet to the other; the telephone had just been invented and there were a few propeller driven airplanes. In my time, back in 1945, our passenger planes could hardly make it to Miami, and that was difficult; although I remember as a primary school student hearing about the trip made by Barberan and Collar; people in Biran used to say: "Barberan and Collar were here". They were two Spanish pilots who flew over the Atlantic and continued on to Mexico. Then there was no more news about Barberan and Collar, it is still a mystery where they went down, whether it was in the sea between Pinar del Rio and Mexico, on the Yucatan peninsula or elsewhere. But nothing more was ever heard about Barberan and Collar, those two men who had the temerity to cross the Atlantic in a small propeller plane that had recently been invented. Aviation had been born at the beginning of the past century.

There had been a terrible war that took the lives of some 50 million people. I am speaking of the time in 1945 when I entered the university, on September. Well, I started on that date, and you, of course, have taken the liberty to celebrate the anniversary that day; it could be the 4th or the 17th, it could be in November, it could be today, the day that you choose as the date. There are so many events to commemorate, and I certainly could not attend that many, and the greatest sorrow of my life would have been not being able to attend, especially at this time, this event in the Aula Magna, as your guest.

I have many events to attend everyday and I am speaking with large groups for hours and hours on end, especially with groups of young people, students, with medical brigades who go out to work in glorious missions that almost nobody else in this world would discharge, because no other country could send 1000 medical doctors to a sister nation in Central America. We have sent just such a group that is now confronting pain and death, in the aftermath of the greatest natural tragedy that anyone in that country can remember.

One after another, I have been speaking to these brigades, and I've been seeing them off; the same with those who are leaving for the other side of the world, flying for 18 hours to where almost simultaneously another of the greatest human tragedies struck. I remember no other catastrophe of such dimensions, because of the place where it hit, and the humble people who were affected. These people are shepherds living on very high mountains and the tragedy struck on the eve of winter where the cold is most intense, where there is great poverty while the insensitive world that wastes a trillion dollars each year on advertising to bamboozle the immense majority of humanity that pays for the lies that are spread depriving the human being of the capacity to think for himself, as he is forced to buy a soap that is the same soap with 10 different names, and he must be deceived because a trillion dollars are spent on it and this money is not paid by the companies, it is paid by those who buy the product due to the advertising.

This insensitive world that spends one trillion dollars each year on the military — it's already two trillion — this insensitive world that extracts various trillions of dollars a year from the impoverished masses, from the immense majority of this planet's inhabitants, remains indifferent when it is told that around 100,000 people have died, among them maybe 25,000 or 30,000 children, or that there are 100,000 injured, and the large majority is suffering from bone fractures in their arms and legs of which barely 10% have been operated on, that there are children with mutilated limbs, and young people, women and men, old people.

This is the kind of world we are living in. It is not a world full of goodness, but a world full of egoism. It is not a world of justice, but one full of exploitation, abuse and pillage, where millions of children die every year — and they could be saved — , just because they are lacking a few cents worth of medicine, or some vitamins or re-hydration salts and a few dollars worth of food, enough for them to live. They die every year due to injustice, almost as many as died in that colossal war that I mentioned a few minutes ago.

What kind of world is this? What kind of world is this where a barbaric empire proclaims its right to launch pre-emptive attacks on 70 or more countries, and is capable of bringing death to any corner of the globe, using the most sophisticated weapons and killing techniques? It's a world where brutality and force prevail, with hundreds of military bases on the entire planet. There is one of these on our soil, where they arbitrarily intervened after the Spanish colonial power could no longer stand by itself, and when hundreds of thousands of our country's dearest sons — in a population of hardly a million — had perished in a long war lasting almost 30 years. And they left us with the revolting Platt Amendment, attached to an equally repugnant resolution that treacherously gave them the right to intervene in our country whenever they considered there to be a lack of order.

More than a century has gone by and this piece of our territory is still forcibly occupied today bringing shame and horror to the world when it is known to have been turned into a torture center, where hundreds of people pulled in from different parts of the world are kept in detention. They do not take them to their own country because there may be laws that would make things difficult for them to illegally hold these people by force, kidnapped for years, overriding any legal procedure, and to the amazement of the entire world, these people are being subjected to sadistic and brutal torture. The world learned of this only when in Iraq they were torturing hundreds of prisoners from a country invaded by the powerful forces of a colossal empire, and where hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians have lost their lives.

New things come up every day. Recently, the press reported that the US government had secret prisons in the satellite countries of Eastern Europe, the same countries that vote in Geneva against Cuba and accuse her of human rights violations. They accuse the country that has never known a torture center in 46 years of Revolution, because our country has never broken that unparalleled tradition in history where not one man has been tortured, that not one person has been known to be tortured. And we would not be the only ones preventing that, it would be our own people that acquired a long time ago an extremely lofty concept of human dignity.

Which of us, which of you, which of our compatriots would quietly admit to a story of torturing even one citizen, in spite of thousands of barbaric acts of terrorism perpetrated against our country, in spite of the thousands of victims of the aggression of that empire that has blockaded us for the last 45 years and has tried to suffocate us by whatever means possible? And now these scoundrels are saying — as one of them recently did before the overwhelming vote of 182 UN members, with one abstention — that the difficulties are a result of our failure, and that great accomplice of the bandit, which is the pro-Nazi state of Israel supports the blockade. We must call it that, because those who commit such crimes are doing so in the name of a people that for more than 1500 years endured persecution and were victims of the most atrocious crimes committed during World War II. The people of Israel are not to blame for the savage genocide carried out in the service of the empire, leading to a holocaust of yet another people, the Palestinian. The government of Israel also proclaims the repugnant right to launch pre-emptive attacks against other countries.

Even today, the empire is threatening to attack Iran if nuclear fuel is produced there. Nuclear fuel is not nuclear weapon; it's not nuclear bombs. To prevent a country from producing the fuel of the future is like forbidding someone to prospect for oil, the fuel of the present, which is due to run out in a very short time. What country in the world is prevented from seeking fuel, coal, gas or oil?

We know that country very well. It is a country with 70 million inhabitants bent on its industrial development and believing, quite correctly, that it is a great crime to use its gas or oil reserves to feed the potential of thousands of millions of kilowatt hours urgently needed by this Third World country for its industrial development. And there we find the empire forbidding them and threatening to attack with bombs. There is already an international debate on what day and at what time a pre-emptive attack will be launched on the research centers for production of nuclear

fuel and on whether it will be the empire that does it, or its satellite Israel as it was the case in Iraq.

In 30 more years, oil reserves will run dry. Presently, 80% of oil is in the hands of Third World countries, since other countries have already depleted their reserves. Such is the case of the United States which had an enormous reserve of oil and gas that will barely last a few more years. That is why the US is trying to secure possession of oil by any means possible, in any corner of the world. However, that source of energy is running low and in 25 or 30 years, there will only be one fundamental energy source for the production of electricity, the nuclear, with some solar and wind energy sources.

The day is far when hydrogen may become the ideal fuel, through still emerging technologies. Meanwhile, mankind has reached a certain level of technical development and cannot live without fuel. This is one present problem.

Our Minister of Foreign Affairs has just visited Iran, since Cuba will be the venue of the next Non-Aligned Countries meeting within a year, and Iran is demanding its right to produce nuclear fuel just like any industrialized nation and not be obliged to destroy the reserves of a raw material, which can be used not only as an energy source but also as a raw material for numerous products such as fertilizers, textiles and many others currently used worldwide.

That's the way of the world. Let's see what happens if they decide to bomb Iran in order to destroy any facility used in the production of nuclear fuel.

Iran is a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and so is Cuba. We have never considered producing nuclear weapons, because we don't need them. Even if they were accessible, how much would they cost and what sense would it make producing a nuclear weapon with an enemy that has thousands of nuclear weapons? It would mean joining the game of nuclear confrontation.

We have a different type of nuclear weapon: it's our ideas. We possess a weapon as powerful as nuclear power and it is the immense justice for which we are struggling. Our nuclear weapon is the invincible power of moral weapons. That is why we have never even considered producing them, nor have we ever considered seeking biological weapons, what for? It is to the weapons that defeat death, that defeat AIDS and cancer that we dedicate our resources. That bandit—I can't recall the name of that guy they appointed, was it Bolton, Bordon, whatever — the man who represents the United States at the United Nations, a super-liar, the shameless liar who fabricated the idea that Cuba was doing research in biological warfare in the Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering Center.

They have also accused us of collaborating with Iran, transferring technology for just such a purpose, when what we are really doing is building a factory in partnership with Iran for anti-cancer products; that's what we are really doing. They want to put a stop to that as well. May they all go to hell or wherever they want to go! They're idiots and they're not going to scare anyone over here! (Applause)

Those impertinent liars! Everybody knows that even the CIA discovered that what the current US representative at the UN was saying was a lie, and they had forced a man to resign because

he said the other had lied. Others in the State Department realized that this was a lie and the man was furious, flying into a fit of rage against all those who were telling the truth. That then is “little Bush”’s representative at the United Nations, where 182 members just voted against that infamous blockade. This is the world where they presume to make a show of force and conquer by the use of lies and by their virtual monopoly on the mass media. Just look at the battle being waged at this moment. And they appointed the man over the objections of Congress and over the fact that everyone knows that he is a repulsive liar.

Everyday that gentleman who rules the United States is exposed using new tricks, committing new crimes, but they start falling, falling down like the leaves of the coconut palm, as a farmer from Santiago would say. Yes, they’re falling, and not quietly. There are running out of tricks and still they continue with their foolish acts.

I was speaking to you about the prisons in various countries, secret prisons where they send their kidnapped victims on the pretext of conducting a war against terrorism. It is not only at Abu-Ghraib and Guantanamo, but anywhere in the world you can find a secret prison where defenders of human rights are tortured. They are the same people who order their little lambs to vote in Geneva, one after another, against Cuba, a country where torture is unknown, something that brings honor and glory on this generation. It is the honor and glory of this Revolution struggling for justice, for independence and for human decorum, and we must keep its purity and dignity untouched! (Applause)

But that’s not all. This morning there was news about the use of live phosphorus in Fallujah. It is there that the empire discovered that a nation, to all intents and purposes unarmed, could not be defeated and the invaders found themselves in the situation of not being able to leave or to stay. If they leave, the combatants would return; if they stay, these troops would be required in other locations. Over 2,000 young US troops have already died, and some are asking: How long will these men continue to give their lives for an unjust war justified by gross lies?

Don’t you think for one minute that they have abundant reserves of US troops. Every day less Americans enlist, even when enlisting in the army has become an employment opportunity. The ones who enlist are the unemployed and very often they try to enlist greater numbers of Afro-Americans to fight their unjust war. However, news is coming out that fewer Afro-Americans are enlisting in the army, despite their high levels of unemployment and their marginalization, because they know full well that they are being used as cannon fodder. In the ghettos of Louisiana, when the government said ‘its every man for himself’, thousands of people were abandoned who drowned in the flood waters; others died in the Senior Citizens Homes or hospitals, and some of them died the victims of euthanasia because the staffs of these institutions feared they would drown anyway. This is the true story that is all well-known by now and we should meditate on it.

They are chasing after Latinos, immigrants, who cross the border trying to escape hunger; this is a border where more than 500 emigrants die every year, many more in only 12 months than those who died during the 28 years of the Berlin Wall.

The empire talked about the Berlin Wall every day; not one word is spoken about the wall between Mexico and the US, where more than 500 people die every year trying to escape poverty and underdevelopment. Such is the world we live in.

Live phosphorus in Fallujah! That's what the empire secretly does. When it became known, the US government stated that live phosphorus was a normal weapon. If it was normal, why was it not published? Why did nobody know that they were using this weapon that is prohibited by international conventions? Napalm is banned and so is live phosphorus for many more reasons.

There is news like this every day, and all of these things are part of life, all of these things are part of our world. Just look at the enormous difference between now and those days when we came to the University brimming with ideals, full of dreams and good will even though we lacked the experience of a profound ideology and the ideas that are accumulated over the passage of years. Young people entered this University exactly like that. It must be remembered that this University was not for the poor, it was for the middle class, for the rich, although young people tended to rise above class ideas and many of them were capable of struggling, as in fact they did throughout the history of Cuba.

Eight students were executed in 1871. They were like the seeds of the noblest of sentiments and of the rebellious spirit of our people which showed their indignation at this colossal injustice. Today we commemorate the deaths of nine students, who were no different from them, murdered by the Nazis in Prague on November 17, 1939, on the eve of the World War II.

Our youth always keeps alive the memory of those medical students and of all those students who fought against tyrannical and corrupt governments. Mella was one of them, also coming from the middle class because the children of farmers who could neither read nor write, were unable to attend high school, let alone enter university.

As the son of a landowner, I was able to finish sixth grade, and when I graduated from seventh grade, I could enroll in a senior high school.

If you couldn't attend high school, you couldn't go on to university. The children of farmers or workers, living at the sugar mills or in a municipality (unless it was a municipality in Santiago or Holguin or Manzanillo, or a few others) couldn't go to high school, not even high school! Of course, that left them without the possibility of graduating from university because, after high school, you had to come to Havana for further studies.

I could come to Havana because my father had the means to send me, and so I graduated from high school, and fortune lead me on to university. Did that mean that I was better than any of the hundreds of boys few of which completed the 6th grade and none of which ever graduated from high school or went on to university?

My own case was like that of many others, I mentioned Mella. I could have mentioned Guiteras, or Trejo who died in one of those demonstrations on September 30, fighting against Machado. I could mention names like those that you listed at the opening of this event.

Before the Revolution, there were always many noble students opposing the Batista tyranny and willing to make sacrifices, willing to die. And so, when the Batista tyranny returned with a

vengeance, many students fought and many students died, and that young man from Cardenas, Manzanita as he was called, always smiling, always jovial, always affectionate with everyone, became well-known for his bravery, his integrity as when he descended the university stairs, facing the water hose of the fire trucks, or the police. That is how all of them came to be known.

If you visit the house where [Jose Antonio] Echevarria lived –Jose Antonio, we'll call him—you'll see that it is a good house, an excellent house. You could see how the students were often oblivious of their social or class origins; at that age of so many hopes and dreams.

At that university, there was only one medical faculty, and one teaching hospital, yet, many students received prizes and awards, first prize in medicine and even in surgery without ever having operated on anybody.

Some made an effort; they were active and made contact with a professor who helped them, taking part in his practice or in some hospital. That's how there were good doctors, not a huge numbers of good doctors –certainly there was a huge number of doctors who wanted to travel to the United States — they were unemployed and with the triumph of the Revolution, that's where they went, straight to the USA and Cuba was left with half of all her medical doctors, 3,000 of them, and 25% of her professors. We started at that point, until we got to where we are today, standing up almost like the capital of world medicine.

Today, our people have at their disposition at least 15 doctors for every one that remained in the country, and they are much better distributed. Cuba has thousands of doctors abroad fraternally offering their services, and the number is growing. At this time -and I specifically asked for the exact figure-, we have 25,000 medical students; in first year there are about 7,000 and each year there will be at least 7,000 more; we have more than 70,000 medical doctors. There are also tens of thousands of students in the other medical sciences. We believe that there are 90,000 studying in the medical field, if we include nurses majoring, in nursing, and all those in other health sector professions. All of them are part of the large number of students in our universities today.

I wanted to bring up the differences from the year when I entered university; what was our country like then? We should ask ourselves that question and meditate on it. What is our country like today, in all areas? And, we could ask the same question about eight, ten, fifteen, twenty different things. Comparison is impossible.

I was speaking about Barberan and Collar disappearing in their light plane full of gasoline tanks, because that's what you had to do in those days; they took off, and left almost in the same way that we did in Mexico in 1956; “if we set out, we arrive; if we arrive, we enter; if we enter, we win”, we said then. It seems like other men before us undertook something as audacious as that, when they crossed the Atlantic. They took off and landed in Cuba, then they took off again, but they did not arrive in Mexico alive.

I was speaking of a ship that set sail; this was like a ship setting sail a long time ago, a small plane that seemed to be powered by an elastic band. Maybe you have seen those little planes which you wind up an elastic band and then you let go and they take off and land. When our Revolution triumphed in this hemisphere, right beside the empire and surrounded, with a few

exceptions, by the empire's satellites, we started on a very difficult journey. Now it is different times, quite a few years after we entered the university.

We came to the university at the end of 1945 and we began the armed struggle in Moncada on July 26th, 1953, only eight years later, and the Revolution triumphed five years, five days and five months after Moncada, after a long journey by way of prison, exile and fighting in the mountains. It was a relatively short time historically speaking, comparing it to earlier struggles that were so hard and difficult on our people. There were two stages: coming to the University, leaving it and the coup d'etat on March 10, 1952.

The stage when we began the struggle is where we will start now. We set off, we attempted to set off, not even being too knowledgeable about the laws of gravity. We headed upwards, struggling against the empire which was already the most powerful one but at a time when another super-power also existed. And we continued marching upwards, gaining experience, seeing our people and the Revolution gain in strength, until this point where we are today.

I wish I had more time to speak to you, but this moment now is without precedent. It is a time that is different from all the others. It is nothing like it was in 1945; it is nothing like it was in 1950 when we graduated, but we had all those ideas that I mentioned that day, when I affirmed with love, respect and the utmost affection, that I came to this University with a rebellious spirit, with some elemental ideas of justice, then here I became a revolutionary, I became a Marxist-Leninist and I acquired the ideas that I have never abandoned, nor have I ever been tempted to do so, not in the least. For that reason, I dare say that I will never abandon them.

In a spirit of confessions, I could say that when I finished studying in this university, I thought I was very revolutionary and basically, I was just starting on a much longer path. If at that time I felt that I was a revolutionary or a socialist, if I had absorbed all the ideas that made me who I am, and I could be nothing other than a revolutionary. I assure you today, in all modesty, that I feel ten times, twenty times, even a hundred times more revolutionary than I was then. (applause) If at that time I was willing to give up my life, today I am a thousand times more willing to give up my life for the revolution. (applause)

One is willing to give up one's life for a noble idea, for an ethical principle, for a sense of dignity and honor, even before one becomes a revolutionary. Tens of millions of men died on the battlefields of World War I and in other wars, impassioned by a symbol, by the beauty of a flag, by the emotional strains of an anthem like *La Marseillaise* was in its revolutionary time although it later became the anthem of the French colonial empire. In the name of that colonial empire and for a new distribution of the world, millions of Frenchmen died en masse in the trenches of World War I. Man is willing to die, to consciously and voluntarily give up his life; he does not fight out of instinct like so many animals fight instinctively moved by the laws of nature. Man is a complete creature, I mean both men and women, and more often one needs to include women. Yes, I have my reasons but I don't know if I'll have the time to tell you all of them. But the human being is the only one capable of consciously rising above all instincts, even though man is a creature of instincts, of egoism. Man is born egotistical, a result of the conditioning of nature. Nature fills us with instincts; it is education that fills us with virtues. Nature makes us do things

instinctively; one of these is the instinct for survival which can lead to infamy, while on the other side, our conscience can lead us to great acts of heroism. It doesn't matter what each one of us is like, how different we are from each other, but when we unite we become one.

It is amazing that in spite of the differences between human beings, they can become as one in a single instant or they can be millions, and they can be a million strong just through their ideas. Nobody followed the Revolution as a cult to anyone or because they felt personal sympathy with any one person. It is only by embracing certain values and ideas that an entire people can develop the same willingness to make sacrifices of any one of those who loyally and sincerely try to lead them toward their destiny.

You are constantly reading the works of the great thinkers, you are constantly reading history. In our country's history you read the works of Marti, you read the works of many distinguished patriot and in the history of the world and in the history of the revolutionary movements you read the theoreticians, those great theoreticians who never faltered in their revolutionary principles. It is the ideas that bring us together, ideas make us a combatant people on a collective and not just an individual basis; ideas make us a mass of revolutionaries. Then, when all of the forces unite, then the people can never be defeated, and when the number of ideas grows, when the number of ideas and values to be defended grows and multiplies, that is when a people can truly never be defeated.

And so, when we remember our comrades, and we see the youth who are taking on such important tasks; many of the others were leaders in this university and have behind them many years of struggle; some have more than 50, others might have more than 40 and today each one has his responsibility; many of them are students, others come from humble backgrounds, I see them all here today, those who were at Moncada, those that came on the *Granma*, fought in the Sierra Maestra and participated in all the battles; I see them all here, each one of them, defending a cause, a flag.

I see, for example our dear comrade Alarcon. I remember him because here we have been speaking of the struggle for the five imprisoned heroes, and he has been their indefatigable champion for justice. This was the task given him by the Revolution and he has shouldered the responsibility with his talent and in his capacity as President of the National Assembly.

I see comrade Machadito, a former doctor, but not an old doctor, who was with us in the mountains. I see Lazo, Lage and Balaguer, I see many more out there, I still have a good sight (laughter)/ I think I see Saez, I think we can see the Minister of Higher Education, I think I can see Gomez, with a few more pounds perhaps, and further along, I see Abel, with a biblical name, who has just come back from Mar del Plata where he waged a glorious battle.

Look at this world and see all the changes, all the aims we are pursuing today. Look at the strategies that are being designed, leading us into the strategies of the world. We are a tiny country, 90 miles away from the colossal empire, the most powerful empire ever in the history of the world. Forty five years have passed and there it is, farther away than ever from the possibility of forcing the Cuban nation to its knees, the same nation they humiliated and offended for some time. (Applause) Once the US owned everything in Cuba: the mines, hundreds of thousands of

the best hectares of land; the ports and its facilities; the electrical system, transportation, banking, commercial activities, etc. and the idiots believe that they will return here and that we will call on them on bended knees: "Come and save us again, Oh Saviors of the World! Come and we shall give you everything we have, again, this university too, so that you can put in 5,000 instead of half a million students; half a million is too much and for your mentality, you would like to see us unemployed and hungry so that filthy capitalism can function because it is only with a reserve corps of unemployed that it can function; come back and make the ranks of our illiterate unemployed grow and stand in lines out by sugarcane fields, with nobody bringing them water to drink, or food to eat, or housing, or transportation. Look for them, see if you can find them because here are their children, hundreds of thousands of them studying in the universities"

(Applause)

I saw it with my own eyes, nobody told me about it, I saw it hardly 48 hours ago. I saw it there at the Convention Center, first a group of a few hundred, dressed in their blue T-shirts; I saw it in the young people who graduated as social workers, and today they are all, without exception, university students, from the first to the fifth year of their courses, after a year of intensive study to become social workers, after several years studying for this profession, first there were 500 and now there are 28,000.

I think it was Agramonte, others say it was Cespedes, who responded to the pessimists when he had just 12 men with him: "I don't care about those lacking in confidence, because with these 12 men I can make a nation". If a nation can be made with 12 men, how many times greater than 12 men are we today? And 12 men, many times multiplied, armed with ideas, knowledge, culture, knowing all about the world, knowing about history, geography, about the struggles, because they possess what we call a revolutionary conscience, which is the sum total of many consciences, it is the sum total of a humanist conscience, the conscience of honor and dignity and the best values that man can grow. This nation is born of love for the homeland and love for the world; and we cannot forget that the homeland is humanity, a statement made more than a hundred years ago. Homeland is humanity, and we must repeat that every day, when someone forgets those living in Haiti or in Guatemala, suffering from the ravages of a natural disaster, among other things, suffering indescribable pain and indescribable poverty, as it is usually the case in most parts of the world.

That is all that the infamous empire and its repugnant system can show as a result of a history where the species set out on a long march for a just society that has not been attained over thousands of years, which is the very short, relatively well-known history of a species in its quest for a just society. And they have always been as far away from that society as we are close to it today, that is, closer to that just society we want to construct. And I dare say that regardless of the many flaws we still have, of our errors and inefficiencies, this is the society which in all human history comes closer to being described as a just society.

Where is justice that I cannot see it? I cannot see it because that one over there earns twenty, thirty times more than me as a doctor, or more than me as an engineer, or more than me as a university professor. Where is justice? And, why is this happening? What does the other produce? How many does he educate? How many does he heal? How many are made happy with

his knowledge, his books and his art? How many does he make happy by building a home? How many does he make happy by growing something to eat? How many does he make happy by working in factories, in industries, in the electrical system, in the drinking water system, in the streets, on the power grids, looking after communications or printing books? How many?

We must say that there are several dozens of thousands of parasites who produce nothing and just take that individual driving a vintage car from Havana to Guantanamo, buying and stealing fuel all along the way, who charged one of those young students 1000 pesos, 1200 pesos, when he had to travel just at a time when transportation difficulties were at their greatest. He knows his ways that alongside those highways, full of pot-holes in many places and missing a lot of signal, things that couldn't be finished for a variety of reasons, because of resources we lack, for conditions we still haven't been able to fix, for lack of controls over the managers and other staffs.

Yes, we have to bear that in mind and not forget it, for we are faced with a great battle, which we must begin to undertake. We shall undertake it and we will win. That's what is most important.

Yes, we are very much aware of this, and we think about this more than about anything else: our flaws, our mistakes, our inequalities, our injustice.

I wouldn't dare to mention this subject here if I was not firmly convinced and sure that we are quickly getting closer to reducing them and to obliterating them so that, barring world catastrophes and colossal wars, we can truly accomplish something. Listen to this well: our country's citizens, who at one time suffered a 10%, 15%, 20% or more rate of unemployment, our citizens who at one time numbered one million illiterate people, some being totally illiterate and some being semi-illiterate, up to 90% of the population, this nation today, and in a very near future, will have every one of her citizens living fundamentally on their work and their pensions and retirement incomes.

Never forget those who for years were our working class, going through decades of sacrifice, suffering the attacks of mercenary bands in the mountains, invasions like Giron, thousands of acts of sabotage that killed our sugar cane workers, our industrial and factory workers, those in the merchant marine or in the fishing industry, those who were suddenly attacked with cannons and bazookas, only because they were Cuban, only because they wanted to be independent, only because they wanted to improve the lot of our people; and there were the bandits, doing as they pleased, those bandits recruited and trained by the CIA. Some are criminals, some are terrorists who blew up planes in mid-air or attempted to blow them up, careless of how many would die, and those over there who organized attacks of every kind and organized acts of terrorism against our country.

Did the empire change in any way? I ask you, "little Bush", where is Mr. Posada Carriles, what have you done with that nice gentleman who despite his shameful actions keeps trying to have the empire on a tight rein? When are you going to answer that very simple question which we have asked you so many times? Where and how did Posada Carriles enter the US? What boat did he use and through which port did he enter? Which of the crown princes authorized this? Could it be the fat little brother in Florida? Forgive me for using the term "fat little brother"; it is not a

criticism, rather a suggestion that he do some exercises and goes on a diet, don't you think? (laughter)...I'm doing this for the gentleman's health.

Who welcomed him? Who gave their permission? Why is he strolling the streets of Florida, of Miami, so shamelessly? How did he pass that academy? Was it sailings or fish breeding? Who was that guy...the guy who was talking on the phone with another terrorist who had some cans of dynamite? And when he asked him, -that really was his voice,- he recognized the guy, everybody recognized him, he couldn't deny that, when they asked what he was going to do with those cans he said: "Go to the Tropicana and throw them through a window and finish it off". Look at how noble these people are, how law-abiding, how respectful of international laws and of human rights. And shameless "little Bush" hasn't been able to give us an answer yet; there he is, mute; nobody has answered us.

The authorities of our sister country, Mexico, haven't had the time either –yes, of course, they are very busy — to answer the question; it's not asking too much, sir, to say whether Posada Carriles, such a naïve kid, naïve and innocent, took that ship from that port, just as Cuba has charged.

They have a lot of nerve, these people, telling all those lies; and if you ask them one little question, a simple little query, they take months and months and they still have no answer, not one word. Months went by and they didn't know where their man Posada was.

That young bright girl, what's her name? The girl who is the Secretary of State (Laughter) Condoleezza or Condoliza? OK, Countess Rice (Laughter) She doesn't know anything either, doesn't have a clue; and the spokespersons don't know anything, either; they haven't lied, they haven't sinned one little bit, they are pure and deserve our congratulations and the trust of the entire world.

Of course, it's a lie that they tortured anybody; it's a lie that they were the accomplices of terrorism; it's a lie that they invented terrorism; it's a lie that they used torture anywhere; it's a lie that they used live phosphorus in Fallujah. Or rather, they say it's true, but it's legal, very legitimate and terribly decent to use live phosphorus. So who are they trying to scare?

We were witness to the colossal battle fought in Mar del Plata, in the stadium and in the area where all the presidents were assembled. I remembered this when I saw our comrades over there and when I saw Abel; I won't comment on this, but our people had the opportunity to see, to observe –I am aware of opinions — that grand battle, one on the streets and the other at the heads-of-state meeting.

Speaking of history, never before in the history of this hemisphere did such a battle take place, one that resembled the battle waged by that sad-faced gentleman, not because of any connection with Cervantes, but because that gentleman was grimacing, he was bored. They put him to bed at midnight and the world may fall apart; on any given day, the planes can take off from the aircraft carriers and drop bombs on that bandit territory which disturbed the slumber of the horseman who holds the reins of the empire, and while he sleeps, the horse wanders wherever it wants and it could be that, as the horseman sleeps, the horse is more aware of the empire's destiny than his master who had to go to bed early. (applause)

It's really a pity that we can't delay his awakening just a bit longer, because the world could be a better place.

And that's how it all goes. We have seen many things that cannot be forgotten.

Some have been asking whether Cuba spoke, whether Cuba took any sides. I'm telling you this now to warn you, because there are those scheming and making ridiculous statements about this. Cuba speaks whenever it is necessary, and Cuba has much to say; but we are not in a hurry, we are not impatient. We know very well when, where and how to deliver the blows to the empire, its system and its lackeys.

Apparently, some thought, or pretended to think, that there were no Cubans at Mar del Plata, that a first-class Cuban revolutionary force was not present in the glorious march in which thousands of world citizens, and mainly Argentines, took part; those who were offended by the emperor's parked aircraft carriers, his army, his renting hotels and hiring thousands of police officers. Nobody was going to do anything to him physically, really, what they wanted was that someone would throw a rotten egg at him. No, really, I think that would have been an honor he doesn't deserve (laughter).

The highly civilized Argentineans, together with the increasingly expert and aware citizens of our hemisphere, where the imposed order is not only untenable but beyond salvage, know exactly what they are doing. They said that it would be a peaceful demonstration, that not a blade of grass would be disturbed. This mass of people, coming together under the cold drizzle, marching for hours to the stadium and making their presence felt in that stadium, taught an unforgettable lesson to the empire, because they showed that the people know what they are doing and, they who know what they're doing, march straight to victory. Those who do not know what they are doing, are crushed by the people.

We don't want to give the empire any excuse to put on a little show. We shall see who is going to check-mate in this 50-piece chess game.

When I use the word "empire", I am not referring to the American people, make sure you understand me well. The American people will salvage many of the ethical values, many of the forgotten principles. They will adapt to the world we live in, if this world can save itself, and this world must save itself. Everyone should struggle and we should be the first in that struggle for the salvation of the world. Ideas are our invincible weapons.

Some speak of the battle of ideas, that battle of ideas which we have been waging for several years now and which is becoming a battle of ideas throughout the world. These ideas will triumph, these ideas must triumph. Let's carry this message, let's open the eyes of a humanity that seems condemned to extinction. It won't be eternal, as it is very likely that even the light of the Sun will go out one day. It is almost certain that there will be no way to move living, solid matter to a distance that is light years away from Earth; the laws of physics are much more rigorous, much more exact than historical or social laws.

In any case, I believe that this humanity and all the great things it is capable of creating must be preserved while it is still possible to do so. A humanity that doesn't care about the preservation

of its species would be like the young student or leader, who knows that his life is very limited to just a few short years and, nevertheless, worries only about his own existence.

I have mentioned the names of a few comrades present here today, some are older, some are not so old, but we never know how long we have left. In no way do I think that any of them wants to save himself without considering the fate of this admirable and marvelous nation. Yesterday, it was but a seed and today it is a mighty tree with deep roots. Yesterday, it was filled with noble potential and today it is filled with true nobility. Yesterday, it dreamed of knowledge and today that knowledge is real, when we are just beginning in this huge university that today is Cuba.

Just look how new cadres are springing up, young cadres. There is Enrique who is leading a small army of 28,000 social workers, plus the 7,000 who are still in school perfecting their skills in that noble profession.

As you know, we are presently waging a war against corruption, against the re-routing of resources, against thievery, and there is this force which we didn't have before we started with the battle of ideas, one designed to wage this battle.

I am going to say something, just to see if it will raise the sense of honor of the construction workers because when they want to be heroic, they are. But don't you think for a moment that stealing resources and materials is just a present-day illness, nor is it an exclusive phenomenon of the Special Period. The Special Period aggravated it, because in this period we saw the growth of much inequality and certain people were able to accumulate a lot of money.

I recall, we were building an important biotechnological center in Bejucal. There was a little cemetery close by. I was making my rounds, and one day I passed by the cemetery. There I saw a colossal market where the construction crew, both the foremen and many of the workers, had put up a market selling cement, steel rods, wood, paint, you name it, all kinds of construction materials.

You know that construction has always been a very serious problem. We have resources now; sometimes there have been shortages, but now we have the possibility of improving the situation of construction materials. However, it's tragic the dilemma with the workers, the weaknesses of the foremen, and of others in leading positions.

But this is nothing new. In the times I'm referring to, we needed 800 kilograms of cement to produce a ton of concrete; it was good quality concrete, the kind needed to put up floors or columns, and it was supposed to last much longer than El Morro castle and La Cabana fortress. Well then, they should use only around 200 kilograms. See the wastage, the re-routing of resources, see the larceny.

In this battle against vice there will be no truce for anyone and we shall be thoroughly scrupulous. We will appeal to everyone's sense of honor. We are sure of one thing; every human being possesses a healthy dose of honor. When one looks in the mirror, one is not always the harshest of judges, even though, in my opinion, the first responsibility of a revolutionary is to be extremely severe with oneself.

We are speaking of criticism and self-criticism, that's true, but our criticisms tend to be almost grouping criticisms; we never resort to criticism in a wider circle, we never resort to criticism on a larger scale.

For example, if an official from Public Health fudges the data documenting the existence of the Aedes Aegypti mosquito, he is summoned, he is criticized. I know some people who say: "Yes, of course, I criticize myself." And with that they are content. What a laugh! They are actually happy. So, you criticize yourself, and what about all the harm you have caused and all the millions that were lost because you were careless or acted incorrectly?

Criticism and self-criticism, it's all very good, as it did not exist in the past. However, if we are going to war we need weapons of greater caliber; we must carry out criticism and self-criticism in the school room, in the party cells and then outside the party cells, in the municipality and finally in the entire country.

Let's make use of that sense of honor which, undoubtedly, we all have, because I know many who are what we call "shameless" people, and they truly are shameless but when in some local newspaper they report what this individual has done, they are filled with shame.

The thief deceives, and the person who deserves to be criticized for some lapse and he is deceitful, he is also a liar.

The Revolution has to use these weapons, and we shall use them whenever necessary! It shouldn't have to be necessary. The Revolution will establish the necessary controls.

Many have been quite pleased with the way things have been going, as the song goes: "And how are you?" This is a question we could well ask of the folks who were going around with their little hose, putting gasoline into their big old cars, or receiving cash from that new rich who wasn't even willing to pay for the gasoline he was using.

Judge for yourselves whether what I am saying describes the reality of today; the general state of disorder, not just in this, but in other things as well, with losses of millions of dollars, maybe 80—listen, 80 is a huge bunch of millions! — it could even be 160 or 200 million dollars. Can you even conceive of what 200 million dollars mean? You've studied math. You've heard of the universities throughout the country, right? Yes or no? You are university leaders, and all the students have their rights, in some form or another, all kinds: regular day students, night students, students of this or of that. Do you know how many university students there are today? If you don't know, we can analyze it. I arrived here today, asking for data: let's see, tell me the exact number, 360,000. Yes, 360,000 as a result of the universalization of higher education.

No doubt Vecino knows. Don't get upset, Vecino, when I ask you for these figures, if you don't know them, don't worry about it.

How many regular day students are there in all the schools of higher education in the country, including the military?

If he doesn't know, someone must know.

(Someone tells him: 230,000)

Enrique, does it match with your figures?

(Enrique explains the distribution of the students' figures.)

Yes, 500,000, but we have to keep on adding.

Those are the students in the universalization program, adding the regular day students, these two figures, that's what I was talking about, it's 500,000.

But there are other categories, I have them here.

(Enrique explains that the figure includes associate professors, adding up to 75,000, together with 25,000 university professors, coming up with the sum of 100,000)

Here it says it's subdivided: "141,000 students in the regular day courses".

Do we all agree on this?

"One hundred and forty thousand students are studying in the courses for workers."

Are these the same ones, or not? Are they included in the 360,000? They are included in the 360,000 of the universalization program. Is that correct, or not?

(Enrique explains that it is independent, that there is the regular day course, the workers' course and the universalization.)

You mean the regular day group? (It is explained that this is the figure they are talking about).

There are courses for workers who already attend university; when they enter university I think they add to the figure of 360,000. Then, there are 32,000 students in distance education. What category are those in? Are they in the 360,000? They're not in the regular day group, they're not in the workers group, yet they are students. This educational group exists.

Fine, let's go with the most conservative figure, which is enough for my purpose here.

Today, there are more than 500,000 university students.

In addition, you know that we already have 958 university campuses. There's the reason why you, the FEU (University Student Federation), are already out there in the municipalities, where a total of 45 university courses are offered, and each year it grows. There are 169 municipal university campuses run by the Ministry of Higher Education; 130 university campuses in the "Alvaro Reinoso" area; of these, 84 are located in the sugar mills communities and a lot of these are included in the earlier figure; there are 18 located in prisons, campuses for higher education that have an enrolment of 594 in under-graduate programs in socio-cultural studies, not that many yet; 240 INDER (Sports Federation) university campuses, 19 in prisons where they are studying as well, with an enrolment of 579, where 200 have just finished the first year. This is new, too: university campuses in the prisons. We also have 169 municipal university campuses for public health, 1,352 campuses in the polyclinics, health units and blood banks, in all these places they are studying various public health related courses.

There are almost 100,000 professors, full professors and associates. Many who were part of the bureaucracy in the sugar mills and in other areas are today teaching courses as associate

professors; thus, the number of professors at the higher level has grown. The two groups –and I am not even mentioning the other university workers — students and professors combined, add up to a total of about 600,000. Among the students, more than 90,000 were young people who were neither attending school nor employed, many of them from poor backgrounds, and today they are showing excellent results in their university studies.

Shall I ask some questions or shall I go, more or less, by the data I have?

I've been asking about the cost, the budget for these higher education centers, right up to the last minute tonight. Carlitos handed me a figure, I believe it said 830. Vecino should know, because he is up on this data. Do you recall that one, Vecino?

(Vecino says that in last year's course, it was 230 million pesos.)

No, I wish! There's a figure that someone should know.

Look here, this is our Ministry of Finance. That was 2004 and I was asking about 2005, there has been an enormous growth. Last year's figures don't help me much, Vecino.

Well, what's happening to Vecino, happens to all of us, and it's a life or death matter. A few days ago, I was standing before a group of 200 university professionals, excellently prepared individuals, and I asked them: "Which of you can tell me your household's electrical bill?" Listen to this, comrades. How many do you think answered me? Just guess, use your logic.

What do you think? You just spoke here. And he's very smart, all of you are smart, but some of you are smarter. How many do you think answered my question, among those 200 university professionals? (He tells him: 100)

What do you think? Do you know how much electricity you use? (He indicates that he has some idea) What's your idea? Tell me in pesos and in kilowatt. (Laughter) No, wait, even more; can you tell me how many incandescent bulbs you have, what brand is your refrigerator, what is your TV set (black and white or in color) and how old it is, what kind of fan you have, how much water you boil each day, what do you boil it in, do you have liquefied gas supplied by pipes, kerosene or liquefied gas supplied in small containers. No, I don't want to ask you that question, be careful, I just wanted to know how many out of the 200 knew what their electric bill was.

You, you're laughing, let's see, and make a guess, an estimate...50, 70, 120. (Someone says it's the third) And what about you? (He says, at least 100) You must be thinking about how much you use, just in case you are asked, but I'm not going to ask you. (Laughter)

Do you know how many of the 200 were able to answer? You know how many? 0.0000 to the infinite power. You've studied some math, you can understand that: no-one, not one single person.

I think that all our people should meditate on that for a while

Can I ask you a question? Why did that happen? Come on, we need to think about this. We have said that we must change the world, that we must save it, that we are living in a world in its critical hour and very close to a tragic finale; I'm not exaggerating here just to impress you. That could happen when you are all younger than I am now. I am speaking for all of you, for your

children, your siblings, whether they are younger or older. It's never been proven, throughout the brief history of man, not the savage history but from the time it was a man and developed a mental capacity but still did not live in society, nor had he developed writing or a rudimentary technology.

You need to think. What kind of university leaders are you? Carlitos, where did this group that can't tell me why those 200 university professionals weren't able to answer the question about energy consumption come from? How long do you need to meditate on this? How about a minute? Would that be long enough? (One comrade explains that the reason is because the Cuban family can afford their electrical bill, unlike in other places where people have to be more vigilant about energy consumption.)

And you, what do you think? (He suggests that no university professor ever has to worry about paying the electrical bill).

What do you think? (The answer is that this happens because the bill is so insignificant.)

What do you think? (Another believes that the revolution subsidizes a large portion of our expenses and that saving is a concern.)

Fine, I'm going to ask you another question. You are zeroing in on the exact answer, at least one that I can agree with, and I'm not alone in my opinion. There are several questions that could complicate the matter some more, but we must make the people think. We have to call upon all our honest compatriots, even the dishonest ones, because after all there could be some dishonest individual who will come up with the truth, saying: "This is the reason." There are many. Simply stated, electricity is practically a gift, and I can prove it to you.

Afterwards, we might have other questions. How much are we earning? And if the question deals with how much we are earning, we might begin to understand the dream of everyone being able to live on their salary or on their adequate pension.

Let's add a bit more to this: consider the case of two sisters. One of them was a teacher and now the two are living together, having some problems, difficulties, earning a pension of 80 pesos because years ago, the salaries were much lower. And then there were periods of: "I'll pay you for overtime, I'll pay you because it is after hours, I'll pay you because it is night-time, I'll pay you extra because you had to work on a Sunday". None of this touched on the basic salary. It affected the teacher's take-home pay, but not the actual teacher's salary or the subsequent pension, according to the laws. Many of these laws were outdated and we have to begin to get rid of them. I can assure you that we have become aware of this. The entire life is a learning process, right up to our last breath.

Many things become clear at a certain time, and thinking of a million different subjects, one can become distracted and not notice a certain phenomenon, such as the raises in personal salaries at the outset of the Special Period: these were implemented following these norms and not following a basic salary guideline. And so there was no hesitation, recently, when the worker's minimum pension was raised to 150 pesos. The lady was earning 80 pesos, 50 was the minimum in a category, in another it would be 190 and in yet another it would be 230. So now, imagine if

you will, that teacher who had worked for 40 years, before the farmers' free market came into being and the intermediaries attacked the Republic. Because everyone knows very well that the farmer does go there to sell three pounds of rice. The farmer is not a merchant, he is a producer. The other one will have a truck because he stole it, or because he bought it, or because he bought it with stolen money, or because he put the motor in, for many reasons.

This is not speaking badly about the Revolution, this is in fact speaking very well of the Revolution, because we speak of a Revolution that can discuss all this and can grab the bull by the horns, even better than the Spanish bull-fighter. That one will take a red cloth, he'll close his eyes and sometimes he'll give it the coup de grace, pierce it with a pointed stick and infuriate the bull; but we have to take the bull by the horns in order to win the prize.

I've never been a fan of bull-fighting, even though I did read Hemingway. When I was in Mexico, from time to time I did go to a bullfight, a *corrida*, or whatever it's called. At the end, you get the prize: a good *torero* gets the tail or an ear. They give two ears and a tail to the one who did a perfect job, along with a glorious reputation and a celebration. I really don't mess with all that.

I recall that at the beginning of the Revolution, one of us, I can't remember who it was, started to talk about bull-fighting. We were somewhat ignorant about the subject, because we had seen it done in Mexico and thought it was a great tourist attraction. Look how much we knew, or who we were, or what we thought we were very revolutionary.

You are laughing, I'm glad because you are encouraging me to go on.

Here is a conclusion I've come to after many years: among all the errors we may have committed, the greatest of them all was that we believed that someone really knew something about socialism, or that someone actually knew how to build socialism. It seemed to be a sure fact, as well-known as the electrical system conceived by those who thought they were experts in electrical systems. Whenever they said: "That's the formula", we thought they knew. Just as if someone is a physician. You are not going to debate anemia, or intestinal problems, or any other condition with a physician; nobody argues with the physician. You can think that he is a good doctor or a bad one, you can follow his advice or not, but you won't argue with him. Which of us would argue with a doctor, or a mathematician, or a historian, or an expert in literature or in any other subject? But we must be idiots if we think, for example, that economy is an exact and eternal science and that it existed since the days of Adam and Eve, and I offer my apologies to the thousands of economists in our country.

All sense of dialectics is lost when someone believes that today's economy is identical to the economy 50 or 100 or 150 years ago, or that it is identical to the one in Lenin's day or to the time when Karl Marx lived. Revisionism is a thousand miles away from my mind and I truly revere Marx, Engels and Lenin.

One day I said: "I became a revolutionary in this university" but it was because I came in contact with those books. Well before I had committed myself, without having read any of those books, I was questioning capitalist political economy. Even at that time, it all seemed irrational to me;

and I took a political economy course in first year, taught by Portela, 900 mimeographed pages, really difficult, almost everyone failed. What a holy terror, that professor!

It was an economy that explained the laws of capitalism and examined the various theories about the origin of value; it also mentioned the Marxists, the Utopians, the Communists, in short, every economic theory. But once I began to study the political economy of capitalism, I began to have great doubts, I began to question all that, because I had grown up on a large rural estate and I remembered things, I had spontaneous ideas, just as any other utopian in this world.

Then, once I learned what utopian communism was, I realized that that's what I was a utopian communist because all my ideas took off from the idea: "This is not good, this is bad, this is a crime. How can we possibly have an overproduction crisis and hunger at the same time, when there is more coal, more cold, more unemployed, because there is more capacity to create wealth? Wouldn't it be simpler to produce and distribute the wealth?"

Just as Karl Marx thought in the period of the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, it seemed like limits for abundance were inherent in the social system; it seemed that just as production forces developed, they could produce everything that the human being needed to satisfy all his essential requirements almost limitlessly, be they material, cultural, etc.

We have all read that *Program*, and it is certainly very respectable. It established with total clarity the difference in his concept between socialist distribution and communist distribution. Marx didn't like to play the prophet or paint pictures of the future; he was very serious, and would never have done that.

When he wrote political books like *The 18th Brumaire* and the *Civil War in France*, he was a genius with a crystal clear interpretation. His *Communist Manifesto* is a classic. You can analyze it and be more or less satisfied with this and with that. I moved on from utopian communism to a communism that was based on serious theories of social development such as dialectic materialism. There was a lot of philosophy, much fighting and arguing. But of course, it is important to pay due attention to different philosophical tendencies.

In our real world, which must be changed, every revolutionary tactician and strategist has the obligation to conceive of a strategy and a tactic that will lead to the fundamental objective, to change the real world. No divisive tactic or strategy can be a good one.

I had the privilege of meeting the followers of the Liberation Theology once when I visited Allende in Chile, in 1971. I met many priests, representatives of various religious denominations, and they were presenting the idea of united forces in the struggle, regardless of any specific religious beliefs.

The world is desperately crying out for unity and if we cannot achieve a minimum of unity, we are not going to go anywhere.

Yesterday, in a meeting with the representative of the Holy See in our country, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of uninterrupted Cuba-Vatican relations, I was saying that one of the things I most appreciated about John Paul II was his ecumenical spirit. I attended religious schools from first grade until my last year, the schools of the De La Salle Brothers and the

Jesuits; it was all religious and we had to go to Mass every day. I don't criticize anyone who wants to go to Mass, but I am against forcing someone to attend every day; that's what happened to me.

Yesterday, I was also talking respectfully and in a good spirit to the bishops about many of these subjects; I recalled what I had said about ecumenism and I remembered that in my day I had witnessed a war to death, of all religious faiths fighting against each other. The Catholics were against the Jews, the Protestants, the Muslims, and everyone was against the other, to speak of one to the other was akin to speaking of the devil.

Many years later, I was quite surprised; I believe it was following the Council held in Rome, Vatican II. It had a great influence on creating an ecumenical spirit, fostering respect between all the various creeds.

Just imagine many powerful churches, the Catholic Church, all the other Christian churches, the Muslim faith. We ourselves are observing extremely interesting things, things we didn't know about the very powerful cultures, beliefs and customs in the Muslim faith, because our doctors are over there in a Muslim country, saving lives. They treat us with great affection and respect. I won't go into more detail, only to say that these are things that have a great impact. There are many very strong religions and some of them are 2500, 3000 years old, some of them are a little younger at 2000 years and others are only hundreds of years old.

This is a good example, because if religious sentiment is unable to be united, despite their various ethical ideals, or moral values or religious aims of any one religion, then unity can never be attained if seven, eight, ten or more churches struggle against each other, all of them refusing to talk to one another.

I have a very clear idea on this subject; ethical values are essential. Without ethical values, there can be no revolutionary values.

I don't know why the communists were credited with the philosophy of the end justifying the means, and sometimes one even asks oneself why the communists didn't defend themselves from that accusation of the end justifying the means. My explanation is that it is due to historical reasons. There was an enormous influence exerted by the first socialist state and by the first true socialist revolution born in a feudal country that still, by and large, has feudal customs and habits and a large percentage of illiteracy; but it was the first working class revolution springing from the ideas of Marx and Engels and developed by the other great genius, Lenin.

Above all, Lenin studied State issues; Marx did not speak of the worker-peasant alliance because he lived in a country that had a highly developed industrial base; Lenin recognized the under-developed world, he was aware of the country where 80 to 90 percent were peasants, and even though it had considerable strength in its railroad workers and in some other industries, Lenin saw with utmost clarity the necessity to forge a worker-peasant alliance. No one before had spoken of this; they had philosophized, but they hadn't talked about this. The first socialist revolution, the first real attempt at a just and egalitarian society, takes place in a huge semi-feudal, semi-under developed country. None of the previous societies slave-based, feudal,

medieval or anti-feudal, bourgeois, or capitalist could ever propose the existence of a just society even though much was said about liberty, equality and fraternity.

Throughout history, the first serious human attempt to create the first just society began less than 200 years ago; the Communist Manifesto was written in 1850 and in 45 years, yes, in 45 more years, it will be 200 years old. After it was written, the evolution of revolutionary thinking could be appreciated.

One could never have arrived at a strategy through dogma. Lenin taught us a lot, because Marx taught us to understand society. Lenin taught us to understand the State and the role of the State.

All these historical factors had a tremendous influence on revolutionary thinking, and of course there were abusive practices, at times even repugnant ones.

This is what gave rise to the slanderous accusation that for communists “the end justifies the means”. I have reflected a great deal about the role of ethics. What is the ethic of a revolutionary? All revolutionary thinking begins with a bit of ethics; some values acquired from parents, others from teachers, but no one is born with these ideas. No one is born with the gift of speech, either; someone has to teach us to speak. The influence of the family is huge.

Upon studying the cases of young people who go to prison between the ages of 20 and 30, we see where they came from, the cultural level of the parents and we note that this has a decisive influence. Such an influence in fact, that during the battle of ideas, after all kinds of sociological research on this subject, we reached the conclusion that crime in Cuba was closely associated with the cultural level and social status of the parents.

It was astounding to see how very few children of university professionals and intellectuals turned to a life of crime. It was likewise incredible to see the numbers coming from economically disadvantaged families that lacked a cultural base. Another problem was of great influence: the disintegration of the family cell in the low income family with an inferior cultural level. Some children ended up staying with neither the father nor the mother, but with an aunt or a grandmother who might have health related problems or something else. This would have a noteworthy influence upon the future of the child.

It was then that we began using university brigades to visit the poorest of our districts, and we decided to mobilize 7,000 students for that. These were the students who later received a diploma, signed by me in a plane, coming back from Africa. I cannot remember how many hours it took me to sign thousands of diplomas, but they were meant to represent the value we placed on the work of these young people. I visited with them on the job, and how we learned! We had to see what was happening there in society. We needed to know many things that were unknown to us: how the people were actually living.

It was then that we discovered, for example, the case of a working mother, earning a salary, with a severely mentally handicapped and bed-ridden child who needed constant care. Some family member would look after the child while the mother was at work. One day, the family member left, or died, and that woman was forced to choose between the job, which supported her, or the care of her child.

I'd like to tell you that we decided that every woman in similar circumstances ought to have the possibility to choose, according to her job and according to the needs and importance of her work for society, whether to receive a salary so that she could look after her child, or the State would pay someone a salary to care for the child while she was at work. This is just one example among many.

The student brigades also helped in saving the lives of persons who, for example, were going to commit suicide due to mental illness or depression or some other reason. We learned so many things! There were about 20,000 or 30,000 people older than 60 who lived alone and didn't even have a bell to let someone know that they might have a chest pain or some other health problem. Such was our society.

We looked into the income these people were receiving from a pension or from social security. Much of the data doesn't even appear in any statistic, or census. We kept on discovering more and more, accomplishing things and forging ideas. We put together more than 100 social programs, many of which have come to fruition a while ago. We haven't publicized all that we have accomplished. What glorious days those were! Starting basically with the groups of young people and with the support of the Party and all the institutions, we developed that battle of ideas around the return from the United States of the kidnapped little boy.

We shall always be grateful for the circumstances that accelerated our knowledge of society and our learning process. I think that we would not be doing what we are doing today if it had not been for that experience.

We created the first course for social workers. We needed to know what the minimum salaries were. I would like you to know that the minimum salary increase was made after we had crossed the country from end to end. Social assistance was one third of everything that was established that year, taking it up to 129 pesos on average. When the pensions were increased, the effect was much stronger as the minimum pension was raised to 150, to 190 in the following category and 230 in the one following that. The minimum salary was also substantially raised.

We were speaking of the importance of the ethical factor. We would have to research the reasons for the confusion. I believe that historical events influenced the idea that for a communist the end justifies the means. There were international events that were difficult to understand — I've mentioned them on more than one occasion — in spite of everything, there was the precedent of France and Britain, those two great colonial powers and the greatest in the world, attempting to hurl Hitler against the USSR. I think that the imperialist plans to throw Hitler against the USSR would never have justified the pact made between Hitler and Stalin, it was a very hard blow. The communist parties, well-known for their discipline, were obliged to defend the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and to politically bleed to death.

Before this pact, the necessity for unification in the anti-fascist struggle led to the alliance in Cuba of the Cuban communists with Batista. By then, Batista had suppressed the famous strike of April 1934 that followed his coup against the provisional government in 1933 which was unquestionably revolutionary in nature and to a large degree, the result of the historical fight of the workers' movement and the Cuban communists. Before that anti-fascist alliance, Batista had

assassinated countless numbers of people and robbed incredible sums of money, and had become a flunky of Yankee imperialism. The order came from Moscow: organize the anti-fascist front. It was a pact with the devil. Here the pact was with the fascist ABC and Batista, a fascist of a different color, who was both a criminal and robber of the public coffer.

These were very difficult events, and one followed on the heels of another; the most disciplined communists in the world –and I say that with all sincere respect- were the communist parties of Latin America. Among these was the Cuban Communist Party. I have always held them in very high regard, and I still do.

Today we can speak of this subject because we are entering a new phase.

The members of the Cuban Communist Party were the most disciplined people, the most honorable and the most self-sacrificed for this country. The Party legislators handed over a portion of their salaries. They were the most honorable people in the country notwithstanding the erroneous direction that was imposed by Stalin on the international movement. How can we blame them? They were faced with the dilemma of accepting or not something which was, in my criteria, absolutely correct: the unity of all communists. “Workers of the world, unite!”, or openly destroy, under the circumstances, all discipline.

I am not one of those people who criticize historical characters demonized by world reaction so that they become a joke for the bourgeoisie and the imperialists. Neither am I going to commit the stupidity of not daring to say what needs to be said on a day like today. We must have the courage to recognize our own errors exactly for that reason, for only in that manner will we reach the objective that we hope to attain. A tremendous vice was created, the abuse of power, the cruelty and, in particular, the habit of one country imposing its authority, that of one hegemonic party, over all other countries and parties.

For more than 40 years we have maintained relations with the Latin American revolutionary movement and they have been extremely close relations. But, it has never even occurred to us to tell anybody what they should be doing. We have seen every revolutionary movement zealously defend its rights and its prerogatives.

I remember crucial moments. I will state this here, and it will only be part of the story. When the USSR crumbled, many people were left on their own, including the Cuban revolutionaries. But we knew what we had to do, what our options were. Everywhere, revolutionary movements were carrying on their struggle. I am not going to say which ones, I’m not going to say who they were; but they were all very serious revolutionary movements and they asked us whether there should be some negotiation process in the face of such a desperate situation, whether the struggle should continue or not, whether negotiations should begin with the other side to strike a peace accord, even though everyone knew the consequences of such a peace.

I would tell them: “You cannot ask us our opinion, as it will be you fighting the battle, and you alone who will die, not us. We know what we are going to do and what we are prepared to do: but these are decisions which each one must make for themselves.” That was the highest expression of our respect for the other movements. We have never attempted to impose ourselves

on the basis of our knowledge and experience, or the enormous respect they show for our revolution which motivated them to listen to our point of view.

At that moment we didn't know whether there would be advantages or disadvantages for Cuba as a result of the decisions that they would take: "You make your own decisions," we said. And so at the decisive moment, each one of them charted their own path. We are a small island here in the Caribbean sea, 90 miles away from the empire and within inches of their illegal military base, a thousand times weaker than the USSR at the time of its pact with Hitler, or at the time it was giving orders to the communist parties. Poland was invaded by the Nazis and the Soviet army had been purged of its best and most brilliant leaders do to scheming by the Nazis. At the time of the Weimar Republic established in Germany after World War I, in the midst of an incredible economic crisis unleashed as a consequence of the Treaty of Versailles imposed by England, France and the United States, there was in Germany a strengthening of the revolutionary movement and a growth of the most reactionary nationalist forces.

Hitler wins in the elections against the liberal bourgeois parties and the militant communist and revolutionary forces. But a much more decisive factor was the terrible resentment of the German people against those unfair conditions dictated by the victors. And it is against this background that Hitler comes to power. In a book he wrote, Hitler casually declared that his aim was to seek vital space in USSR territory for the German race, at the expense of the Russians whom he considered to be an inferior race. All this was written, and the communist movement took on very clear ideas and concepts to oppose Nazi fascism.

In our country, after so many revolutionaries had fallen, since the communists were the most conscientious, the most militant and the most honorable, the Marxist Leninist Party was led, of course, to that alliance with Batista, the same who had repressed students and the public in general. The young people resented his power very much; the workers who had always seen their interests continuously defended by the communist leaders were firmly loyal to the Party, but it was among the youth and wide popular sectors of society that there was the most justified rejection of Batista.

I believe that the experience of that first socialist State, a State that should have been fixed and not destroyed, was a bitter one. You may be sure that we have thought many times about that incredible phenomenon where one of the mightiest powers in the world disintegrated the way it did; for this was a power that had matched the strength of the other super-power and had paid with the lives of more than 20 million of her people in the battle against fascism.

Is it that revolutions are doomed to fall apart, or that men cause revolutions to fall apart? Can either man or society prevent revolutions from collapsing? I could immediately add to this another question: Do you believe that this revolutionary socialist process can fall apart, or not? (Exclamations of: "No!!") Have you ever given that some thought? Have you ever deeply reflected about it?

Were you aware of all these inequalities that I have been talking about? Were you aware of certain generalized habits? Did you know that there are people who earn forty or fifty times the amount one of those doctors over there in the mountains of Guatemala, part of the "Henry

Reeve” Contingent, earns in one month? It could be in other faraway reaches of Africa, or at an altitude of thousands of meters, in the Himalayas, saving lives and earning 5% or 10% of what one of those dirty little crooks earns, selling gasoline to the new rich, diverting resources from the ports in trucks and by the ton-load, stealing in the dollar shops, stealing in a five-star hotel by exchanging a bottle of rum for another of lesser quality and pocketing the dollars for which he sells the drinks.

Just how many ways of stealing do we have in this country? Why is it that we read every day in the opinion polls that people are asking about when the “kids” are coming to the dollar stores, to the drugstores, or to all the other places? Everyone is full of admiration for these “kids”, I mean the social workers, who came out of economically disadvantaged environments and are now highly prepared and trained.

I looked at those faces, as I look at you now and faces tell me more than any article, any book or cliché. You are aware that since the beginning of civilization, since the inception of private property, there has been a class difference. The world has only known a class based society, all the rest is pre-history.

How is it that I can tell that you come from economically disadvantaged environments? None of you entered university because you were the son or daughter of an important land-owner.

Here we are and I have been given the honor of sitting here. Which of you has a father who owns 1,000 hectares, or more than 10,000 hectares? I won't ask each one of you, because all I need to do is to look at you to know whether by chance one of you is the child of some professional, of the middle class. You applauded loudly because I know where you are coming from, and you know that today, there is no one left that cuts sugar cane by hand. Who were the cane cutters?

I could also explain why we no longer cut cane today; there are no cane cutters here and the heavy machinery destroys the sugar cane fields. The abuses of the developed world and the subsidies have led to sugar prices that were scraping the bottom of the trash bins, on the world markets. In the meantime, Europe was paying its growers two or three times more.

In the days when the USSR paid our sugar at 27 or 28 cents, and paid in oil because it was cheaper to pay for sugar with oil than to buy the beet sugar produced labor intensively in the Russian fields, the USSR was a country whose economy grew extensively, not intensively, and so their labor force was never enough and the beet harvest required many workers.

So, we are now coming to the point of asking ourselves this question –I have already reached this point myself, some years ago — in the face of this super-powerful empire that stalks us and threatens us, that has transition plans and military action plans in this specific historical moment.

They are awaiting a natural and absolutely logical event, the death of someone. In this case, they have honored me by thinking of me. It might be a confession of what they have not been able to do in a long time. If I were a vain man, I could be proud of the fact that those guys admit that they are waiting for me to die, and this is the time. They are waiting for me to die, and everyday they invent something new: Castro has this, he's suffering from that, and now the latest is that they say Castro has Parkinson's disease.

Yes, it's true, I had a very bad fall and I'm still in rehab for this arm (He shows the arm), and its improving. I'm very grateful for the circumstances which caused me to break my arm, because now I'm forced to be even more disciplined, to work more, to dedicate more time (almost 24 hours a day) to my job. I had been doing this ever since the Special Period began, and now I dedicate every second to my work and I fight harder than ever. Luckily, I feel better than ever because I'm more disciplined and I exercise much more. (Applause)

So they call it Parkinson's. I recall that the day after my fall, when I was told I had fissures, in the plural, on my upper humerus. When I was about to write a report about what had happened, I was told: "No, the plural of fissure is fracture." At that time, there was nothing to do but to say: "Write fissure and I will explain to the people that it isn't a fissure, but fissures." I made that clear, because in any case, I don't fear the enemy; but I believed that I was in good shape, that it had been an accident and that I hadn't hit my head. If I had hit my head, I probably wouldn't be here today. I got into the ambulance and was driven to Havana, where the first thing they did was to construct a new knee cap for me out of the eight fragments of the old one, and a few other things. Those who have already killed me off several times can be almost-happy. But they have suffered disappointment after disappointment and I have been forced to undertake a tough road through my rehabilitation. I do it daily, so that the knee cap can function more smoothly. And listen to this: two liters of blood leaked into the inside of my shoulder and in the upper part of the arm, not even showing up on the X-ray.

I have been very diligent, and I continue in my efforts. What I have learned is that I shall be exercising until my last breath, I cannot let anything go, and I have better eating habits what is good for me and not eating one gram more than is necessary.

Now they say that the CIA has discovered that I suffer from Parkinson's. That's a little like the guy who discovered that I was the wealthiest man in the world. What a faux pas! That's a little tale that is still floating around. I'll tell you this; I haven't talked about it because in the last few months I haven't had any available TV time: there was Posada Carriles over there, and the bandits, and a million other things. But I'm saving this little story, and they are going to lose this one. The guy and all his cronies are going to have a bit of a problem for having invented this one; they don't know what to do now, perhaps the best thing would be to correct themselves. They say that I have Parkinson's. Whenever you are exercising, the arm gets stronger gradually, muscle by muscle. How many people have I had to greet? Literally thousands, and some of them come up to me and pull on my arm what can I do? I should do what some others do when someone touches you there, you tense up the shoulder so that it appears to be stronger and made of iron. Every time I have to shake hands, I do that. So this arm is stronger than the other one (He shows the right arm), what do you think of that?

But the CIA has discovered that I have Parkinson's. Truly, I don't care if I do have Parkinson's. The Pope suffered from Parkinson's and he spent many long years traveling all over the world with great energy, they even tried to assassinate him; so, this is what I did: "Let's see how my Parkinson's is doing, let me aim (he points firmly with his index finger) (Applause and exclamations), and so I say, it's the right one."

I've been lucky that I've always had great aim. And I still have it, even without a telescopic lens.

The day following the accident, they take you to a hospital, they send you here and there, you don't protest, but you know exactly what they are doing to you. In my case, they had to consult on the operation to know what they were going to do and how they were going to do it. What to do with the knee cap and how to do it. What to do with the arm. So I said: "Give me local anesthesia," because if I was really not feeling up to doing anything I would call the Party and say: "Look, I'm not up to doing anything." Because of this, I have criticized the doctors, because they minimized the seriousness of the situation somewhat. The surgery, good; the rehab, here's what I said: "Fine, in the long run, I have no plans to pitch in the next baseball championship, and I'm certainly not going to participate in the next Olympics". It was more risky to undergo the operation, with the steel pins and everything else. They need to be doing this with a 20 or 25 year old. But, anyway, the correct thing had to be done, and if you know you are not going to be able to fulfill some obligation, you say: "This is what is happening, please, find somebody else to take over because I don't feel up to it." If my time to die comes, I will die, and if I don't die and recover, one has some level of experience, some sense of authority and nothing is gained with lies and dishonor. Those were my concerns at that moment.

Once I said that the day I really die, nobody will believe it; I'll probably carry on like El Cid, astride his horse, winning battles, even after death.

You can never trust imperialism; it is treacherous and capable of anything. It tortures in Guantanamo, it tortures in the prisons of Iraq, it has prisons for torture in the former socialist countries, it uses live phosphorus, and then they say: "It is the most innocent and legitimate of weapons." If you were in my position, it would be logical for you to have a weapon and be able to use it. And so I do. I have a Browning, with a 15 shot capacity. I've used guns a lot in my life.

The first thing I wanted to do was to see if my arm was strong enough to fire this gun that I had always used. I always have it around, close to me. I removed the bullet holder, loaded it, put on the safety, took it off again, removed the bullet holder, took out the bullets, and said: Relax. That was on the next day.

Measures have been taken and measures prepared so that there can be no element of surprise, and our people should know what to do in any scenario. Listen to me well; it is necessary to know what to do under any circumstances.

We are not going to describe these measures to "little Bush"; we are not going to tell him what we have prepared. But I can say this: "Look, little gentleman, you cannot stand it, that is, if they haven't already given you a swift kick in the pants and removed you for having violated the US laws." Everyone is protesting against him, and all that keeps coming up are news of crimes, and still more crimes.

Today, I certainly don't want to suggest to the CIA –I hope I won't have to tell them — that I have been doing some research on the emperor while they are busy researching the state of my health and the alleged Parkinson's I'm suffering. But, I don't think I need to do so.

I don't aim to personally insult anyone. I say what I say because it reveals concepts, it reflects contempt, it reflects the clear idea we have about mediocrity, stupidity and many other factors; but I don't wish to mention certain subjects, we have abundant material, and we could mention to the CIA —this organization is angry because it has been humiliated — certain facts we know regarding the health of the emperor. Of course, the CIA has not said a word either about how Posada Carriles entered the US. No one has, no one, no one!

I asked you a question, comrade students; don't worry, I haven't forgotten, and I'd like to believe that you will never forget it. It is the question that I ask in view of historical experiences we have known, and I ask you all, without exception, to reflect on it: Can the revolutionary process be irreversible, or not? Which are the ideas or the degree of conscience that would make the reversal of the revolutionary process impossible? When those who were the forerunners, the veterans, start disappearing and making room for new generations of leaders, what will be done and how will it be accomplished? After all, we have been witnesses to many errors, and we didn't notice.

A leader has a tremendous power when he enjoys the confidence of the masses that put full trust in his abilities. The consequences of errors committed by those in authority are terrible, and this has happened more than once during the revolutionary processes.

Such is the stuff for meditation. One studies history, one meditates on what happened here and there, on what happened today and on what will happen tomorrow, on where each country's processes will lead, what path our own process will take, how it will get there, and what role Cuba will play in this process.

The country has endured limitations in resources, many limitations; but this country has wasted resources, thoughtlessly. So, while you received the soaps that had no perfume and the toothpaste, regularly every month, and even though sometimes certain activities in the schools were neglected which, for example caused the excellent state of dental health among our youth to decay, some thought that socialism could be constructed with capitalist methods. That is one of the great historical errors. I do not wish to speak of this, I don't want to theorize. But I have an infinite number of examples of many things that couldn't be resolved by those who called themselves theoreticians, blanketing themselves from head to toe in the books of Marx, Engels, Lenin and many others.

That was why I commented that one of our greatest mistakes at the beginning of, and often during, the Revolution was believing that someone knew how to build socialism.

In my opinion, today, we have relatively clear ideas about how one goes about building socialism, but we need many extremely clear ideas and many questions answered by you who will be the ones responsible for the preservation, or not, of socialism in the future.

What kind of a society would this be, how worthy of joy could we be when we assemble on a day like today, in a place like this, if we were not minimally aware of what we need to know, so that on our heroic island, this heroic people, this nation which has written pages in the history books like no other nation in the history of mankind can preserve the Revolution? Please, do not think that this who is speaking to you is a vain man or a charlatan, or someone inclined to bluff.

Forty-six years have passed and the history of this country is known and the people of this nation know it well. They also know their neighbor very well, the empire, with its size and its power, its strength and its wealth, its technology and its control over the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, all the world of finances. That country has imposed on us the most incredibly iron-clad blockade, which was discussed at the United Nations where 182 nations supported Cuba, voting freely even though they ran a risk voting against the empire. The island has achieved this today, not during the days when the European socialist countries stood together with us, but after the socialist camp had disappeared and the USSR had fallen apart. We forged this Revolution alone, against all risk, for many long years and we had realized that if the day ever come when we would be under direct attack by the US, no one would ever fight for us, nor would we ask anyone to do so.

It would have been naïve of us to think, or to ask for, or to expect that one super-power would fight against the other, in this day and age of modern technological development, to intervene in this island 90 miles away. We came to the conclusion that such support would never happen. And another thing: once we asked them directly, a few years before the collapse: “Tell us frankly.” : “No,” they said. It was the answer we knew they would give and from that point on, more than ever, we accelerated the development of our concept and we perfected the tactical and strategic ideas which have seen to the triumph and victory of the Revolution. The Revolution’s strength began with the struggle of seven armed men against an enemy with 80,000 troops including marines, soldiers and police, tanks, airplanes and all kinds of modern weaponry of the time. What an infinitely huge difference between our weapons and the weapons of that army, trained by the US, supported by the US and supplied by the US. After we received our reply, we held on to our concepts more firmly than ever, we deepened them and we gained in strength to the point where we can affirm today that our country is militarily invulnerable, and not because of arms of mass destruction.

They may have tanks to spare, but we have just what we need, not one to spare! All their technology collapses like ice-cubes beneath the noon-day sun in a hot summer. And again, just like when we possessed only seven guns and a handful of bullets. Today, we possess much more than those seven guns. We have a people who have learned to handle weapons; we have an entire nation which, in spite of our errors, holds such a high degree of culture, education and conscience that it will never allow this country to become their colony again.

This country can self-destruct; this Revolution can destroy itself, but they can never destroy us; we can destroy ourselves, and it would be our fault.

I have been fortunate to have lived many years. That is not a special merit but rather, it is an exceptional opportunity to share with you everything that I am telling you, young leaders, all the leaders of the masses, all the leaders of the workers’ movement, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, the women’s groups, the farmers, the veterans of the Revolution, organized throughout the country, hundreds of thousands who have struggled through the years carrying out glorious internationalist missions, students like yourselves, intelligent, well prepared, healthy, organized. You are everywhere, in each one of those 900 or so campuses and the 1000 plus and the 2000 plus that we shall quickly have; and it will continue growing until more than

500,000 and 600,000, with new graduates every year. And those that graduate, like our physicians in Venezuela, will be studying with the aid of computers, videos and cassettes, all the audio-visual means necessary, to attain that scientific degree, that Master's or that Doctorate in medical sciences, everyone, one hundred percent of them.

Today we may speak about thousands of specialists in comprehensive general medicine and tomorrow we will be speaking about thousands of professionals in medical sciences, just to mention one branch. Let's not forget that once we had 3,000 doctors and no university professors. Many left this very university. Today, we can say that in a few short years, there will be 100,000 doctors. When those are not enough, there will be 150,000. And we will have university professors, just as we have thousands of programmers and program designers and researchers. Many changes are coming because we need to know much in a short time.

I was just telling you about a battle and I asked how much it cost. Don't think that these 28,000 social workers will be working for nothing. I've already told you how I knew that they came from the most modest of the segments of the population, I saw it in their faces. Involuntarily, I have developed the habit of guessing the province from which my compatriots come. I mentioned it in jest, and I say it to the doctors who are leaving on their missions, to the social workers, that each one belongs to a micro-tribe. I recognize those that come from Manzanillo, for example, those from Havana, from Guantanamo, from Santiago; it is impressive to see people from the most humble backgrounds in this country transform into 28,000 social workers and thousands of university students, university students!! What a force! And soon we shall also be seeing those who graduated a while ago in the Sports Coliseum.

The coliseum teaches us about Marxist-Leninism; it teaches us about social classes. A short while ago, about 15,000 doctors and medical students, some of them from ELAM (Latin American School of Medicine), and some from as far away as Eastern Timor, were gathered in the coliseum. It was an unforgettable event.

The image of those 15,000 white coats all together on graduation day can never be forgotten. That was the day that the "Henry Reeve" Contingent was created following in the tradition of many doctors who have been to places where exceptional events have taken place, in a time span much too brief to even imagine.

A short while later, the more than 3,000 young art instructors graduated; it was the second group, following that first graduation in Santa Clara. There are now 3,000 more of them already working. The next 3,000 that are in their last year of studies are also at work. And so they multiply. One day we shall assemble half at least of the social workers that are today developing one of the most transcendental tasks ever taken on by a group of young people. There is a group of Social Work Specialists who have joined forces with these young university students and they have become as one.

And what can we expect from the work of these youth? We shall put a stop to many of these vices: thievery, diversion of materials and money draining away towards the new rich.

Does anybody think that we are going to confiscate funds? No, money is sacred; everybody who has their money in the bank cannot be touched.

But look at something new, we are going to battle against an abundance of vices, theft, re-routing, one by one, we will get to them all, in some order. They don't suspect it. Do you have any ideas? Very good, then!

Certain vices can be very deep-seated. We started with Pinar del Rio to ascertain what was happening in the gas stations that sell gas in dollars. We soon discovered that there was as much gas being stolen as sold. Almost half the amount was being stolen and in other places more than half.

Well, what is happening in Havana? Will they mend their ways? Not really, everything is fun and games. Perhaps they thought that the social workers were idiots, little boys and girls. It is interesting to note that 72% of the social workers are women — I don't think something like that has happened before — just as the doctors who are raising the prestige of our country and opening the way so that this country can use her human capital, something which is much more precious than oil. I repeat; it is much more precious than oil or gold, and any country that has oil is saying: "Wow, how lucky! I have this natural resource that is running out!" We do too, and we are going to increase oil production, of course. It's fortunate we didn't discover it earlier, because it would have been wasted.

Human capital is not a non-renewable product. It is renewable, and better, still it can be multiplied. Each year human capital increases and receives what was called, in my time, a compound interest. Add up what it is worth and receive an interest for what it is worth and for what it has earned; in five years you have much more capital, and in 100 years, it boggles the mind.

Allow me to tell you that today, human capital is practically superior to almost all of the others put together, and it is advancing very quickly to become the country's most valuable resource. I'm not exaggerating.

I was asking about the cost; what was the economic cost of all our universities.

Just by using the new income collected by the gas stations in three months —and, of course, they are not going to be doing this forever, as you may guess — but if they were to grow another 50% next year, they would collect the necessary funds in four months. All they have to do is force the new rich to pay for the fuel they consume, and in this way, within a year, they would pay no less than four times over what 600,000 university students and their professors cost. That's something, isn't it? And there would be a couple extra

Do you know what a "couple extra" is? The people from Santiago know it. When you bought something at the store, they would give you something extra as a prize, a candy made of coconut or some such thing. That was the "couple extra". The social workers pay for this with a "couple extra."

They arrived in Havana and suddenly they were collecting double. And didn't those who were there collect more? No, the social workers had to come. So I said to myself: "Is it possible that they have not learned their lesson and correct themselves?"

Eventually, those that don't want to understand will correct themselves, but in a different way: they are going to cover themselves in their own garbage. They just don't want to understand.

So what was happening in the meanwhile in Matanzas and in Havana Province? The collection increased just a bit: 12 %, 15 %, 20 %. But they were just like Pinar del Rio and the capital before the controls were in place.

In Havana Province people learned to steal like crazy.

Today, the social workers are in the refineries; they get on board the tanker trucks that carry 20,000 or 30,000 liters and they watch, more or less, where that truck goes, and how much of the oil is re-routed.

They have discovered private gas stations, supplied with oil from these trucks.

We all know that many of the state owned trucks go all over the place, and sometimes they visit a relative, a friend, a family or a girl-friend.

I remember the time, several years before the Special Period, I saw a brand new Volvo front-loader on Fifth Avenue...one of those at the time would have cost 50,000 or 60,000 dollars. I wanted to know where the truck was heading at that speed so I asked my escort: "Hold on, ask him where he's going; try to get an honest answer." The driver confessed that he was off to visit his girl-friend in that new Volvo, going down Fifth Avenue at top speed.

Some things you'll see, Mio Cid—I think it was Cervantes who said this—that would make the stones talk.

So, this is some of what has been happening. In general, we all know, and many have said: "The Revolution can't do that; no, it's impossible; no, nobody can fix that." But yes, the people are going to fix it this time, the Revolution is going to fix it, any way we can. Is it merely an ethical matter? Yes, it is above all an ethical matter; but even more, it is a vital economic matter.

Our nation is one of those that waste the most combustible energy in the world. We had proof of it right here, and you very honestly pointed it out; it is very important. No one knows the cost of electricity; no one knows the cost of gasoline; no one knows its market value. I was about to tell you that it is very sad when a ton of oil can cost 400 dollars and a ton of gasoline can cost 500, 600, 700 or on occasion 1000; this is a product which does not get cheaper. Whenever that happens it is circumstantial, and it does not last long. But the product itself will run out. It's very simple: oil will run out just as many of the world minerals.

Take a look at our nickel mines, leaving great holes where once there used to be a lot of nickel. This is happening to oil; the great oil fields have all been found and every day there is less of them. This is a subject about which we have had to think long and hard.

For example, do you know how many kilometers per liter it takes to operate a Zil-130? 1.6 kilometers. It transports sugar cane or delivers snacks to the secondary school students. The Ministry of Sugar was told: Look, the Ministry of Food Industries needs your help to distribute the snack to the junior high schools. How many trucks can you spare? We have to reach 400,000

children, free of charge, to bring them their yoghurt and their bread. Of course, of those they could spare they offered the ones running on gasoline, the most cost inefficient.

If you were to exchange this Zil running on 1.6 kilometers per liter for a vehicle that has the appropriate size, let's say a two ton truck, and that one was a 5 ton truck, even a 1.2 ton truck would do. We started to see this in a discussion with the electrical industry company. They raised the problem of trucks needed to repair power grids and said: "We have to exchange 400 Soviet gas-guzzlers, because we're spending too much on gasoline." We studied them one after another, to see how much they used and what should replace them. The discussions were long; don't you think that the directors of our companies outstand for their discipline. And everyone can't be happy, I warn you; and I warn all of you as well, because this promises to be a tough fight. Till now, nobody has complained but, if I remember correctly, there were around 3,000 entities that were handling convertible currency and were managing their profits with generous expenditures in convertible currency, buying this and that, painting their houses, buying a new car and getting rid of the old clunker. We realized that, given the conditions this country is living in, such habits must be broken. We called a meeting with the main companies and they commenced to put some changes into place.

When you go to war with a lot of bullets, you're not too worried whether the guns are shooting that efficiently, however, if you have few bullets (something that always happened to us in the war) you must be familiar with each gun's bullets, even knowing the brand name, even though they may be of the same caliber, some bullets function better with a certain gun, others may jam up. Sometimes, in the name of economy, you have to prevent them from being fired and just shoot when the enemy is breaching the trenches. For example, there is nothing as terrible as an automatic weapon being fired, and that's how we operated.

Let's speak of banks. We have excellent banking institutions. The banks today manage all the resources for all the expenses of the nation; they pay out in accordance to the established programs. You will never see the director of any bank out to lunch with the representative of some powerful corporation. Directors are never invited to dine in a restaurant, or to travel to Europe and stay in the owner's house or some luxurious hotel. Some of our business men make million dollar deals, and the fine art of corruption as it is practiced in capitalist circles is as subtle as a serpent and worse than a rat. They will anesthetize you while you are being "bitten" and it can rip off a hunk of flesh in the middle of the night. This was the way the Revolution was being put to sleep so that a piece of flesh could then be ripped away. In a few cases, corruption was out in the open. Many knew about its existence, or they suspected it, when they observed the life-style changes the new car, the house being redecorated, adding little decorative touches here and there because of pure vanity. We have heard such stories time and time again, and measures must be taken even though it will not be resolved easily.

Now we come to larceny, or the re-routing of resources from the gas stations. There are ways to deliver gasoline because that gentleman, who is my very good friend, uses his vehicle in a very useful way and so I can see that he gets a certain amount of gasoline. This is just one way of thousands. There are dozens of ways to waste or to re-routing resources. If the controls in place

are not enforced, or if we cannot find the best solution to stop this, theft will continue and increase.

Today, in our country, we could be saving more energy, more than is possible in any other country. There are 2,400,000 vintage refrigerators in family dwellings which use four or five times more electricity per hour, on a 24 hour basis.

A single data, so that you don't forget it. In Pinar del Rio there are 143,000 refrigerators; of this number, 136,000 are INPUDs, Minsk and other ancient Soviet brands, Frigidaire and the other capitalist brands consume, according to my calculations, around 20% — I am using another figure but here I will use the most conservative one — of the electricity generated by power plants for Pinar del Rio during peak hours.

Earlier on, I was speaking of a Zil truck; we have thousands of these. Worse than that, there are many institutions with old trucks, which are not operational, but they are not reported in that condition and the central administration has become accustomed to negotiating with government ministers. The central State Administration doesn't need to negotiate with any minister, it must issue orders to the ministers. "How many trucks do you have?" "This is how many." It is necessary to delve into the problems and then make decisions.

The sugar industry produced eight million tons and today this figure barely reaches one and a half tons. We had to radically cut back on tilling and seeding the land while oil was costing 40 dollars a barrel, it was ruinous for the country, particularly if you added to that equation the hurricanes that were passing through with increasing frequency, the prolonged droughts, and because the cane fields had a life span of four or five years when once they lasted 15 or more, and when the market price was 7 cents. I remember that one day I asked a company which sells our sugar about the price of sugar and about production at the end of March, and they didn't even know how much sugar was being produced for months, much less the cost of a ton of sugar in American dollars, the answer came up about a month and a half later.

Quite simply, we had to shut down sugar mills or we were going to disappear down the Bartlett Trench. The country had many, many economists and it is not my intention to criticize them, but speaking with the same honesty I used to describe the errors of the Revolution, I would like to ask why we hadn't discovered that maintaining production levels of sugar would be impossible. The USSR had collapsed, oil was costing 40 dollars a barrel, sugar prices were at basement levels...so why did we not rationalize that industry instead of sowing 20,000 *caballerias* that year, equivalent of almost 270,000 hectares, obliging us to till the land with tractors and heavy ploughs, sowing cane that afterwards had to be cleaned using machinery, fertilize with expensive herbicides, etc. None of our economists seemed to have noticed any of this, and we practically had to instruct them, order them, to stop the procedure. It is like saying: "The country is being invaded"; you cannot reply: "Hold on, let me have a thirty meetings with a hundreds of people." It's as if we had said in Giron : "Let's hold a meeting for three days to discuss what we should do to repel the invasion." I assure you that the Revolution, throughout her history, has been a constant and real war, with the enemy stalking us and ready to strike at us if we should let down our guard.

I called the minister and I told him: Tell me please, how many hectares are ploughed?" The answer: "Eighty thousand." My response was: "Not one hectare more." That wasn't really up to me, but I had no option; you just can't let the country go down the tubes, and in April I was looking at 20,000 *caballerias* of land being ploughed.

We have had to do many more things like this, things that would make the stones speak. It's not your fault, but, what was happening to us? Why did we not see all this? The USSR had already collapsed, we had been left without oil overnight, with no raw materials, no food, no cleaning products, nothing. Probably, it was good that this happened, after all. Maybe it was necessary that we suffered as we did, so that we are ready to give our lives a hundred times over before we surrender the country or the Revolution, the Revolution we so deeply believe in.

Maybe it was all necessary, for we have committed many errors. It is these errors that we are trying to correct, if you will, that we are in the process of correcting.

One of the corrections made by the Party and the Government was to put an end to the prerogative of 3,000 citizens to manage the country's currency, in the situation of debt — they could have a debt of such and such a size — nobody was guaranteeing the payment of that debt; when the debt expired the State was obliged to pay it. It might have been an unnecessary or subjective debt, and if the State did not pay it, its credit could be considerably affected.

Today that has changed; I would like to tell you that the country is paying off every last cent, with not even a second's delay, and credit grows constantly. Money is not being thrown out of the windows; it is spent in great quantities, yes, but not in those colossal amounts that we saw in the sugar industry.

You will be even more amazed when I tell you that, according to its inventory, the Ministry of Sugar has 2000 to 3000 more trucks than it had when it was producing 8 million tons of sugar. It's tough, but I'm going to tell it like it is; I'm going to talk about it, and no matter how many times I tell it, and no matter how I criticize this in public, I am not afraid to shoulder the responsibility for what needs to be done, we cannot afford to be soft. Let them attack and criticize me, I know the reality of the situation, I know it very well. There must be quite a few who are hurting: kings, czars, emperors.

Is everyone like that? No! Are all our ministers like that? No. Some ministers have been very inefficient. Sometimes we are soft on officials who hold important positions, but I have this old habit: I like to work with the comrades who have made mistakes. I've done that many times over. As long as I see positive qualities and what is missing is the correct guidance. Sometimes it is just a question of short-sightedness, in spite of all the mechanisms and institutions in the country to defend itself, to struggle and to fight with honor, without abuse of power, for nothing would ever justify the abuse of power. We must be audacious enough to tell the truth, but not all of it, because we don't need to say everything at once. Political battles follow certain tactics, with adequate information, following their own path. I am not telling you everything; I am telling you the indispensable. Don't worry about what the bandits are saying or what the news services will report tomorrow or the day after: he who laughs last, laughs best.

There are some news reports saying that Castro is launching an offensive, Castro is launching his social workers that we are renouncing all the progressive advances made so far. The progressive advance means that you are selling a pound of rice for four pesos, it's robbery! What retiree would be able to buy that? A pensioner with his 80 pesos and five pounds of rice in his ration book cannot buy that. Havana had privileges and used to receive six. Havana used to receive one additional pound, and so did Santiago, but the rest of the provinces received five. We must measure it, ounce after ounce, 100 grams, how it grows. What's happening with the ration book? You have rice and you exchange it for sugar, and so on.

Today, everybody receives two more pounds of rice. I'd like to see the day when that will be enough. It's not far, but now they throw it at the chickens. Well, that's a whole other story. We are getting close to the time when everyone will have enough rice. We are also preparing conditions so that the ration book will be a thing of the past. We want to change something that was once useful and now is in the way. And if you would like to buy more rice, buy more rice and less sugar, or something else, not just red beans or black beans. You can buy whatever color of beans you like and cook them as you like. I warn you, you will have to pay a lot of attention to cooking, and quite soon.

Some were also commenting on the chocolate: "I'll believe it when I see it." That's what happened with the pressure cookers, and today there are millions of believers. Others said: "How is this chocolate?" "What does it cost?" "Eight pesos." "It's pretty expensive to be subsidized." Moral of the story: Everything subsidized should be as economical as electricity. "So, how much does it cost?" "Ah! Eight pesos." "How many cents of a devalued dollar?" Thirty two cents. What's it like? It has 200 grams; in each 11 grams seven are whole milk powder. Let everyone check for himself. Take it to a lab and get it examined. Four grams of cocoa, the strongest...as strong as it is healthy. Cuba today is probably the country that consumes most cocoa per capita in the world; children eat it, but so does Dad, just as Dad drinks the child's coffee. Children are born and registered, and they receive their little packet of coffee, real coffee, for five pesos. "It's too expensive to be subsidized!" You should really say: it is a little short of a gift.

The road to reach what I am saying is: the worker must receive more. Everyone who works should receive more. All pensioners should receive more. We are really talking about more income and more products.

There are two over there, they're not bad, and some of you are discovering the chocolate. I know that our doctors over there in Kashmir drink our chocolate every night; this packet which is so expensive, and you can add milk. For the children, if you like, add more; add water and add milk, and then there is protein.

I assure you that we are measuring all the protein in every bean and in every egg. Most of the country is getting five. Havana is getting eight. Today there are more than 100 municipalities that are receiving 10, and every new one receives an increase. Add it up: 5 times 9 makes 45. That's 4.50 plus 5 times 15cents, 75, that means that with 5.25 cents you can buy 10 eggs. Those on social assistance can get 5 new eggs for 4.50. Correct.

Yes, but then came the chocolate and you need to get 8 pesos, and the coffee and you need 5, and 8 more, 13; add it to the 5.25, 18.25.

Well, you have two more pounds of rice, and this cost 90 cents of a peso each one, let's call it a little less than 4 cents of a dollar. That's new: the country must spend 40 million dollars on those two additional pounds of rice, and we don't hesitate in doing so. And the one who got a raise of 50 pesos, now he is left with a little less. But we are thinking how much of an increase the pensioner will get so that he can buy more...and the money must be guaranteed before it is distributed. It's not just a matter of printing bills and distributing them without having them backed up with merchandise or services, because then those magnificent intermediaries will charge five pesos for the rice instead of three. Don't forget that those who can will charge what they like. "Pay me eight pesos for a pound of beans," they'll say.

All 5 million in the country, who received 10 ounces, will be receiving 20, and those who were receiving 20 will be getting 30, and those who were receiving 10 and then 20 will be getting 30, tripling the amount of beans, or grain as they call it, not including rice or corn. Five million, three times more, and the rest at 50% more.

This too cost us several million dollars. I am not going to ask you where we got it, because that is a subject for the great theoreticians: "That's too little for a salary raise," they say. Sure, the ideal would be triple. And where do we get it from? My dear sir, are you going to tell me where we are going to get this, who do we have to rob, or are we going to have to pull your leg to give you much more than this so that you are deceived?

There are a few questions that we need to ask the fools, not that everything they think is foolish, but there are many foolish remarks that are due to ignorance: the price is high, the price is high, and price is always high.

We ended up giving away the houses, some people bought theirs, they were the owners, they had paid 50 pesos a month, 80 pesos, or, if the money was sent to them from Miami, it amounted to about 3 dollars; some sold theirs in 15 000 or 20 000 dollars, when they had originally paid less than 500.

Can the country resolve its housing problem by giving away houses? And who will get them, the proletariat or the humble people? Many humble people were given houses for free and then they sold them to the new rich. How much can the new rich spend on a house? Is this socialism?

Maybe it's down to necessity at a certain moment in time, maybe it's a mistake, because the country suffered a shattering blow when overnight the great power fell and we were left alone, all on our own, and we lost all the markets on which to sell our sugar and we stopped getting supplies, fuel, even the wood with which to give a Christian burial to our dead. And everyone thought: 'This will fall apart', and the idiots still believe that it is all going to fall apart here and that if it doesn't fall apart now it will fall apart later. And the more illusions they entertain and the more they think, the more we should think, the more we should draw our own conclusions, so that this glorious people who has so trusted all of us is never defeated. (Applause)

Let there never be a USSR situation here, or broken, disperse socialist blocks! The empire shall not come here to set up secret jails in which to torture progressive men and women from other parts of this continent that are today rising to fight for the second and final independence!

Before we go back to living such a repugnant and miserable life there better not be any memory, even the slightest trace, of us or our descendents.

I said that we are more and more revolutionary and I said this for a reason. Now, we understand the empire better and better, we are increasingly aware of what they are capable of while before we were skeptical with regard to some things, they seemed to us impossible.

They had fooled the world. When the mass media grew in full force it took control of peoples' minds and exercised its power through not only lies, but also conditioned response. A lie isn't the same as a conditioned response: a lie affects one's knowledge whereas the conditioned response affects one's ability to think. And being misinformed isn't the same as having lost the ability to think, because responses have been created for you: 'This is bad, that is bad; socialism is bad, socialism is bad', they say, and all the ignorant people and all the humble people and all the exploited people are saying: 'Socialism is bad'. 'Communism is bad'. And all the poor people, all the exploited people and all the illiterate people are repeating it: 'Communism is bad'. 'Cuba is bad, Cuba is bad', the empire has said it, it has been said in Geneva, it has been said all over the place, and all the exploited people around the world, all the illiterate people and all those who don't receive medical care, or education or have any guarantee of a job, or of anything are saying: 'The Cuban Revolution is bad, the Cuban Revolution is bad'. 'Listen, the Cuban Revolution did this and that'. But listen to this too: 'No-one is illiterate in Cuba'. Listen, 'infant mortality rate is such and such'. Listen, 'everyone can read and write'. Listen, 'freedom can't exist without culture'. Listen, 'there can't be choice'.

What are they talking about? What can the illiterate people do? How can they know if the International Monetary Fund is good or bad, or that interest is higher, or that the world is being ceaselessly subjugated and pillaged by a thousand different methods put into practice by this system? They don't know.

They don't teach the masses to read and write, yet they spend a million dollars on publicity every year; but it isn't the fact that they spend it, it's the fact that they spend it on creating conditioned responses, because someone bought Palmolive, someone else bought Colgate, and someone else bought Candado soap, just because they were told to a hundred times over, because they associated the products with a pretty image and this sowed its seed and carved its place in the brain. They who talk so much of brainwashing, it is they who carve their place, who mould the brain, who take away from the human being his capacity to think; it would be less serious if they were taking away the ability to think from someone who had been to university, who could read a book.

What can the illiterate read? What means have they of realizing that they are being conned? What means have they of knowing that the biggest lie in the world is the one that claims that the rotten system that reigns over there and what they have in many places, if not almost all of the countries that copied that system is a democracy? The damage that they are doing is terrible. And

people are becoming aware of this, and day after day more people are becoming aware, day after day, after day, they feel more disdain, more disgust, more hatred, more condemnation, and more desire to fight. This is what, in the end, makes everyone much more revolutionary than they were when they were unaware of many of these things, when they only knew about elements of injustice and inequality.

At the moment, while I'm talking to you about this, I'm not theorizing, although it is necessary to theorize; we are working, we are moving towards full changes in our society. We have to change again, because we have gone through some very difficult times, and these inequalities and injustices have arisen, and we are going to change this situation without abusing anyone's rights in the least, and without taking money away from anyone. No, we're not going to take anybody's money; in our eyes, the faith that our people have in the bank is the most important thing of all. And because the Revolution is creating wealth, and because the Revolution is going to create a significant input that isn't derived from the sugar industry or any of that, it will mainly come from that capital, and also from experience, because knowing what must be done is very important.

If I tell you about the gas stations in the capital you're going to be amazed; there's more than double the amount that there should be, its total chaos. Every ministry wanted one and got one, and they're scattered around everywhere. The People's Power institution is a disaster, total chaos, in the sense that all the oldest trucks, the ones that consume the most fuel, and all that, were given to the People's Power. When it seemed that the use of these trucks was being rationalized, really the country was being permanently mortgaged.

Can we do the same when fuel costs 2 dollars as when it costs 10 or 20, or 40, or 60? One of the worst things that happened to us was precisely that we believed in the strategies of the power system. Many questions were asked, and, really, we discovered that the main problem was that we were operating on a concept that corresponded to the days when fuel cost 2 dollars; the sugar policy corresponded to the days when that cost two dollars, too.

The price of oil nowadays is not in keeping with any supply and demand rule; it conforms to other factors like the shortages, the extensive squandering by the rich countries, and it's not a price that is anyway in keeping with economic rules either. The reason behind it is the shortage of this product together with the increasing and extraordinary demand for it.

In fact, this very morning I was informed of some news: by next year there will be a demand for 2 million more barrels a day; the year after that the demand will have risen to more than 84 million barrels a day, and the United States, which is the empire's main territory, goes through 8.6 million barrels of fuel a day. This is one of the key points.

We invite everyone to take part in a great battle, it's not just a fuel and electricity battle, it's a battle against larceny, against all types of theft, anywhere in the world. I repeat: against all types of theft, anywhere in the world.

What is the cost of the total amount of energy that the country uses at the current oil prices? It's around 3 billion dollars.

Of course, saving measures aren't the only way to increase income, there are several ways. Let me tell you that there are quite a few and they are significant. I am almost certain –the final result could be a bit more or a bit less, I don't want to say for certain, I'm always conservative when it comes to calculations– that this country, in light of all the information that we now have, can save, in a short amount of time, two thirds of the energy that it now consumes, adding up all the factors: electricity, oil, diesel, fuel oil, etc; with a price like that currently charged it could decrease slightly and then increase considerably. This would mean more than 1, 5 billion dollars. And you may ask: What does the country currently do with those 1, 5 billion dollars? My answer to that would be: one part is stolen, another part is squandered and the rest is thrown away.

As we are in the middle of this offensive, in the middle of the activity, I can't give you all of the information; but I think that within 10 years the work of these young social workers may save the country up to 20 billion dollars with regard to energy. Did you hear that? You know how much a million is, don't you? And 100 millions? And 1 billion in convertible pesos?

Carlitos, you gave me a document:

'The total cost of education: 4,117 million pesos; the cost of higher education: 886 million.'

'Information from the Ministry of Economy and Planning, confronted with the Ministry of Finance and Prices, on November 17, 2005'.

So, it is 886 million pesos. We have that 700 million pesos is 35.4 million dollars. And let me say once again: it's a small part of what is stolen or extracted from the fuel reserves, less than 20%. That is what the universities cost, according to this information.

When I say 1 billion dollars saved, I am talking about 25 billion pesos. All the wages paid in this country, at international exchange rates, which are exceedingly arbitrary towards Cuba, amount to around 14 billion pesos, a currency which has true value in our country, and has a very high real purchasing power. It has also been revalued and it may be revalued again.

Every word uttered has to be carefully weighed. I'm not improvising, I have reflected extensively on this information and I have it in my mind, and I weigh my words: I'll say this, I won't say that, because we have enemies who are trying to thwart everything and mix everything up, like those who say that we are abusing the sacred freedom of trade. And they say other things besides, one example is: 'What can they get with a dollar that was sent over by someone who is most probably a university graduate? As you all know, they didn't have to pay a cent. Following the triumph of the Revolution no-one who left here for the United States was illiterate.

And every year was the same, those who had sixth grade, a seventh grade of education, those who new a thing or two, those sectors that went to university were the first to go there, the richest sectors of society, and for more than 40 years the empire stole tens of thousands of university graduates and hundreds of thousands of skilled workers, whom they now try, at all cost, to prevent from sending remittances to Cuba.

What bitterness there was that day when the dollar shops opened, as a means to collect a little bit of the remittance money, and those with this money went to spend it in those shops, that were

expensive, and aimed at collecting a bit of this money and redistributing it to those who didn't get any, at a time when the country was in a very difficult situation.

Now then, what do they do now with a dollar? They send it over here. I don't know whether they send you a dollar or two. (Talking to someone) I have relatives who receive money. I don't mess about that.

One day we asked and were told that in some provinces 30% or 40% of the people receive something, a little; but sending over a dollar is a good deal, a really good deal! So good that it could easily ruin us because of the enormous purchasing power they have in a blockaded country, with highly subsidized rationed products and free or amazingly cheap services.

I have an example of this, going back to electricity. Do you know how much it costs the country in convertible pesos to produce one kilowatt with this system that has had so many problems, with the 'Guiteras', the Felton and other power plants, that have caused so many power outages and many other problems? Do you know how much it costs the country in convertible pesos? Around 15 cents per kilowatt, but if you –this comrade, undoubtedly an intelligent man, who spoke so well– were to receive, say, one dollar, what could you do with it? You've acknowledged that electricity is very cheap, it's practically given away; we give it away to the pensioners and to the workers, we give it away; but we are also giving it away to the hustlers, to those who made 1000 pesos from here to Guantánamo, or who make twice what a doctor earns in a month by taking him from Havana to Las Tunas, with stolen fuel, bribing the gas station attendants.

I'm not against anyone, but neither am I against the truth. I don't believe any lies, I'm sorry, but I'm telling them all now that they are going to lose the battle, and it won't be an act of injustice or abuse of power. We are giving away electricity to those who sell a pound of beans for 8 pesos. And, please, don't stop selling them, don't go doing that and blaming it on me. Sell them, we're not going to prohibit it, what I want is to know what they're going to do when beans are more plentiful. I don't know if they'll drop the price or not, but half of the population has seen their quota triple, and the other half has seen it increase by 50%. I think that they'll have to lower it somewhat. Most probably, sometime in the future, with a bit of money, from the energy that we will be saving, we will assign another 10 ounces and the moment will come in which all sellers will be honest and not one single bean will go astray and produce that isn't bought is returned, because there will no longer be any means by which to pinch it, nor reason, nor circumstances, the speculator will end up with nothing to sell and will have to eat it all himself.

The farmers eat their produce and sell the rest. The speculator steals and doesn't produce anything. A cable from Reuters portrayed the government as beating down the 'progressive advances' of the special period. Progressive is what I have been talking about.

They don't mention that the crook, or whoever, he's probably not a crook, the lucky fellow over there sends you a dollar and you spend very little on electricity, you consume less than 100, you have spent 9 Cuban pesos for 100 kilowatts of electricity. Okay? Divide 24 by 9 (he works out the sum)

You spend 2400 cents, and for your 100 kilowatts you paid 900 cents, that's not even half a dollar, you've still got 1500 cents left, you've only used 100; you are a very thrifty young lad, you turn off the lights, you turn everything else off as well, you don't have any incandescent light bulbs, all yours are fluorescent light bulbs, your refrigerator uses less than 40 watts an hour, you don't have one of those old Frigidaire models that once belonged to your grandmother, you are very good. (Laughter)

Now, maybe you spend 150 kilowatts, but it's going to be a bit more expensive for you because the extra 50 cost 20 instead of 9, which is 10 pesos; so you, who paid a bit more because of those 50, have spent 19 pesos. But, listen, you still haven't spent a dollar, you don't live in Florida, you live in Cuba. In Florida it's stingy and shameless, the electricity costs him 15 cents of a dollar, but he sends you a dollar so that with less than a dollar you can pay for 150 kilowatts; but, in spite of this, you use in moderation, you have many gadgets, new and old, possibly an air conditioner and a few other things, and you use 300 kilowatts. You work it out, the first 100 are worth 9 pesos; the second 200, 40 pesos, together that equals 49 pesos. In total you spend 1.9 dollars for 300 kilowatts of electricity; that is to say, 0.63 cents of a dollar for one Cuban kilowatt of electricity. How amazingly brilliant!

How much do the Cuban people spend because of that dollar that is sent to you from over there? Because that wasn't a dollar that you earned, or a peso, by working for it, or that that middleman made by selling a pound of beans for eight pesos; it was sent to you by a healthy person, who studied free of charge right from primary school, who isn't ill, they are the healthiest citizens that go to the United States, where there is an Adjustment Act, and where the sending of remittances is also prohibited.

Okay, so for less than two dollars the country had to spend 44 dollars to subsidize that dollar that was sent from the United States. This country is a noble one, it subsidized those dollars from over there, that instead of helping you are going to say: 'Look, I'm going to send you 2 dollars for the electricity, but don't use so much, please, be careful, turn off the lights. Look, I'm also going to send you a refrigerator, or I'm going to give you the money to buy yourself one in the 'shopping'. The generous sender of dollars then continues: 'Don't worry, I'll send you everything you need, I am good, I am noble, I'm going to heaven, I guarantee you those 300 kilowatts that you are costing that stupid socialist State that says that it is revolutionary and that it is going to fight until death to defend the Revolution'. It may be a person who knows that we are good, but he may also think that we are fools; and, even, be partly right about that. Watch out!

Now, to collect 45 dollars I have to collect 4500 cents. I have to collect them from all of you. How many people are there here? (He is told 405) So, it's four hundred and five? Well then, before you all go can you please hand over 11 cents, that is what you pay, that money with which the State pays is your money, that is to say, the Cuban people's money. All of you hand over 11 cents to subsidize the electricity bill of that person for one month. Don't forget! We are going to put someone in charge of watching you all and registering the information as well. (Laughter) Isn't that right?

So if this person is given his quota of rice, how much do those five pounds of rice cost him? Let's see, with a dollar. How much does it cost him? How much can he buy with a dollar, even with the deduction, even with the revaluated price of the peso? He buys a hundred pounds of rice, not in one day as some fools believe, but saves it for this month, and the next month, and the following months.

Obviously, you didn't spend any of what they sent you on medicine, for medicine here are subsidized, if you bought it in the drugstore, that is, what wasn't stolen and resold, and then you spent 10% of what it costs in hard currency. If you went to the hospital and had an ankle or even heart operation, your operation could cost 1000, 2000, 10,000 in the United States; if you suffer a stroke and are given a valve, this could cost one of our employees over in the Interests Section 80,000 dollars, but here you're treated. There could an incident of mistreatment in a hospital, but have you ever been to a hospital where you have not been treated?

Of course, our system didn't have the organization that it is now starting to have and will have, fully, in the future, or the equipment that is now starting to be used in the majority of hospitals, high quality standardized equipment, that therefore can receive maintenance, or the computerized multi-section tomography machines, with 64 sections, the best in the world, that are now starting to arrive, that have been bought and paid for. You see. And how have they been paid? They have been paid with the savings and with the country's newly increasing income. It doesn't cost you anything.

From the moment that you enroll in nursery school until the day that you graduate with the honorable PhD in agricultural science, physical science, medical science, it never costs you penny. If you're lucky you get an apartment, although it is likely that you will never be that lucky—okay, let's say your father was given it because he was a construction worker—, but you don't pay rent, you don't pay taxes. Perhaps you are quite sharp and you say: 'I am going to rent it out to some visitors, in convertible pesos. So, I am charged 30 cents in tax for every dollar that I receive; okay, I was practically given this house, it cost me 500 dollars, I make 800 a month and I give 240 to the State, a few dollars here and there, and I earn 500 dollars; 5 times two 10, 12 500 pesos. You can go, by virtue of those sacred freedom of trade laws, and buy a pound of rice for 3 pesos on the open market, you can go up to a gas station attendant and say: 'Look, I have a 1950's car because I bought it from such and such a person, I paid for it in hard currency or in convertible pesos, and I have someone who gets me the fuel, and I'm going on a 300 km trip, and I have three girlfriends', and this hunk of tin is an attractive offer with all the problems with transport. Who's not going to want me with this car?' (Laughter)

If you want, dear students, I could add that those who use 300 kilowatts consume 40% of the residential electricity produced in the country; 40% of this electricity could represent—a cautious and conservative figure— 400 million dollars generously and benevolently given by the State to the biggest users. And who are the biggest users? Go and visit one of the new rich and take a look at how many electrical appliances they have.

I remember that when we were analyzing the issue of power consumption we discovered that a '*paladar*' [private] restaurant consumed 11,000 kilowatts and that this stupid State was

subsidizing the owner, the owner of the place where the bourgeoisie likes to take their guests so that they can taste the lobster and the shrimps, all of it stolen from Batabanó, a miracle of the private business, that little place with four or five tables. But, of course, this totalitarian, abusive State is against progress because it is against plundering. So, the State is subsidizing the '*paladar*' with more than 1,000 dollars a month, and I found this out because I asked how much they spent, how much it was worth, and this fellow was paying the electricity at that price, 11,000 kilowatts; I think that once the total exceeded 300 he was paying 30 cents of a peso per kilowatt. Didn't you know? No, none of you know anything. (Something is said to him) No, don't make things up, I have made a lot of enquiries and I have been misinformed on many occasions. It is 30 cents, 11,000 kilowatts, he was paying 3,000 pesos. Look what he was paying, the State was getting rich because he paid 3,000 Cuban pesos, some 120 dollars; but it costs the State..., on that occasion I calculated that a kilowatt was 10 cents of a dollar, now 11,000, at a cost of 15 cents for the State, we'll have to pass the collection plate here, I don't know how you are all doing for cash but we have to subsidize that '*paladar*', and as it costs 1,250 dollars a month and there are 400 of you, don't just hand over the 20 cents when you leave, also donate around 3 dollars please, for the monthly payment, pay the bill because someone has to subsidize that '*paladar*'. That's free trade, that's progress, that's development, that's a step forward.

We are going to show them what progress is, what development is, what justice is, what it is to end the theft. And I warn them: it will be with the wholehearted support of the people. We know what we are doing, it is pure math and it's in the numbers. We know how much everything that we are going to save is worth. I don't want to talk about what we are buying now, nor do I want to elaborate much more about the billions, regardless of whether or not the power cuts will come to an end, and believe me, they will end, of that you can be sure.

Now we have around two and a half million electrical pressure cookers, we've not just got the rice cookers, we're also going to have some gadget that saves more than 80% of the energy that you use to boil one liter of water.

I'm sure that I can ask you a question and that you will answer it. Raise your hands all of you who don't use warm water to wash with in August. Honestly now. Be careful, don't get mixed up.

(A girl raises her hand)

Okay, so you've never used warm water? (She tells him that she hasn't) And what about winter? (Again she replies negatively) Congratulations. You make up approximately 10% of the population. You do, in winter? (A boy answers that he does) What a responsible man you are (laughter) And you know I have asked other people, not like I have here, I asked students and work colleagues, and I asked them to raise their hands if they didn't use it. Do you know when that was? It was on my birthday, on August 13. I asked 10 of them to tell me if they didn't heat the water to take a shower and none of the 10 raised their hands. I'm talking about water to take a shower, people also heat water to purify it, and for the children, in summer. When it's cold I want to see which of you takes a shower without heating the water first. (Laughter)

And do you know what university students in the halls of residence do with cans to heat water? Do you know? Ah! And why don't you find out how much electricity they use? I can tell you, I can tell you that there are some methods of heating water that use more than forty times more energy. Forty times!

Tell me honestly, have any of you ever used electricity to heat a homemade burner when the gas has run out? I'm not referring to those of you who have mains gas, that is the most economic, and should not be touched on. Those of you who cook with liquid gas or kerosene, have you ever used a homemade burner to cook anything? Raise your hands if you have never used one.

Let's see. Who's here? What about that person there who raised their hand. Have a look, find out about that gentleman, maybe my eyesight's failing me, and let's see. Really, raise your hand if you have never used one. One. Stand up young lady. Please, come here. Yes, you who raised your hand, yes you, stand up. Come here please. Now then, answer my question. You're telling the absolute truth? (She tells him that she is) You have never used one. Where do you live? (She tells him that she lives in the country, in Santa María) Is there electricity there? (She answers affirmatively)

I wanted to find the ideal citizen, someone who has never used a homemade burner.

Tell me something, is it ever hot there? And another thing: do you have an electric fan? Because I'm sure there are mosquitoes out there, aren't there? What type of fan do you have? What type of motor does this fan have, Aurika? (Laughter) (She tells him that it is a Sanyo with an efficient electric motor)

Your parents are farmers, is that true? (She says that it is)

But you don't sell anything on that market do you? (Laughter) She is honest, she has slightly more resources.

Do you have any incandescent bulbs? (She tells him that she does)

How many? What size are they? How powerful are they? (She tells him that they are 60 watt bulbs)

And can you see okay with those? (She answers affirmatively)

How many hours a day do you have them on for? (She tells him that they are on for quite a few hours)

What, five, six? (She tells him that there is one that stays on all night)

One is on all night? How many hours is that? Of course, it's so that the place isn't shrouded in darkness. So that's 10, 12? (She tells him 12 hours)

Twelve hours. Oh my!

And the other light, how long is that on for? (She tells him that it is on from six in the evening until after ten)

After ten, that is, so let's say six hours. Twelve plus four, 16 hours; times 60 equals 960 watts. Instead of using 960 watts you are going to be given 2 fluorescent light bulbs that use 7 watts each if they're on for 12 and 4 hours; 16 times 7 equals 112 watts and more light.

Do you want to do something for your country? Do you want to? I'm sure that you do. Do you live there? I didn't want to ask, but anyway, the problem has now been solved. I am going to tell you how much you are going to give your country very soon, starting from tomorrow if you wish.

Enrique, send them two 7 watt bulbs, or 15 or 20 if you want, you'll be able to see better that you do with the incandescent bulbs and you'll have less thieves sneaking about nearby, The cost of these little 7 watt bulbs, I've already worked it out, is 112 watts, which I'll subtract from the 960 that the incandescent bulbs use: 960 minus 112 equals 858 watts, multiplied by 365, the number of days in a year, if it's not a leap year, equals 313.170 watts, divided by 1000 it would be 313.17 kilowatts, multiplied by 15 cents, with the cost of production in hard currency, brings the total to 46 dollars and 97 cents.

I would like to thank you in advance, you, who are going to give the country –wait a minute, don't go, yet– from the payment that you have to make now, you are going to give Cuba 12.7 cents a day, in 100 days you would have given the country 12.7 dollars, and by next year you will have given all of us 46.45 dollars, with which to buy a few more beans or whatever. So, let me tell you, and this isn't some kind of tax, and you will see better, by just changing two light bulbs you are going to give us 46.45 dollars; we're not going to charge you or anyone for the two light bulbs. They last five times longer than the incandescent light bulbs and they generate less heat, you won't have to use that Sanyo fan of yours so much.

So that's the situation, explained with that example. Imagine if there were 15 million light bulbs instead of 2, and not just those in people's houses, who have more than calculations show, but also in the schools, general stores, and in all types of shops and stalls; 15 million. Of course, she only has two and she uses them quite a lot, there are others who use them much less and some people use them very often, so we can't extrapolate like that. But we must save, maybe for quite a few hours, between two and three 100,000 kilowatt power generators, plus the cost of fuel and other things needed to produce the electricity that is squandered, a power the country needs in order to ensure that these bulbs are on for an hour, which make this expenditure necessary.

What are you all talking about? What are you laughing at? (They point up to the ceiling of the theatre hall where there is a large amount of small incandescent bulbs) Ah! No, I'm prepared to pay for those to stay there, they are very pretty. It isn't a waste, it's a traditional and historical setting and, besides, there aren't events here all day every day, and in any case, the guilty party here is me, because this building has been lit up the whole time that I have been up here on this rostrum.

Well, thank you very much.

(He turns to another young woman from Ciego de Avila, who stood next to the other young woman from Havana) Is there a refrigerator in your house? (She tells him that it is not working)

It's not working? Wasn't it fitted with the seal or the thermostat? (She tells him that it was)

So why did it break again? (She tells him that the motor burned out)

The motor burned out? When? (She tells him that it was a while ago)

What type is it? (She tells him that it is Russian)

Russian, Minsk, or made with a Russian motor, INPUD, in Santa Clara and now it's not working, you were using much more energy than those light bulbs.

Let us assume that it is working, we'll have to say what we must do in your case, because we'll have to change the refrigerator as it uses too much energy.

The day before yesterday I was seeing off some of the social workers who were going to go and talk to the truck and tractor drivers, they were going to find out where they were, where they lived, what they were called, what their identity numbers were, how much fuel they used, if they used diesel how many kilometers did they travel on one liter; but it's not necessary to know a lot to realize that your non operational Minsk used a lot of energy.

Don't you remember? It must have been using around 300 watts an hour; you certainly were ruining the republic, because this one faulty refrigerator must consume seven kilowatts a day. If instead of this you had a new one, that consumed less than 40 watts an hour, you could be—I'm going to tell you how much you would be saving, I am going to try, I am going to calculate just 200 watts per hour—using 4.8 kilowatts a day. Learn to multiply, because you are all going to have to do this. (He makes the calculation) At 15 cents per kilowatt, she is going to be giving us 15 and 15, 30 and 30, 72 cents a day. She shall have her refrigerator. Let's note that down, Enrique.

You don't have one at the moment? (He is told that the situation is being sorted out)

Where are you going to get the machine from, tell me that? (He is told that the motor is going to be repaired by self-employed workers)

Wait, we're going to be increasing rates by about 30% then because those repaired motors are a disaster. Enrique, how much do the repaired motors consume? Many people have done that because their motors have broken and they didn't have any other choice, we can't blame them. But the State can be blamed. I can assure you this: within six months you will have a refrigerator that won't consume more than 40 watts an hour. I'm talking about what is wasted, what is thrown away, in your case we'll be set to save 200 per hour. That's what you'll save yourself, it's a pity that the 150 that we had in stock have just been distributed. Maybe, Enriquito, we've got seven left, we could have a trial over there. At the moment we have 150 trials underway in the city, we are going to hold a short meeting with the representatives of Arroyo Naranjo, where 30,000 use liquid gas. We are going to visit them.

Enrique, how many went to visit the residents of Arroyo Naranjo, the 50,000 homes? (Enrique tells him that that day 1,098 social workers had gone to visit around 55,000 homes. He points out that each worker visits an average of 20 houses a day, so according to calculations, they would have visited 20,000)

So, in two days they will have visited them all. They will have recorded what domestic appliances are used in this municipality. We are carrying out important social experiments. We are going to change the gas, they may be listening to me now, they are the lowest income people in this city and they have been given liquid gas. The price of liquid gas is more than 700 dollars per ton.

(Calculating) That's 300,000 kilograms, 300 tons of liquid gas, as a minimum, the monthly cost for Arroyo Naranjo. The approximate yearly cost for Arroyo Naranjo's liquid gas is 3 million dollars, if it is really only 30,000 consumers; we should send a team to check on whether it is running out or not.

We'll do an important experiment, we'll collect all the data and then we'll meet with the direct representatives from the communities, the popular councils, the trade unions, the mass organizations, 1,500 of the people closest to the neighbors to discuss this experiment that we propose to carry out and I'm sure that it will be a success, and you will immediately be saving the energy expenses.

We'll see the winter consumption rate; we'll see what the new light bulbs we are distributing from now until the end of December will save us; we'll see those new fans that will substitute the homemade ones, which amount to one million, and then we'll add to that an equal amount of the simple but highly efficient manual electrical water heaters that are going to considerably reduce the cost from what it takes to boil water.

In December we will be distributing 14,000 pieces of equipment: rice cookers, electrical pressure cookers, water heaters. The energy efficient light bulbs replacing the incandescent are not included in these figures.

We shall see what happens to certain vehicles after the conversations with the social workers, and how many of them will receive a good Christian burial. When each Ministry receives the appropriate number of trucks and they are asked to keep 90% of them on the road and that all of them should be registered, it will be surprising to see how much energy is saved.

Actually, we have ideas that we won't be explaining now: the exact time it will take to remove every single one of the gasoline powered trucks and other gas guzzlers off the road.

We've been speaking about saving two-thirds of the same. By the end of 2006, we believe we shall have saved no less than a million kilowatt/hours in electricity. Today this amount is generated and inefficiently used. With the new equipment, we shall have the capacity to generate at least 1.4 million kilowatt/hours, not counting the plants that are being built. That is more certain than everything which has been announced and accomplished, and everything that has not been mentioned and accomplished.

I don't like to talk much about it, but there are ideas which we have already begun to apply extensively. We will take advantage of the fact that in winter there is a 15% decrease in energy consumption, since each new piece of equipment must have its energy assured. We need to be sure that the family has cooking facilities if this should fail; now there are many problems, but

they are all being studied in detail, and all of them are being solved conscientiously, as Marx would have said.

I won't go on any more, but soon I shall return and we will continue talking.

I have broached many different subjects. We have to be resolute: either we defeat these deviations and strengthen the Revolution by destroying any of the illusions that the empire may have, or we can rather say: either we radically defeat these problems or we die. We must repeat the motto: *Patria o Muerte!* (Homeland or Death!) This is all very serious and we must use all necessary forces, if need be, the 28,000 social workers. I would guess that all those who are out there re-routing gasoline should be well advised so that we don't have to discover, point by point, who it is that is stealing fuel. The 10,000 social workers are ready and the city of Havana has been transformed into a spectacular school where we are learning what it is that we have to do. They learn more every day. The 28,000 will be joined by the 7,000 who are still studying.

If 28,000 are not enough, and some of these are already on the job creating anti-corruption groups, so that each problem needing observation is in the hands of a group; you can find members of the communist youth, of the mass organizations, of the veterans of the Revolution, as we said at the coliseum.

The problems I have mentioned are all being seriously addressed; you cannot imagine the enthusiasm, the seriousness, dignity, and pride they feel when they realize the great good that they are bringing to the country.

Fuel and energy are the most important issues, but not the only ones. How much has been stolen from factories such as those that produce medicines. There is one such in La Lisa where it was necessary to remove the manager and almost 100 others; they were involved in the theft of medicines. A hundred were let go; now we need find people to replace them. This is not enough, nor is it the only solution.

And what's next? We must also use all the technical means available. We have already acquired a large number of the new pumps needed for one third, approximately, of the gas stations that will remain in operation in the country, and also a number of new tanker trucks that won't be an obstruction in traffic or cause traffic jams or accidents. For the most part, they will be operating at night when there is less traffic. We haven't drawn up the figures yet of fatalities that occur because of accidents.

One day, the Revolution will be able to trace the location of every truck anywhere, using the most sophisticated technical instruments. Nobody will be able to take that truck to pay a visit to auntie or to the sweetheart. Not that there is anything wrong with looking after your private business, but it cannot be done in a vehicle used for work, much less at a time when there is a worldwide fuel crisis; then it becomes a crime. We will not forget any detail that is within our means to improve, whether it is that little soap with no smell, or the toothpaste or any other essential.

We have already bought 1000 buses, but not to charge the historical prices. Some of these are already resolving some of those problems mentioned, and the others will be here in a few months time.

Transportation will receive some subsidy, but not 90%; that would ruin us, so it must be minimal. We have to apply maximum rationality to salaries, prices, pensions. There should be zero over-spending and wastage. We are not a capitalist country where everything is left to chance.

Subsidies and free services will be considered only in essentials. Medical services will be free, so will education and the like. Housing will not be free. Maybe there will be some subsidy, but the rents that are paid in installments need to come close to the actual cost. You may well ask: "What are we going to pay all this with?" It will be in a large part from what is being wasted and stolen today, and from the non-negligible income the country is receiving. Everything that is within our reach, everything belongs to the people, the only thing not to be allowed is egotistical and irresponsible wastage of our wealth.

I really had no intention of getting involved in a dissertation on such sensitive matters, but it would have been a crime not to take advantage of the moment and tell you some of the things related to the economy, to the material life of the country, to the future of the Revolution, to revolutionary ideas, to the reasons why we began this struggle, to the colossal strength we possess today, the country we are today and we may continue to be, which is much more than we are now.

I could never show my face again if I were lying or exaggerating. I prefer to do things rather than to make promises. In any case, I do not do anything, because a man alone cannot do a thing. I avail myself of the experience or the authority which I have in order to wage this battle. There are millions of Cubans ready to wage this war which is a war of all the people.

I mentioned that we have reached military invulnerability, that this empire cannot afford the price of the lives that would be lost, numbering as many or more than in Vietnam, if they try to occupy our land. The American people are not willing to allow their leaders to waste thousands of lives on their imperial quests. Let's see if the tally reaches 3,000 in Iraq; it is at 2,000 already, and on a daily basis the news is grimmer for those who started that war.

And let's see what will happen with this dirty blockade. There are many Americans upset because they couldn't accept the help of our Cuban doctors; the majority was in favor and the local authorities more so.

Let's see, because we can show them that it would be better to get rid of that trash, because it will never destroy our Revolution. We can tell Europe: Keep your humanitarian aid, you hypocrites, keep it all, because we don't need it. What a wonderful thing it is to be able to say that we do not need the help of Europe or of the empire! Finish it whenever you want even though we don't care if you do or not, because we have learned how to save, to think, to grow; we have learned to multiply our efforts so that we can rise to the challenge of our colossal adversary.

I have been speaking to you with all the trust that I can. I have told you about every one of the main tasks facing the social workers' brigades and about their important activities. Sometimes they had to go out without warning, quickly and with discipline and efficiency. We had thousands in the city of Havana and we mobilized thousands more as a reserve.

They are already accomplishing many tasks. If we don't have enough of them, how many students are there in this university? Right now I will say to you what I said to them: if 28,000 are not enough, we will meet with you, students of the glorious Federation of University Students and you will find 28,000 other students for us (Applause), and in pairs, together with the social workers who have been acquiring some experience, you will be mobilized; and if 56,000 are not enough we will meet with you again and you will find 56,000 reinforcements for us.

You know who will shelter them? The people will, for they have great respect for these kids, and they no longer say: "These can't fix anything," "This will never finish." And together with you, together with the people, we will be proving that it can be done. And I think that we shall have many more resources, not just to meet the necessities, but so that we may further develop; because we are managing things much better. Much of what we accomplish, we do with the resources that we have saved. We are saving hundreds of millions of dollars and now it will depend on the rhythm and efficiency with which we proceed on every task.

New ideas come up everyday. What we can save in energy we can immediately convert into resources. The worst and most inefficient thermo-electric plants will still be around, but we won't need them; they will be around as back up, ready to fill in if anything unexpected happens on each step of the way.

The country spends 3,800,000 tons of fuel yearly just for the production of electricity. Today, our energy system works at only 60% capacity.

We shall never again build a thermo-electric plant. The plants that shall be built will be using gas, the one that comes with extraction of oil; they will be plants running on combined cycles that can be paid off within four or five years and can produce a kilowatt for 2 cents of a dollar.

We shall never again build a "Guiteras". Those were crazy schemes, born out of dogma and shortsighted plans. In a system that needs to produce around 2 million kilowatts, buying a plant for 330,000 means that you are concentrating more than 15% of all effective generated electricity in one single plant; when it goes out, or is hit with lightning as it happened a few weeks ago in "Guiteras", the black-out strikes with a fury, affecting both the population and the economy. How long was the revolution going to put up with such an erroneous concept in the development of the power system? Such concepts, I assure you, are not limited to Cuba, and today we are the first country in the world to discover this. They will be coming to Cuba to see what we are doing.

I won't say more on this, because I could be adding details that have much more importance.

We will make the transition from being an idiot country to one that will leave everyone else far behind. I'd like to warn others that they are limping badly and repeating the same mistakes.

No, I won't be going into detail. I promise that one day I will tell you, student leaders, the whole story, maybe when we are all together again. But it won't be today. Today, I must keep quiet because talking too much could tip off the enemy or give them information. Still, there are things that they cannot stop, like the two and a half million electric pressure cookers that are already here and on their way, that, they cannot stop. Domestic appliances are also on their way from China. China is one of the largest countries in the world, having become today the principal motor force of the world economy. China produces many things and we are negotiating other purchases and exchanges at an accelerating pace.

I told you that our credit has grown. Our country has the ability to mobilize millions and millions of dollars. Tell that to "little Bush" so that he and all his schemers can become bitter if they want. Let them say what they want tomorrow, about the "poor guys", these "noble individuals" who were stealing "ever so little", about those persons who charge anything they want for just about anything. I tell them as I am telling you: "Pay for the fuel that you are using." Actually, why are we handing over everything to that bandit, that miser or that egoist who would like us to pay 15 cents for every kilowatt that he uses? What world economic law obliges us to do that? Let them get ready for the bill that we are preparing for them. We have already devaluated the dollar, but that dollar is still enjoying too many privileges.

Of course, neither the dollar nor those that go around stealing; they don't have our Meteorological Institute and our Dr. Rubiera, and now a hurricane is coming. Nobody knows where this hurricane is going or how strong the winds are going to be. The only sure thing is that it is a Category Five Hurricane. (Laughter) A Category Five Hurricane is one that leaves nothing standing and it won't abuse anyone, it won't starve anyone, it just uses the simplest of principles: the ration book must disappear; those who work and produce will receive more, and they will be able to buy more; those who worked for decades will receive more and will have more. The country will have much more but it will never be a consumer society. It will be a society of knowledge, of culture, of the most extraordinary human development imaginable, development in art, culture, science but not for chemical weapons, with a breadth of liberty that no one will be able to dismantle. We know this already, we don't need to proclaim it, but it is worth remembering.

We have earned the right to do what we are going to do today, to have at our disposition almost a million professionals, intellectuals and artists, to have at our disposition 500,000 university students, in all areas of science, capable of all activities.

I am proclaiming that our society will truly be an entirely new society. In this long distance race, we are already several laps ahead of our closest competitors. The merit lies with the empire for it presented us with an enormous threat and it was this challenge that spurred us on. Theirs is the merit and the only thing our noble, generous, brave and intelligent people have done is to take up that challenge; today it does so, with the force of a multitude of developed intellects.

Today, as we speak of 500,000, we know that this number was produced in a very short time, just three short years ago, and look at how many are here today, and how many there will be tomorrow.

And there will be more for we have thousands of Latin American students studying medicine. In our country alone, we will be educating 100,000 doctors in the next 10 years. We are involved in creating the best medical capital in the world, not just for us, but for the peoples of Latin America and other parts of the world. We are being asked to educate more doctors, and we have the ability and the facilities, and no one can educate them better than we can. We have developed educational methodologies that we have not even dreamed of. We shall see all this, and very soon.

The ELAM ([Latin American School of Medicine] will have not just 12,000 medical students, there are also 2,000 Bolivian undergraduates here; some are at the ELAM, others are in Cienfuegos living with serious, professional and culturally prepared families whose psychological profile was investigated together with that of the student and his or her family; a new and unique experience.

I was talking about this yesterday, calling it solidarity transformed into a colossal wealth. How could we house 100,000 higher education students? We know what it costs to house and feed each one of them.

In the first phase of the Revolution, we constructed hundreds of high schools and today we have less than half of the enrolment of the seventies. We know what it costs to repair these schools and how long it takes to do so. There will be many medical schools for 400 to 450 students with excellent conditions, with all the necessary materials for study, audiovisual equipment and interactive programs. As we all know, and as comrade Machadito said, if he had had such resources during the five years of his education, he would have been able to acquire in one year all the information it took him five years to achieve at that time. This doesn't mean that we shall produce doctors in one year, but that in the course of six years of study, a doctor will acquire the knowledge that traditional methods would have given him in 20 years! We are thinking of excellence, and this is what we are constantly increasing.

We are aware of what our compatriots are doing in other areas. We are in constant communication. They are the 'Henry Reeve' Contingent and many others like them. A beautiful story is being written these days, the like of which has not been seen in history or during the life of our Revolution.

I am very happy that on a day like today, the Day of the Student, and the date you have chosen to celebrate the 60th anniversary of my entry into this university, I feel very well both physically and spiritually, meeting with you here. There were many ideas running through my mind, and I had to organize my memories of yesterday with the new ideas of today, and be careful so that I wouldn't say anything I shouldn't and so that I would say everything that I wanted to.

This month I think that we will have to take some measures; I was discussing this with the comrades. We cannot lose a second because things are going on constantly, and so it must begin this month.

We urgently need to discourage the wasting of electricity. I call it "discouragement"; it is not the definitive formula. That will be something else. But as of now we need to be distributing a massive amount of equipment. The more we save, the more equipment we can distribute, and the

more equipment we distribute, the more energy we'll save and the more money we'll begin to collect starting at the end of this month and going to the beginning of next year. That is why it is urgent to begin in December, establishing certain limitations on the wasting of electricity.

Not a cent more of increases for those who are consuming 100; a little more for those consuming 150, 200 and 300 kilowatts. There will be people who consume 300 who will have to pay a bit more, but not too much. Instead of two dollars they will have to pay, perhaps four for 300. But don't consume more than 300; turn off your lights and the fan; don't leave the TV turned on. I haven't even mentioned that there are a million television sets, 40,000 already here and more coming, 50 watts, so that there will be no more black and white sets.

And we we'll continue saving. The laboratories will determine what each piece of equipment consumes, everything will be measured and all calculations will be less than the figures show; no detail will escape notice, or at least very few. Every day there will be more experiments, and more experiments. There will be a test run in a municipality, the poorest one, and that's why all the social workers are here today. Another group is covering Cienfuegos delivering the new light bulbs.

Enrique, when will the gas stations in that province be occupied? It doesn't matter, they know it's going to happen, they can imagine.

(Enrique explains that it will begin on Saturday; that 158,000 light bulbs have been replaced in Cienfuegos and the rest will be finished tomorrow.)

(Two energy efficient light bulbs are handed to the *Comandante* so that he can give them to the student from the province of Havana.)

Hey, Enrique, come over here. The one she is holding is not the right one. You are consuming electricity for no reason. Quickly, we are finishing up here.

Ah, the girl is over there. No, this one is 7. (Enrique explains that one is 7 and the other is 15)

No, she has two 60s. Don't turn off the lights at home. She told me that she had two 60s. I asked for her to be given two 15s.

Here, not you, her. Take it to her; tell her she already has one. (They give her two 15 watts bulbs.)

We already know what we will save each year. It's quite a bit. (Applause)

We'll discount it from what she has to pay for the subsidy for the one over there.

They are changing. How many bulbs are they going to exchange in Cienfuegos? (Enrique tells him that 207,000 had to be exchanged)

How many more did they find? (He is told that there was more demand and they will send 100,000 more)

We had said a hundred and fifty thousand for Havana province. (It is explained that they are on the way; 158,000 have been exchanged by the 400 social workers, with 360 reinforcements. He repeats that on Saturday they begin with the gas stations)

Correct. The day after tomorrow we are in the gas stations. Let them get everything ready. In any case we will be finding out what the people are buying, and then they will install the perfect distributing machines and the nation will know where each one is located.

How much gas do the vehicles use, not the trucks, the front loaders used in construction, like the last time? What do all the MINAZ [Ministry of Sugar Industry] tractors consume? What do all the tractors in the fields use? There are thousands of them being used instead of jeeps. When they don't have enough kerosene, how much do they use? What do most of them use, do they use diesel to cook? There are hundreds of thousands, hundreds of thousands.

Besides that, I'm telling you, entirely new machinery to drill, new seismic, that's very modern, drilling everywhere and using accompanying gas to build plants on the combined cycle. This will replace the "Guiteras" [power plant] and those enormous plants in Santiago de Cuba which would consume half a million barrels of diesel turned out by that city's refinery, using up between 300 and 500 grams of fuel oil for every kilowatt of electricity. Or those machines gobbling up diesel in San Jose de las Lajas, using 400 grams of diesel for every kilowatt to produce 60,000 kilowatts in the peak hours. Don't be surprised the day you hear that they have been definitely retired. They will be around until we are sure there will be no deficit, we need to be very sure. Wherever we substitute one fuel for another, we will always hold on to the old one just in case, so that everything has been guaranteed. They are going to be great changes.

I've already told you that there are 1000 buses for long distance rides, and they will have their cost. Not just yet, because we prefer to wait. Sometimes it's better to wait in order to understand something better. To better understand, for example, some measure. The Revolution always needs the understanding and the support of the people for every step that it takes. I assure you and I repeat it, that everybody who works will receive more, everyone who works for the country and the Revolution will receive more. The abuses will end; many of the inequalities will disappear, as will the conditions that allowed them to exist. When there is no one left that needs to be subsidized we will have advanced considerably in our march towards a society of justice and dignity. That is what true and irreversible socialism demands.

The empire was hoping that Cuba would have many more '*paladares*' but it appears that there will be no more of them. What do they think that we have become neo-liberals? No one here has become a neo-liberal. We will prove to them the irrefutable crisis of their theories, just as we have shown them the disaster of their blockade, their aggression and their destabilizing actions.

Next year there may be fewer abstentions when the United Nations votes against the blockade, even though really there is no one left besides the fascist and genocidal ally that always votes unscrupulously with the empire. The world has to wage this battle.

Firstly, nobody should have the right to manufacture nuclear weapons. There should be no privileges for imperialism to impose its hegemonic rule and to take the natural resources and raw materials away from the nations of the Third World. We have denounced that a thousand times, but that is not the solution. The first solution for any Third World country is to not fear the empire; we have always acted that way and they are beginning to feel demoralized.

Secondly, we will strictly defend, in all the public squares of the world, the right to produce nuclear fuel. And we are not afraid to do so, let us make that perfectly clear. (Applause)

There must be an end to stupidity in the world, and to abuse, and to the empire based on might and terror. It will disappear when all fear disappears. Every day there are more fearless countries. Every day there will be more countries that will rebel and the empire will not be able to keep that infamous system alive any longer.

Salvador Allende once spoke of things that would happen rather sooner than a later. I believe that sooner rather than later the empire will disintegrate and the American people will enjoy more freedom than ever, they will be able to aspire to more justice than ever before; they will be able to use science and technology for their own improvement and for the betterment of humanity; they will be able to join all of us who fight for the survival of the species; they will be able to join all of us who fight for opportunities for the human species.

It's only fair to struggle for that and that is why we must use all our energy, all our effort and all our time to be able to say with the voice of millions, or hundreds of thousands of millions of people: It is worthwhile to have been born! It is worthwhile to have lived!

(Ovation)

Socialist Voice #84, February 21, 2006

Cuba Seeks Revolutionary Renewal, Part One: Celebrating a ‘wonderful, triumphant year’

By John Riddell

“The super-powerful empire that stalks us and threatens us [is] awaiting a natural and absolutely logical event: the death of someone. They have honored me by thinking of me.” —Fidel Castro, November 17 2005

Speaking on the sixtieth anniversary of his admission to the University of Havana, Cuba’s president responded to the imperialists’ “transition plans and military action plans” by challenging his compatriots to develop their own plans for the revolution’s future.

His speech has set off what Cuban Foreign Minister Filipe Perez Roque has called “an intense debate across the entire country,” in factories, work collectives, farmers cooperatives, streets, and neighborhoods.

Although he is now 79 years old, and has been the target of several CIA-organized assassination attempts, Fidel Castro shows no slackening in vigor. Reporters noted his firm stride in the January 24 demonstration of a million Havana residents against provocations by the U.S. diplomatic mission. And the U.S. imperialists’ conclusion that the Cuban revolution cannot be overthrown while Fidel is alive testifies to the failure of their campaign to isolate, starve, demoralize, and crush Cuba.

Fidel mocked the imperialists’ hopes of military conquest. “They can never destroy us,” he said. But, he warned, “this country can self-destruct ... we can destroy ourselves, and it would be our fault.”

Addressing the National Assembly on December 23, Perez Roque elaborated on the nature of the threat:

“We have achieved military invulnerability. We will achieve economic invulnerability ... despite the ongoing blockade. We must also struggle ... to preserve ideological and political invulnerability.”

This is not a problem so long as the generation who made the revolution is with us, he said. But the enemy bases its plans on “the idea that those who come after can be confused, defeated, divided, bought, or pushed around.”

‘A wonderful year’

The opening up of this discussion is the result not of Cuba’s weakness but its progress. The year 2005, which the Cubans named “Year of the Bolivarian Agreement for the Americas” (see Socialist Voice #26), was a “wonderful, victorious year,” according to Perez Roque.

The economy expanded by an impressive 11.8%, and 10% growth is expected this year. (Cuba’s measure of economic growth includes social services as well as commercial transactions.) Cuba

significantly lessened its dependence on trade with imperialist states such as Canada; Venezuela and China are now Cuba's leading trading partners.

Cuba's renewed economic strength has allowed it to initiate a major investment program to strengthen its electricity supply, and new targeted measures to improve the lives of working people. Substantial salary and pension increases have been implemented, and 100,000 new homes will be built in 2006.

More crucially, Cuba's isolation has eased. Popular movements allied to Cuba scored resounding electoral victories in Venezuela and Bolivia, while candidates identified with pro-U.S. policies lost presidential elections across Latin America. Cuba is taking its place as an influential participant in a continent-wide movement of peoples against imperialist oppression.

Humanitarian aid

Cuba has also won increased moral authority as the world's most effective and dedicated supplier of humanitarian aid. After the Pakistan earthquake disaster, for example, Cuba dispatched 2,200 medical staff to set up field hospitals and clinics. As of mid-December, 3,500 operations had been performed with sophisticated equipment in tents set up deep in the frozen Himalayas.

(Much less technical skill and human commitment was to be seen in the United Nations-led effort, which sent 350,000 non-winterized tents to a region locked in bitter cold, along with a much smaller number of winterized tents that lacked stoves.)

Cuba has become a major supplier of eye care to Third World countries: 170,000 Venezuelans have received eye operations in Cuba in the last year and a half.

More than 25,000 Cuban health professionals serve as volunteers in other countries, usually in poverty-stricken, rural, and remote areas, while 2,400 students from 115 other countries receive free medical education in Cuban universities.

Danger signs

These achievements testify to the moral strength and convictions of Cuban working people. Nonetheless, Castro's November 17 speech focused on danger signs in Cuba's moral commitment to socialist values — signs of “thievery [of state property], diversion of materials, and money draining away towards the new rich.”

A study revealed that in government gas stations, “there was as much gas being stolen as sold.” Fidel himself had seen a makeshift market where a construction crew, “both the foremen and many of the workers, had put up a market selling cement, steel rods, wood, paint, you name it— all kinds of construction materials.”

The problem is not new, Fidel said, but “the Special Period aggravated it, because in this period we saw the growth of much inequality, and certain people were able to accumulate a lot of money.” (The term “Special Period” refers to the years after the collapse of economic relations with the Soviet Union in 1991.)

“There are several dozens of thousands of parasites,” he said, “who earn 40 or 50 times the amount one of those [Cuban] doctors over there in the mountains of Guatemala ... earns.”

Perez Roque, who at 39 has carried out almost all his political activity since the 1991 crisis, underlined the impact of the Special Period. Cuba’s gross internal product shrank by 35% and its imports by 85% in the space of four years, he said, while reductions in food supply temporarily cut Cubans’ average caloric intake from 3,000 to 2,000 calories a day.

“Facing up to those years was a feat whose story will be told and retold,” he said. Still, it was during those years that “the vices cited by Comrade Fidel became entrenched” including tendencies “to individualism, to saving your own skin.” Such evils “are not nourished in a society where each receives according to their labour.” But this principle that was undermined during the Special Period.

Social workers with attitude

On October 15, the government moved to end the gas diversion problem by assigning thousands of young people in blue T-shirts to substitute for gas attendants at service stations across the country, who were sent home on leave. The youth belong to Cuba’s corps of 28,000 social workers, recruited from among school dropouts and the young unemployed. After extensive education and preparation (7,000 are now in training), they work on projects that assist Cuba’s most vulnerable citizens.

Referring to the anti-corruption effort, Fidel commented, “We read every day in the opinion polls that people are asking about when the ‘kids’ are coming to the dollar stores, to the drugstores, or to all the other places.” Dollar and drug stores have a reputation as targets for theft. “Everyone is full of admiration for these ‘kids.’”

The crackdown on corruption has a social as well as an economic goal: to reduce the gap between privileged and unprivileged within Cuban society. Among the goals of social improvement cited by Castro: “We decided that every [sole-support mother] ... ought to have the possibility to choose ... whether to receive a salary so that she could look after her child, or the state would pay someone a salary to care for the child while she was at work.”

The same logic can be seen in Cuba’s approach to its chronic electricity shortage. In addition to modernizing its power grid and generating facilities, Cuba has launched a conservation campaign, naming this the “Year of the Energy Revolution.” In Fidel’s view, two-thirds of the energy now consumed can be saved.

The Cuban electricity program also aims to decrease social differentiation. Electricity prices have been raised, but the cost for small-scale users is less than a tenth the rate paid by high-level consumers — who are often among Cuba’s new rich. (The top rate in Cuba is still much less than Ontario workers will pay after the province’s coming rate hikes.) Meanwhile, the government is distributing fluorescent light bulbs and energy efficient cookers and refrigerators that will provide practical benefits to working people—particularly in lessening women’s domestic labour—while reducing energy consumption.

Recognizing that the increases would have an impact on many working-class families, the government accompanied them by substantial across-the-board wage increases. The minimum wage was doubled last year.

“This nation today, and in a very near future,” Fidel said, “will have every one of her citizens living fundamentally on their work and their pensions and retirement income,” without having to rely on sideline occupations, second jobs, or foreign remittances. This goal, undermined in Cuba during the Special Period, is achieved by very few workers in the Third World countries, and is far from guaranteed even in wealthy Canada.

Yet Cuba’s most authoritative leaders are careful not to nourish illusions that the revolution can be defended simply by increasing living standards. “Socialism disappeared in Eastern European countries that had a high level of life in material terms,” said Perez Roque. Nor did the overturn of the nationalized and centrally directed economy lead to material improvement. “Only this year has Hungary achieved the living standards that it enjoyed in 1972,” he said, despite billions of dollars in European Union assistance. We must add that the post-1990 record of economies in most of Eastern Europe and in Russia is even worse.

Three principles

In his address to the National Assembly, Perez Roque proposed three principles to assure the revolution’s survival that have a focus entirely different from that on material goods:

1. “Those who lead must do so on the basis of their example, as has always been the case.... Authority comes from an austere style of life and from dedication to work. The people must know that those who lead receive no privileges except that of greater service and sacrifice, that their families live in a manner no different from the people, that their children receive the same education as the children of workers.”
2. “We must maintain the support of the immense majority of the people, as we do today, not on the basis of material consumption but on the basis of ideas and convictions. I told you how in the socialist countries the people were disarmed and did not go into the streets, did not struggle when their future was torn apart. But we saw how the poor people of Venezuela went into the streets to demand the return of Chavez in face of the oligarchical and military coup mounted by the Yankees. The [Cuban] Rebel Army possessed nothing. Its recruits were farmers and poor workers. Ideas and convictions are decisive, not the notion that people will support us more because they possess more.”
3. “Ultimately the decisive question is who receives the income. The majority, the people? Or the oligarchical minority, the transnationals, the pro-Yankees? Who owns the property: the people, the majority? Or the corrupt minority that serves the interests of the only policeman in the world who can guarantee these privileges in Cuba — Yankee imperialism?”

Part Two of this article will take up further aspects of Castro’s November 17 speech and discuss the economic measures now in preparation to strengthen the revolution.

Socialist Voice #85, February 25, 2006

Morales Election Is a Victory for the Bolivian People; A Reply to Left Critics of Bolivia's New President

By Fred Feldman

Introduction by Ian Angus and John Riddell

What attitude should Marxists adopt towards the new Bolivian government headed by radical peasant and indigenous leader Evo Morales?

Morales and the movement he leads have set as their goal the "refounding" of the Bolivian nation. The noted Latin American journalist Eduardo Galeano has written an eloquent explanation of this goal in "The Second Founding of Bolivia."

However, many groups in the international left have been sharply critical of Morales and the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) he leads.

For example, Gerry Foley, a leader of the U.S.-based group Socialist Action, writes that "popular illusions in Morales and a party like MAS in the Bolivian situation can only be a step backward, and have to be combated. ... It is essential for revolutionists to combat illusions in Morales and similar parliamentary solutions and to support the fight to make a government directly representing the working people a reality." (Socialist Action, January 2006)

In Bolivia itself, Jaime Solares, a leader of the Central Obrero Boliviano (COB), a union federation, has denounced Morales as "a traitor to the working class," and the COB remained neutral in the election. Just one week after the election, Solares issued an Open Letter demanding immediate nationalization of the oil industry and by implication threatening direct action against the government if Morales doesn't adopt their timetable.

The following article by Fred Feldman responds to these and similar criticisms.

It is a serious error to place ourselves in opposition to the general course of a popular movement to "refound the nation" because of theoretical considerations such as permanent revolution, "State and Revolution," "two-stage revolution," the evils of "populism," concerns about electoralism, demands for workers councils, general references to the laws of capitalism, and so on.

And that is what we are dealing with in the Bolivian election and its consequences — a popular movement to "refound the nation" that has now elected one of its leaders as president. What has come under fire from much of the left is not just or even primarily Morales but rather this course of the masses. Of course, he is not "betraying," because he is authentically representing the popular worker-peasant-indigenous movement that used him to take the presidency of the bourgeois state for itself.

Uncertain outcome

How will the contradiction between the mass movement and the presidency, on one side, and the bourgeoisie plus its state play out? Will the contradiction deepen as measures opposed by the imperialists or native capital are carried out? Or will it be resolved in favor of the maintenance and consolidation of a bourgeois government and state?

The outcome is not foreordained. As Venezuela has been showing, the fact that the masses don't start by destroying the army and the state machine doesn't doom the process. And we are talking about a process, not gigantic historical stages.

- Will it lead to further democratic gains for the workers, peasants, and indigenous?
- Will it lead to comparable developments in other countries of the region?
- Will it lead to more collaboration and unity against the imperialist main enemy of the peoples of Latin America?
- Will it lead to socialism? Will the process stall and retreat?
- Will the presidency be reabsorbed in the bourgeois state or will the state be dismantled and constructed on a new foundation in the process?
- Will a coup or invasion be attempted? How will divisions in the military, which must surely be developing, play out?
- Will antagonism against the imperialists heighten or will the imperialists be conciliated? Will Morales and the movement he leads advance or retreat? How will divisions within the movement play out?

All of these are possibilities, I believe. But there is a lot to go through to get there, and the process is just beginning. But none of this will be resolved by the demands of Solares and Foley and other left critics that the process that has begun to be replaced by a different one.

A victory to be utilized

The election of Morales must to be recognized as a gain to be utilized in deepening the struggle. The opportunity to use the presidency of the nation to advance the struggle must be welcomed, not feared or rejected.

Marx said the working people cannot simply take hold of the state and wield it for its own purposes, and he was right. But he never opposed running for office, including executive office. In Bolivia and (under very different conditions) in Venezuela, the masses have taken hold of one piece of the state — the presidency — and are trying to wield it to advance their interests. If they continue the fight to pursue these interests, and if Morales continues to represent them, this will mean an ever-widening conflict with the imperialists, the bourgeoisie, and their state in Bolivia (and in the United States of course).

One difference with Venezuela is that in Bolivia the mass upsurge preceded the establishment of the presidency. In Venezuela there was the Caracazo (1989) and the popular response to Chavez's coup (1992) and an electrified response to his assertion after the coup failed that the fight would continue. Nonetheless, there was less visible mass struggle in Venezuela before the

establishment of the Chavez government (1999) than in Bolivia. So the relative independence of the Morales presidency from the bourgeois government and state and its relative dependence on the mass movement is more clear than in the first period of the Chavez presidency.

The Bolivian people face the challenge and opportunity of deepening this conflict. And of course much depends (yes, the individual in history matters) on Morales's capacity to stand against the pressures coming down from the enemy, pressures that are sure to intensify if the president attempts to advance the interests of those who raised him up.

This is about the fundamental nature of communism, the fact that communism is not a theory but a historical movement taking place before our eyes (and hopefully with our participation). Genuine communism is the name given to the real struggles taking place around us. A genuine communist movement doesn't argue that the real struggle is a mistake that should be replaced with another one advocated by advanced thinkers — whether this goes by the name of permanent revolution, socialism from below, two-stage revolution, or whatever.

Constituent Assembly

The Bolivian masses want to “refound the nation” in a very fundamental way — I believe this has been Morales' slogan since he began pressing for the combination of the presidential election and constituent assembly as a road for the struggle. He argued from the beginning that the movement could not just change things “from below” but had to take political power to accomplish its goals. So far he has done a very good job of pursuing this course patiently and stubbornly, and he has won masses of fighting workers and peasants and Indians to his cause. And so far he is keeping his word to them.

The leftist critics say that Bolivia is in a revolutionary situation — and then they demand that this revolutionary situation be replaced by a different one that follows an anti-electoral, “workers council” course. To those who think that way, I recommend the very fine critique of the ultraleft in Portugal in 1975, by Gerry Foley, Joseph Hansen and George Novack, which has been posted in the Documents section of the Socialist Voice website. Their arguments against the hostile stance taken by much of the far left against the constituent assembly elected in Portugal in 1975 are directly relevant to the hostility much of the far left is expressing towards the Morales presidency today.

I am not in the least suggesting that the far left critics are allied with imperialism — but neither are they playing a revolutionary role. Indeed, the intense fanaticism of Solares' denunciation of Morales is fraught with danger. Let us not forget the 1983 coup carried out by Bernard Coard's “leftists” against Maurice Bishop in Grenada, a coup that destroyed the popular movement that Bishop led and opened the door to U.S. invasion.

Cuba's role

The developments in Bolivia show the growing attractive power of the Cuban revolution. And this has been heightened by the Castro leadership's ability to relate to all struggles and fighters in a completely non-sectarian way. They learned in their courageous and self-sacrificing efforts to push the strategy of guerrilla warfare in the 1960s that revolutions are not made by imposing

“Russian models” or “Cuban roads” but by collaborating with revolutionaries and fighters from the popular movements in Latin America in the line of march that the class struggle in their countries and region charts for itself.

And the Bolivian process is greatly strengthened by the committed support it is receiving from Cuba and Venezuela.

The counter-argument seems to be that objective conditions in Bolivia demand maximalist solutions, not the step-by-step advances pursued by Morales, who some compare with Kerensky. But the Bolivian masses are pursuing a *process*, not immediately creating soviets or overthrowing the entire bourgeois state as a whole in one blow. And Morales, unlike Kerensky, is not postponing the Constituent Assembly but insisting on it against capitalist and landlord opposition, and campaigning for the working people and oppressed to mobilize for it and defend it.

The test of Bolivia

Morales is certainly going to be thoroughly tested by what happens. The pressure has only started to be applied. The threats and penalties will mount if he continues to lead forward. The Bolivian working people are also being tested.

But the veteran revolutionaries and would-be revolutionaries in Bolivia and elsewhere are also being tested. Can they avoid a spirit of narrow resistance, resentment, and competition with the new forces that have come forward including Morales?

There is nothing progressive or revolutionary about shouting from abroad, “You are fools! They betray you!” when the masses are going forward firmly and intelligently, when the leadership they have forged is showing some competence, and when they are not being betrayed.